

I need to **start** today by **giving credit** for some of the **concepts** today to **Joshua Harris**

His book ***“Stop Dating the Church”*** should be **required reading** for all Christians

I’ve taken **some** of his **CONCEPTS** & **ADDED** them to my own **“Heart”** on this **critically important** subject

“Stop Dating the Church” – By **Joshua Harris**
Amazon.com - \$9.35

Today – We’re going to talk about **Abiding in Fellowship** & **specifically**, we’re going to **talk** about becoming

An essential, integral, functioning part of a local group of believers

Let’s Pray

We’re headed to **Acts Ch 2**

But on the **previous page** of your Bible (*probably*) is actually the **BEGINNING** of the **NT Church**

Acts 1:8 (ESV)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

If you are a **Believer** today – then you & I can **trace**
our **Spiritual heritage** back to **THIS Vs** (& really, further)

But from **Acts 1:8** – to the day you were saved
there have been those who have “**Given Evidence**” (*Witnesses*)

to **the New Life** available to all in **Jesus Christ** alone

A **few vs's** later – in **Acts Ch 2** – The Holy Spirit falls on 120 believers
& the church - is **LIT on fire**

The **first event** is an “Open Air Sermon” – Preached by **Peter**
& **3,000 souls** are saved

& **then** - Immediately we read

Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)

42 And they DEVOTED themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

THIS is the N.T. church - that we are part of - if we are saved today

There's **SO MUCH** we could **focus on** in teaching these Vs's

But for the **ABIDE** series
in regard to **ABIDING in Fellowship**

I need to **FOCUS PRIMARILY** on **One WORD** today

The word – **DEVOTED**

EVERYTHING in these Vs's can be described & taught
as a part of our **FELLOWSHIP**

The Apostles **Teaching** (42)

The WORD **Fellowship** – KOINONIA (*sharing in common*) (42)

Breaking of Bread – Used of **Communion** & **Eating** together (42)

Prayers – both personal & corporate (42)

All who believed were **together** (44)

Had all things in **common** (44)

Giving (more than a tithe) to those in need (45)

Day by Day **in the Temple** together & **Eating** together (46)

Praising God & **having favor** with all the people (47)

The Lord **adding to their number** daily, those who were being saved

All of these verses are describing
what we can call **in general** - **FELLOWSHIP**

But I'd like to **look very closely** at the word **DEVOTED**
“they Devoted themselves” to this Fellowship

Because the word for **DEVOTED**
has a very similar meaning - as ***“ABIDE”***

The **NKJV** translates this word – “***continued steadfastly***”
where we can **see** a similar meaning as “***to Abide***”

But **IF** we’ll **dig in**- just a little bit more - **we’ll** be able to **see**
a **Critical SECRET** to our Christian **Growth & Maturity**

If we’ll **dig in** – we’ll see the **SECRET** to – “**Abiding in Fellowship**”

The **GK word** is - PROS-KA-TEAR-O

STRONG’S – to **adhere** to, be **devoted** to, to **continue** all the time, to **persevere** and **not to faint**.

TDNT – to **persist** at, to **remain** with, to be **loyal** to.

LOUW-NIDA - to **continue** to do something with **intense effort**, with the possible implication of ‘**despite difficulty**’

THAT is what it means to be “**Devoted To**”,
to “**Continue Steadfastly**” - in **the Fellowship** of the Believers

& **THAT** is **ALSO** what it means - **TO ABIDE**

But there is something **UNIQUE**
about the **GREEK word** used here

it’s **SIMILAR** in definition – to our word **ABIDE**,
that **we’ve been using** all thru this series

ABIDE Meaning: ***to continue in a permanent state,***
a continuous “Living in Union”

But this Word for “**Being DEVOTED**”
to the Fellowship of God’s people

has a clear sense of **Abiding in the Midst of DIFFICULTY**

Look closely – these definitions are **PACKED** with emotion
they are words of **PERSEVERING** in **DIFFICULTY**

ADHERE to - be **DEVOTED** to - **CONTINUE** *all the time*

PERSEVERE – **Not FAINT**

PERSIST at, **REMAIN** with, **BE LOYAL** to

& the **Last Definition** (Louw Nida Lex) - really **DRIVES it HOME !!**

LOUW-NIDA

to continue to do something with intense effort . . . despite difficulty

I've been learning how to **ABIDE in Fellowship** for over 30 years

& in my experience – the “**Despite Difficulty**” part
is a absolute **GUARANTEE**

Who would agree with me – that it is a **GUARANTEE**
that to **Abide in Fellowship WILL** Always **BE**
In the MIDST of some Difficulty ??

There are **SO MANY things** we **could focus on**
about **ABIDING in Fellowship**

But **I believe** the most **critically truth** I could share is

We must Learn to **ABIDE in Fellowship**
In the MIDST of some Difficulty ??

This is our **THIRD Practical Message** in Abiding

In our **1st** Practical Msg – we looked at **HOW to PRAY** –
IN SPITE of **WHY** we think **CAN'T**

In our **2nd** Practical Msg – we looked at Abiding in **God's Word**
IN SPITE of **WHY** we think we **CAN'T**

& in this **3rd** Practical Msg – I want to talk about
HOW we can **Abide in Fellowship**
IN SPITE of **WHY** we think we **CAN'T**

Now – it's Very Important – that I define
HOW I'm using the Phrase - **Abiding in Fellowship**

What I mean (for the msg today) by **Abiding in Fellowship** is;

becoming an essential, integral, functioning part of a local group of believers (*integral = "essential to the completeness"*)

Every True **Believer** is part of the **Universal Body** of Christ

But the **PRACTICAL** & **TANGIBLE** way
that we **FUNCTION** as part of the Body of Christ

is by being ***an essential, integral, functioning part of a local group of believers***

C.J. Mahaney – great current preacher

Every Christian is called to be passionately committed to a specific local church. Why? Because the local church is the key to spiritual health and growth for a Christian. And because as the visible "body of Christ" in the world, the local church is central to God's plan for every generation.

The **Local Church** is the Visible “***Body of Christ***” in the world
& it is **CENTRAL** to God’s Plan, for every generation

& so Mahaney says: ***Every Christian is called to be passionately committed to a specific local church***

But **IF in fact**, that’s **True** - **WHY** do we see so **FEW** Christians
Passionately Committed to a Specific **Local Church** ?

Here are **THREE Possible reasons**

1) Our attitude toward church is “Me Centered”

Often **we attend** church for what **we can GET** out of it

Is it **enjoyable** – for me ?

Is it **entertaining** – for me ?

do I like the **people, programs, activities** ?

Most Christians come to church with a “**What’s in it for me attitude**”

We are **taught** to be **consumers** - & the **best consumers**
are the **ones** who find the **Best Product**, at the **Lowest Price**

So **if I’m going** to invest my **90 Min** - or my **\$90**

then **I am** going to **shop around** till I can get **the most**
out of those minutes & dollars

because **that’s** what **good consumers** do !!

& **as soon** as I can take my **minutes**, & my **dollars** –
& **get more** out of it somewhere else – **then I gotta go** . . .

cause that's what **good consumers** do
they're always **looking around** for the **best deal** in town

To me – this is the **Number ONE** reason
that Christians **don't ABIDE** in Fellowship in our culture

The **#2 reason** – **WHY** we see so few Christians
really **ABIDE** in a specific **Fellowship** of believers

2) We are taught to be Independent

Dr Spock told us in the 60's
that we **get to** have it **OUR WAY** – **ALL the Time**

But **the only way** we can have it **our way**

is to **remain independent** of anything
that might *get in the way* - of us **having it OUR way**

& so **some Christians** show up at church . . .
but **they're careful NOT** to get **TOO** involved

because it may conflict with them Having things – **THEIR WAY**

They **avoid** putting themselves in **a situation**
where they might have to **change** or **adjust** their *views & opinions*

& **then** - if you ever **cross** their **VIEW**, or **OPINION**
they **can quickly** & easily **move on** down the road

cause they have **no real ties**

3rd reason why so few Christians really ABIDE in Fellowship, is ;

3) We become church “critic’s” - like Siskel & Eibert

Do you remember these guys – with their “*Thumbs UP, Thumbs DOWN*” reviews of the movies ?

2 thumbs down

1 thumb up – 1 thumb down

2 thumbs up – FOR TODAY – next Sunday it may change

Too often Christians take the Siskel & Eibert approach to church

They sit back in our Barka Lounger evaluating & determining if they’re are sufficiently impressed – or NOT

& if they’re NOT impressed, well . . . then it’s their job to tell somebody cause that’s just what they do

Criticism of The Fellowship of Believers is almost Universally Accepted by Christians today

Very seldom do I hear of a Christian pointing out the SIN of another Christian who is criticizing the body of Christ

& the enemy constantly feeds these Christians the BAIT to keep them always DAMAGING the Cause of Christ

But Maybe all that these Christians NEED
- Maybe all that we ALL NEED

is a CLEARER perspective on how God sees the church

let's just ZOOM OUT a bit - - to get a little bigger picture

I LOVE . . . My WIFE

In July, she will have been my BRIDE for 30 years

She has always been my BRIDE – I have always been willing to CLIMB any Mountain, or SWIM any Ocean for her

I love her with a UNIQUE & a SACRIFICIAL Love

& when a person CARES for my wife, & my kids
when a person is CONCERNED for their well being
& is willing even to SACRIFICE to take care of them . . .

That person will find a SPECIAL place in my heart
because they are CARING FOR - what I Love so much

& if a person Disrespects, Criticizes, or Slanders My wife, or my kids

or if a person does something to cause
my BRIDE or my CHILDREN pain or difficulty

THAT person will also – have a SPECIAL place in my heart
but it's not a GOOD special place

& so - If that's true for me – with my Bride, & my Children
How much MORE TRUE is that - for Jesus Christ & His Church

Jesus Christ feels Infinitely Stronger about the Church
than I feel, about my own BRIDE

Jesus Gave Himself up, as a Sacrifice, for the Church
Jesus Laid down His life, for His Bride

Do you think that God saw Marriage - & said, ***“Hey, we should pattern our love for the church after this marriage thing”***

No – Of Course Not

God said, ***“In order to give them some small example of how I feel for the church, I’m going to pattern MARRIAGE after My IMMENSE, Sacrificial Love for the church”***

Let’s turn over to **Eph 5** - - it is **ALWAYS** used to teach on **Marriage**
But **today** – Just **LOOK** at it from **God’s** Perspective

Ephesians 5:25–27 (ESV)

***25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.***

The **teaching continues** to **V.32** – where it says

Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)

32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Guys - Jesus **LOVES** His Bride

BOTH the **Universal Church** - & the **local church**

& if we are **Followers** of Christ

If we are being **Transformed** into His image

If we are **Putting on** the Mind of Christ

Then WE will **LOVE** the church – **BECAUSE** Jesus loves it
Even **WITH ALL** its *Flaws & Hang-Ups*

& **IF** we could just **BEGIN** to understand a portion
of **HOW MUCH** Jesus **loves** His **Bride**

Then **maybe** we would **Love the Bride** of Christ
& **maybe** be a little **more careful** about causing **Injury** – to Her

If that's not enough – **How about** the fact that
ALL TOGETHER we are called the **BODY of Christ** (**1Cor 12**)

Do we want to be **Abide** as **PART** of the **BODY** of Christ ?
Or do we want to inflict **INJURY** on the **Body** of Christ ?

By the way – As far as **ABIDING ANALOGIES** go . . .
DON'T TRY – separating a **PART** of your Body, *from the rest*

That's **NOT Pretty**
All the **PARTS** are meant to Function - **TOGETHER**

Or **how about** the fact that we are called **the TEMPLE** of God !
The place where God is to be **Worshipped** & **Honored**

Do we want to **Abide** in the place where God's *Worshipped & Honored*?
Or do we want to **spray paint** **INSULTS** on the **walls** ?

At times – we can **ALL** come up with **GOOD REASONS**
why we just **CAN'T be**

*an essential, integral, functioning part of a local group of
believers*

But **just think** for a minute with me

When the **Apostle Peter** had **DENIED** Christ
& he had **FALLEN** so **HARD** in his Pride

What TEST Jesus gave him – in order to **RESTORE** him ?

How would Jesus **KNOW** if Peter had **repented**
& was ready to **truly follow** Him ?

In the **FAMOUS** "**Breakfast by the Sea**" text – in **Jn 21:15-17**

Three times Jesus asked Peter if he really **loved** Him
all **Three times** Peter **responded YES**, *to the best of his ability*

& all **Three times** – Jesus said – **THEN**;
Feed My **Lambs**
Tend My **Sheep**
Feed My **Sheep**

Sometimes – we read **too much INTO** this text
as we **overly dissect** the words for love, etc

The **Clearest Meaning** here is this:

"If you love Jesus, then care of His flock"

& **YES** – it's **TRUE** - Sheep are – **Stubborn**, **Stinky**, & **Stupid**

But **HOW** can we say we **Love** the **Good SHEPHERD**
If we **refuse** to **CARE** for His **SHEEP** ?

& **CARING** for His **Sheep**
is **most often** done – in the **Local Church**

Chuck Colson

Of course every believer is part of the universal church. But for any Christian who has a choice in the matter, failure to cleave to a particular church is failure to obey Christ

& Christians **NOT** wanting to **ABIDE** in Fellowship
is **NOT JUST** a **20th** (or **21st** Century) Problem

in the **1800's** **Charles Spurgeon** wrote this

Charles Spurgeon

I know there are some who say, "Well, I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to the church."

Now why not?

"Because I can be a Christian without it"

Are you quite clear about that? You can be as good a Christian by disobedience to your Lord's commands as by being obedient?"

Spurgeon compared this problem - to TWO different BRICKS

1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)

5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon says: A believer who **refuses** to be an **integral part** of a **local group** of believers

is **like a brick** that **refuses** to be **part of a house**

A **single brick**, being **kicked around** on the ground
is of **NO USE** to the **building** of the house

it must become PART of the house, to become useful

The N.T. is very CLEAR on this matter

There are SO MANY places where the Bible SPELLS out
our Critical NEED to be Joined together as the Body of Christ

John 13 & 17 - All through Acts

Rom 12 & 15 - 1Cor 10 & 12

Eph 2 & 4 - Heb 10 & 13

1Pet 4 - All of 1Jn

& it just goes on & on & on

All thru the N.T. – the Apostle's were constantly
planting & caring for individual local churches

MOST of the N.T. books were written to specific local churches

ALMOST Every time the word church is used in the N.T.
it is addressing (in context) a specific local group of believers

Certainly the Universal Church of Jesus Christ
is an UMBRELLA over all of the N.T.

But in the Practical sense of ABIDING in Fellowship
in MOST cases that means

being an essential, integral, functioning part of a local group of believers

& then – REMAINING with them – ABIDING in Fellowship with them
Continue “Living in Union” with them

If you'd like to take on this study – on your own

if you'd like to ABIDE in the Word

Regarding your need to ABIDE in Fellowship

Let me give you THREE Ch's to really dig into

Eph 4 - Rom 12 - 1Cor 12

& we MIGHT go ahead & take next week

to review these 3 Key Ch's on this subject

Does this mean that absolutely ANY church we walk into
we should make a Long-Term commitment
to ABIDE in the Fellowship there ??

NO – it doesn't mean that

& I think we'll take Next week to go over GUIDELINES
of how to choose a group of Believers to ABIDE in Fellowship with

We don't have the time TODAY - to develop those guidelines –
or HOW you BEGIN to ABIDE in specific Fellowship

But what you can do TODAY

is make your way to one of the Discipleship Tables after Svc

I know it's not that easy to go the first time - but give it a try

& I'm going to ask the Discipleship Table Leaders

to talk about ways - that the people at your Table

can BECOME a functioning part of THIS group of believers – ok?

The purpose of Today's Msg is **SINGULAR**

It's to **Exhort** you & to **Encourage** you – to become
an essential, integral, functioning part of a group of believers

in other words – Learn to **ABIDE in Fellowship**

ABIDE meaning – ***A Continuous “Living in Union”***

Become an **ABIDING PART** of a Group of Believers

It is **Critically Important** for your Spiritual **Growth**
& it is **Critically Important** in **Obeying** the Commands of Christ

The **GOOD NEWS** is – God **NEVER** said
we had to find a **PERFECT Group** of Believers – to **Abide** in

If that were the case we'd all have to **DIE** & meet in **Heaven**
cause that's the **only place** that's gonna happen

But Jesus Christ – **YOUR LORD** . . .
HE **LOVES** **Stubborn**, **Sticky**, & **Stupid** SHEEP

& He has called **YOU** to **Love them** also - **on His behalf**

& He has called you to be **UNITED** with them;
as His **Body** – as His **Temple** - & as His **Bride**

Please – become
an essential, integral, functioning part of a group of believers

& then – **ABIDE** there !!

As **Acts 2:42** says – Be **DEVOTED** to the Fellowship of the Saints

adhere to - be **devoted** to - **continue** *all the time in*

persevere – **not faint**

persist at, **remain** with, **be loyal** to

& continue with intense effort . . . despite difficulty

Remember – **THAT**, is what **DEVOTED to** - **MEANS**

Let's Pray

For next Msg – choosing a fellowship . . .

We've got to determine WHERE in the Body of Christ God has called us to **ABIDE in Fellowship** with - & THEN we've got to **ABIDE** there – Meaning - **a continuous living in union**

Josh Harris gives 10 QUESTIONS you can use to determine whether you're in a church you should consider making an **ABIDING** commitment to

- 1) Is God's Word is faithfully taught?
- 2) Does sound doctrine matter?
- 3) Is the gospel cherished & proclaimed?
- 4) Is there a commitment to reach the un-saved w/ the gospel?
- 5) Are the leaders are characterized by humility & integrity?
- 6) Are the people striving to live by God's Word?
- 7) Can I find & cultivate Godly relationships?
- 8) Will I be encouraged to serve?
- 9) Is the church willing to confront me about sin?
- 10) Can I become a part of this church "just as it is?"

& then – when you Find the Group of Believers God has called YOU to be a Part of – then ABIDE THERE

Stay there – Become ***an essential, integral, functioning part of that group of believers***

You DO THAT – By Joining in on what's going on

& more importantly – by Finding, & Cultivating,
Godly Relationships in the church

More important than attending functions & events

It's most important that you look for opportunities

to Begin, & Build, Godly Relationships

The BEST kind of Godly relationship
is a DISCIPLING Relationship

A DISCIPLING Relationship
is relationship based on FOLLOWING JESUS

Where you Strengthen - & you are Strengthened
Where – As Gal 6:2 says - you Bear One Another's Burdens

Prob toward the end – See “Rescuing Sunday” pg 104

*toward – or at the close Do - Abiding in Fellowship is intimately
connected to DISCIPLESHIP*

Another reason we must learn to ABIDE in a Fellowship of Believers is
– Because Our Sanctification (Growth, Maturity) CANNOT come in a
vacuum – True Growth & Maturity in Christ - REQUIRES that we are
connected with other people - & specifically – with other Christians

If we separate ourselves from fellowship - & we THINK we're maturing
in Christ – What may be happening to us is - we MAY BE adding to our
KNOWLEDGE – But we won't know if we've actually changed or not -
UNTIL we start “Rubbing Up” against other people

ANYBODY can be a Christian ALONE - in a Vacuum
ANYBODY can think they've changed – when their ALONE

But If you want to know if you really have NEW LIFE in Christ – then LOOK at how you’re LIVING with – SACRIFICING for – SERVING, & LOVING – the Bride of Christ – the Flock that Jesus Christ died for

Cause if you’re not Actively Serving & Loving those that Jesus died for – then the best you can hope for, with all your knowledge – is to become a Pharisee

See ‘fellowship’ pg 75 - & lead into ‘one anothering’ pg 76 – this is good following the JN 21 section

Eph 2:13-22

1Pet 1:4-5

Heb 10:23-25

Acts 20.28

Heb 13.17

1Pet 4.8-11

Jn 13.35

Fifth, however, we must note that fellowship does not stop with being an inner unity for it is primarily an action word! *Koinonia* is used nineteen times in the New Testament and in addition to being translated as “fellowship” it is also translated by the words, “contribution,” “sharing,” and “participation.” A close study of the usage of this word shows that action is always included in its meaning. Fellowship, you see, is not just being together, it is doing together! This is a point almost universally ignored by Christian groups today.

Our sixth observation concerning the meaning of “fellowship” is that it is a unique relationship with Christ. We have a relationship of being “in Christ.” We also have a

relationship of being “a part of Christ’s body.” Fellowship is neither. It is not “being in” or “being part” but it is “doing with” Christ. It is our partnership with Christ in fulfilling God’s will.

So, we have seen that fellowship in its New Testament sense is an inner unity expressed outwardly. It is not just being together but doing together. It is not just doing anything together but it is working together to accomplish God’s will. Now we must ask, “Why is it so important to the church?” I think we shall see as we continue that:

2. Fellowship is the indispensable means of accomplishing the God-given purpose of the church.

Let’s read together [Ephesians 3:8-11](#).

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ...

We see in this passage that God has an eternal plan. The church has a part in accomplishing that plan. The phrase “through the church” in vs. 10 shows that the church is to be God’s instrument in accomplishing His plan. The purpose of the church as stated in vs. 10 is to show to the world the manifold or in Greek, the many-faceted wisdom of God. So then, the purpose of the church is to hold God up to the world and display every glorious aspect of His being for all to see.

What is important to see here is that no individual working alone could ever fulfill this plan of showing every perfection of God for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So you see, the very nature of God’s plan necessitates the Godly capacities of many individuals added together to show His perfections to the world. You might say that God’s plan must be compared not to a solo but to a symphony. Its beauty is impossible to capture in one note no matter how loud. Only by a full orchestra playing together can the beautiful harmony be fully captured. And this is what the Church is, God’s orchestra! In order to fully manifest God, each person must not only play his part but must play it together. So in God’s symphony—His plan, the score is the Bible which reveals His Son, Jesus Christ. The instruments are our spiritual gifts and natural abilities. And the indispensable means we use to perform is fellowship, our co-participation in accomplishing His purpose. It is only

as we work together in this way that it is possible to accomplish God's plan. This is why fellowship is indispensable to the church.

Of course, some people try to do it all themselves. The movie, "Beau Geste" is an example of the way some churches function. In the movie, the Arabs are attacking a foreign legion outpost. There are only four legionnaires left alive in the post. But they want the enemy to think they have lots of strength so they propped up the dead bodies of their comrades in the turrets and the four men ran around the walls shooting the dead men's guns for them. This is the plan of many churches today. They hire a large staff of clergy to prop up the spiritually dead and fire their guns for them. But this will never accomplish God's plan.

There is another group of people who are church-hoppers and non-participants. They think the church can make it without them. However, [1 Corinthians 12](#) makes it clear that every *single* member of the body is necessary for its proper functioning. Because of the importance of fellowship, no one has the right to amputate themselves from the functioning body of Christ, the local church.

So, then, we see that the practice of fellowship, the outward exercise of our inner unity in doing God's will, is not only natural but indispensable in accomplishing God's purpose for the church. How, then, can we practice fellowship?

Practicing Fellowship

You can practice Fellowship by recognizing our goal and taking an active part where you can best help.

People must recognize our goal. People often do not take part in a church because they see no clear purpose. As previously discussed, our purpose is to show God's glory to the world in all the many ways He has instructed us in the Bible. We participate together seven days a week to glorify God, to do it His way, and to do it together.

You can practice fellowship by taking an active part where you can best help with this goal. You can discover where you can best help by recognizing your spiritual gifts and natural abilities and by knowing the needs of our church. Then help where you can make not just yourself, but the church as a whole, to be the most fruitful. If you do not know your spiritual

gift, pitch in where you have a natural ability. As you work with others, your gifts will surface and you'll find places you might function in our church according to your gifts and abilities.

From Bill Hull – Choose the Life

1. The Great Commission was more about *depth* than it was *strategy* or *technique*.
2. Discipleship was *not optional*.
3. Being spiritually transformed is the *primary* and *exclusive* work of the church.
4. The evidence of being a follower of Jesus is *following* Jesus.
5. Believing the right things was not enough, that true belief included *behavioral* verification.
6. The most important question we face is who is saved and *who is not* (see #5).
7. Discipleship is a choice, we *don't drift into it* or amble our way half-heartedly down the path of obedience.
8. We had accepted a non-discipleship Christianity and we must *confess this sin* to the Lord.
9. What's more, I was going to *evangelize* them.

I was going to engage them in "discipleship evangelism", calling on them to "*Choose The Life*" . . . the life of following Jesus, the life of spiritual formation, the life that is the answer to the weakness of the church and the boring ineffectiveness of our lives.