

Hope Church South Haven June 8th 2025

Genesis 2:15-24

Say what?!?! Do I need the church to love Jesus?

Last Sunday of the series SAY WHAT?!?! Honest conversations about common misbeliefs of Christians. Today we are tackling the popular idea – especially after COVID:

I don't need the church to love Jesus.

If you think “church” means a building or a denomination, you’re right — we don’t need that to love Jesus. It’s as simple as that. If I can quote Joey from Friends: It’s a MOO-point. It’s a cow’s opinion. It doesn’t matter.

But church is much more than just a space and a time.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 1:22-23 NIV

The NEW TESTAMENT uses the word **ἐκκλησία** (ekklesia) to describe the church. In Greek culture it was used to describe a gathering of people, especially those “called out” for a specific purpose. In the Bible it is used to describe the community of believers.

Over the past 50 years more and more Christians have walked away from church life. About TWENTY YEARS ago, around **42%** of adults in the U.S. connected to a church almost every week. TEN YEARS ago, that number dropped to **38%**. NOW, it's down to **30%**.

Some of the REASONS people use to justify this:

- Sermons and worship are **boring** and **not relevant** to their lives. Services are too long.
Not a big fan of the style. Didn't really feel welcome or loved. JUST NOT WORTH IT!
- Church as full of hypocrites and have a hard time with the moral failures of church leaders. DON'T WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH IT.
- Many people say they **don't have time for church** because of busy schedules with family, work, or sports. 22% of people who are not part of church life give this as their main reason. But here's a tough truth: only about 0.023% of **high school athletes** get drafted to **play professionally**.

- Negative experience with Christians – story of DAN KIMBALL ***‘They like Jesus but not the church.’***

⇒ Waiting for a flight at an airport in Dallas.

⇒ Saw a young man wearing a black t-shirt.

⇒ Front of the T-shirt: INTOLERANT. Beneath INTOLERANT was written: JESUS is the way, the truth and the life.

⇒ When the young man turned around, he saw what was written on the back:

Islam is a lie! Homosexuality is a sin! Abortion is murder!

⇒ Dan Kimball is a conservative Christian and supports pro-life views, but he struggled with how non-believers would react to this young man's shirt.

⇒ Boarding the plane he passed the young man and asked him: ‘What church do you belong to?’

⇒ The young man replied: ‘A bible preaching church. Are you a Christian?’

⇒ Dan Kimball: ‘I am, but I wouldn’t wear that T-shirt. I think your T-shirt turns people away from Jesus, instead of helping those who are **hurting or struggling come to Him.**’

⇒ The young man answered: ‘I can’t keep the truth to myself. If even one person comes to know Jesus because of my T-shirt, then wearing it was worth it.’

⇒ Dan Kimball: 'Do you know of anyone who has been saved because of the T-shirt?'

⇒ Young man: 'No, that's the Holy Spirit's job. My part is simply to share the message'

⇒ Dan realized he wasn't going to change the young man's mind, so he went to his seat.

⇒ The whole flight, he kept thinking about **what kind of image of Jesus we show to the world.**

- Last reason is the ABSENCE OF **joy** and **fun** and **laughter** and **real life** at church.
- ⇒ The Korean artist **YONGSUNG KIM** became a Christian in high school. He noticed that **most paintings of Jesus looked dark and harsh and sad.**
- ⇒ He believes these images impacts how people see Jesus and how they believe in Him and how they follow Him.
- ⇒ Yongsung Kim decided to spend his life **painting Jesus as someone full of light and hope** — a Jesus who is joyful and glad and loving and gentle and good.

What ignited my deconversion was the church's funeral spirit, its fussy buttoned-upness.

Christians' stay-at-home-and-pickle-in-their-own-juices personalities, their vinegary countenances drained me emotionally, incapacitated me intellectually, and shut me down spiritually. The best I could say was this: by and large, Christians were kind people in a bad mood.

Leonard Sweet

Why did God give us the church? Why do we need church to love Jesus? So many good sermons online? So many good books to read and devotionals to use? Why do I need to do life with other believers?

You can open your bibles at **GENESIS 2**.

- Genesis 1–11 is called primeval history. It differs in content and style from the rest of Genesis.
- These chapters COVER the origins of the world, **humanity**, sin, and the **nations**, emphasizing God as the creator.
- The **2nd creation story** emphasizes our position in creation.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 2:15-25 NIV

- In the story of creation, we meet Adam. He had a **perfect intimate relationship** with God — there was no sin, nothing was broken, and everything was good. Nothing could come between God and Adam.

It is not good for man to be alone.

- I always believed that God created us with an emptiness / a void that **only God could fill** through a relationship with Him. When God is not part of our lives, we try to fill it with money or work or ambition or things. But nothing other than God really satisfies us.

- But then I discovered something more in the 2nd creation story. God also created us with another kind of emptiness.
- GOD CREATED US with a need for deep, meaningful relationships with other people.
A need that can only be filled by **a significant other** and **being part of an authentic community.**
- An emptiness inside of us that **God doesn't fill**. An emptiness He **doesn't want to fill** it.
- That is why it hurts so much when we lose someone we love. When we go through a divorce. Or when good friends leave us. Or when we are disappointed by a church.
- As an introvert, it was a tough lesson to learn. Contrary to what I always believed. In this life I need more than God. I need his people too.
- Not to be saved. But to share life with. To help us keep trusting God and believing in Him, even when life is hard. To help us not give up on our faith in this crazy beautiful world.
- Genesis 2 shouts out: We were

#createdforcommunity

#createdforcommunity: life is not a party of one.

- COMMUNITY cannot happen by myself. Community requires being with others and sharing life together.
- And Jesus showed us how. He was great at stepping away from everything for a minute. To get away from **all the distractions and noise** of this world so he could really connect with God His Father.
- But most of the time, Jesus did life with ordinary people. He lived among them. He spent time with everyone — no matter who they were.
- Jesus showed us that GOD’S KINGDOM isn’t just about ourselves. That we were created to **connect with people** and **grow God’s family bigger**.

Nobody should be able to out-community the local church.

Carey Nieuwhof

- In our togetherness. In our COMMUNITY. In **being church**. God **transforms** how we see everything — SHAPING our perspectives and deepening our faith and helping us experience life in new ways.

#createdforcommunity: the church helps me to look up.

- COMMUNITY reminds us to worship God.

- Coming together, even if it's just for a few hours each week, it helps us remember that **we are not the center of everything.**
- It shifts our focus away from our OWN STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES and allows us to **give God the glory** He deserves.
- Worshipping God together reminds me that **God is not distant or indifferent** like an uncaring parent. He is deeply involved in our lives and in the world.
- Worshipping God together reminds me that God is always SEEKING us, FINDING us, and WELCOMING us back.
- That we are constantly **surrounded by His presence**, even when our circumstances and emotions make it feel like if we are alone.

#createdforcommunity: the church helps me to look around.

- This COMMUNITY always amazes me.
- The diversity and creativity within the group is incredible — people of all ages, personalities, cultures, stories, and worship styles come together.
- We **set aside our differences** to worship the one true God.
- It's remarkable how the same songs, same scriptures, and one shared space can connect with everyone, even though each person here arrived with their own unique story, own unique circumstances and challenges.

- I find it incredible how church help us FORM CONNECTIONS with people I normally might not have connected with.
- Absolutely beautiful how **imperfect people worship a perfect God in an imperfect way.**

If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all; and the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us.

Charles Spurgeon

- A place where I love on other and be loved. Where I can support others and be supported. Where I can pray for others and be prayed for.

#createdforcommunity: the church helps me to look outside.

- Our togetherness reminds me that there are still many people missing out on this—
over 4 billion who aren't yet part of God's family.
- Church life is a reminder that **God has not given up on the world.** That every person, no matter what their stories are or what hurts they carry, that they truly matter.
- If God hasn't given up on them, then NEITHER CAN I. No matter how brutal, broken, or messy this world seems.

- This compels us to live with a REAL PASSION for those who are lost and not yet saved.
- When we **LOOK OUTSIDE** it reminds me that this / the church does not exist its members, but for those that are still outside. **NON-MEMBERS!**
- Our calling is to **share God's kindness, love, and goodness with everyone**. To bring them in.

The church is like manure. Pile it together and it stinks up the neighborhood. Spread it out and it enriches the world.

Luis Palau

#createdforcommunity: the church helps me to look inside.

- Our COMMUNITY reminds me that I am a work in progress—**UNDER CONSTRUCTION**—and will be until I take my last breath.
- It encourages me to keep transforming, growing, and becoming a better version of myself.
- It keeps me accountable.
- Story of **Milton Rokeah** and the Christ's of Ypsilanti.

- ⇒ There were three men—Leon, Joseph, and Clyde—who were patients at a mental hospital in Michigan.
- ⇒ Each patient convinced that they were Jesus Christ – a condition known as the MESSIAH COMPLEX. They believed everything revolved around them.
- ⇒ After two years of therapy with little progress, their psychologist decided to put them **together in one group**. Hoping that living, eating and working together. Spending hours in the same therapy group might help them realize they weren't actually Christ.
- ⇒ During one group session, Clyde declared, "I am the Messiah, the son of God. I'm here on a mission to save the world."
- ⇒ When the psychologist asked why do you say that, Clyde replied, "God told me."
- ⇒ Joseph then stood up and said, "I never told you that."

- It's easy to make life all about ourselves—the world encourages us to see ourselves as the main character in our own story.
- But being part of a church community challenges me to let go of my ego, my personal dreams, ambitions, and plans, and to DISCOVER THAT LIFE ISN'T JUST ABOUT MYSELF ANYMORE.

Jesus didn't have an office. Jesus didn't have office hours. He did life with people.

Church life doesn't have an office. Church life doesn't have office hours. Church life calls us do life together.

Church LIFE is as essential to a follower of Jesus as a transfusion is to a kidney patient — it provides the **life, support, and connection** we need to thrive in following Jesus in this messy crazy beautiful world.

BLESSING

Your hands are meant to help and care for people who need it, and to give generously.

Your ears are meant to listen—to people's stories and to what God's Spirit is saying.

Your eyes are meant to notice how God is active in this world—in all that is good, beautiful, and true.

Your feet are meant to go out and bring God's light to places that feel dark.

Your heart is meant to hold on to hope, remembering that God is here and making things new.

Your whole self is made to love.