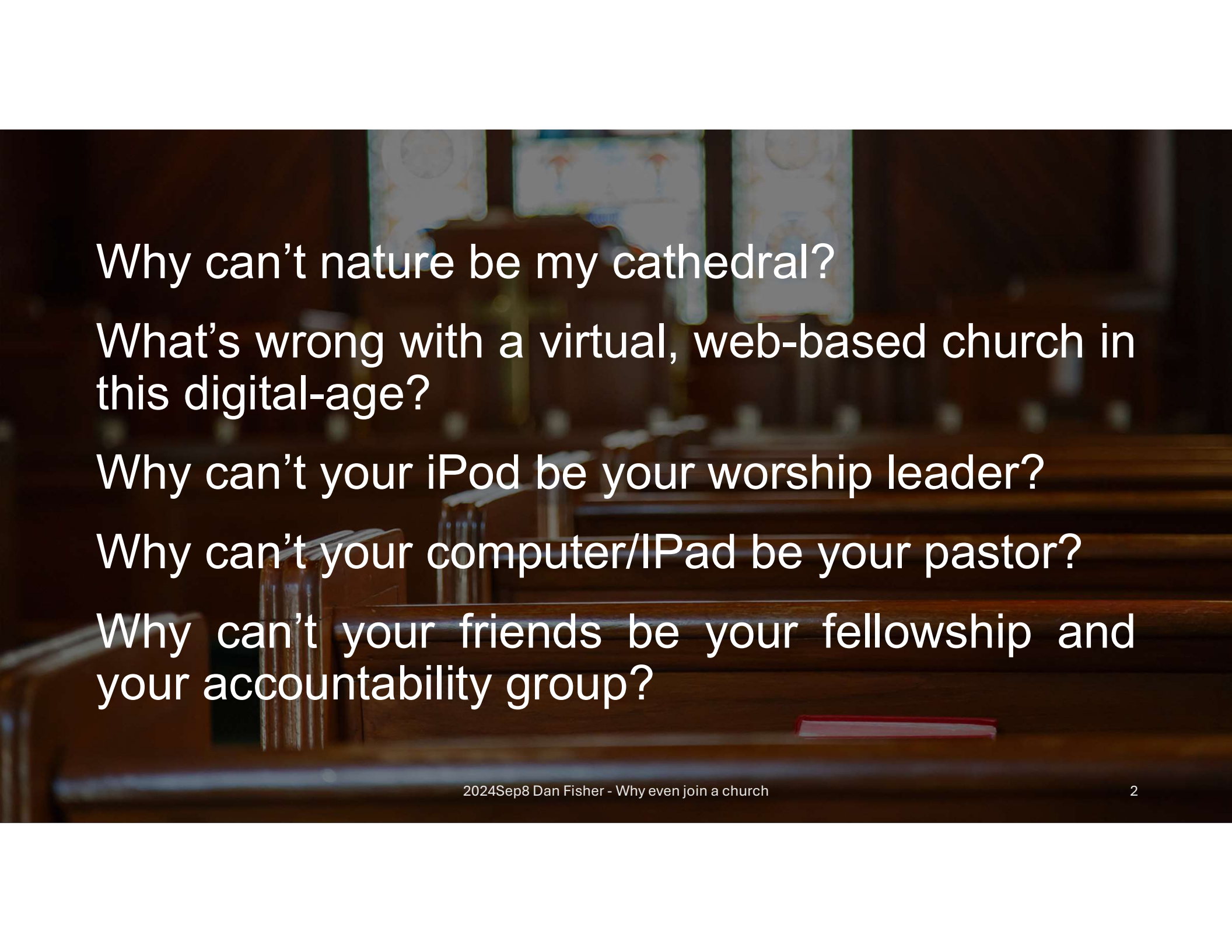


A photograph of a church interior. The foreground shows several rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are three stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a serene atmosphere. The text "Why even join a church?" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Why even join a church?



Why can't nature be my cathedral?

What's wrong with a virtual, web-based church in this digital-age?

Why can't your iPod be your worship leader?

Why can't your computer/iPad be your pastor?

Why can't your friends be your fellowship and your accountability group?

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful patterns. The lighting is dim, creating a solemn atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the image.

The answer is simple:
That's not the way God designed it!

It is true that as believers we are all part of the **universal church** – the body of Christ.

Even so, becoming a member of a local church is **not optional** for the believer.

Admittedly, there is **no verse in the Bible** that specifically commands us to actually, physically write our names on the membership roll of a church. But the clear teaching of Scripture is that we are to be members in a local fellowship of believers.

There was a time when **coming** to Christ meant **becoming** a part of His church.

Things have changed drastically.

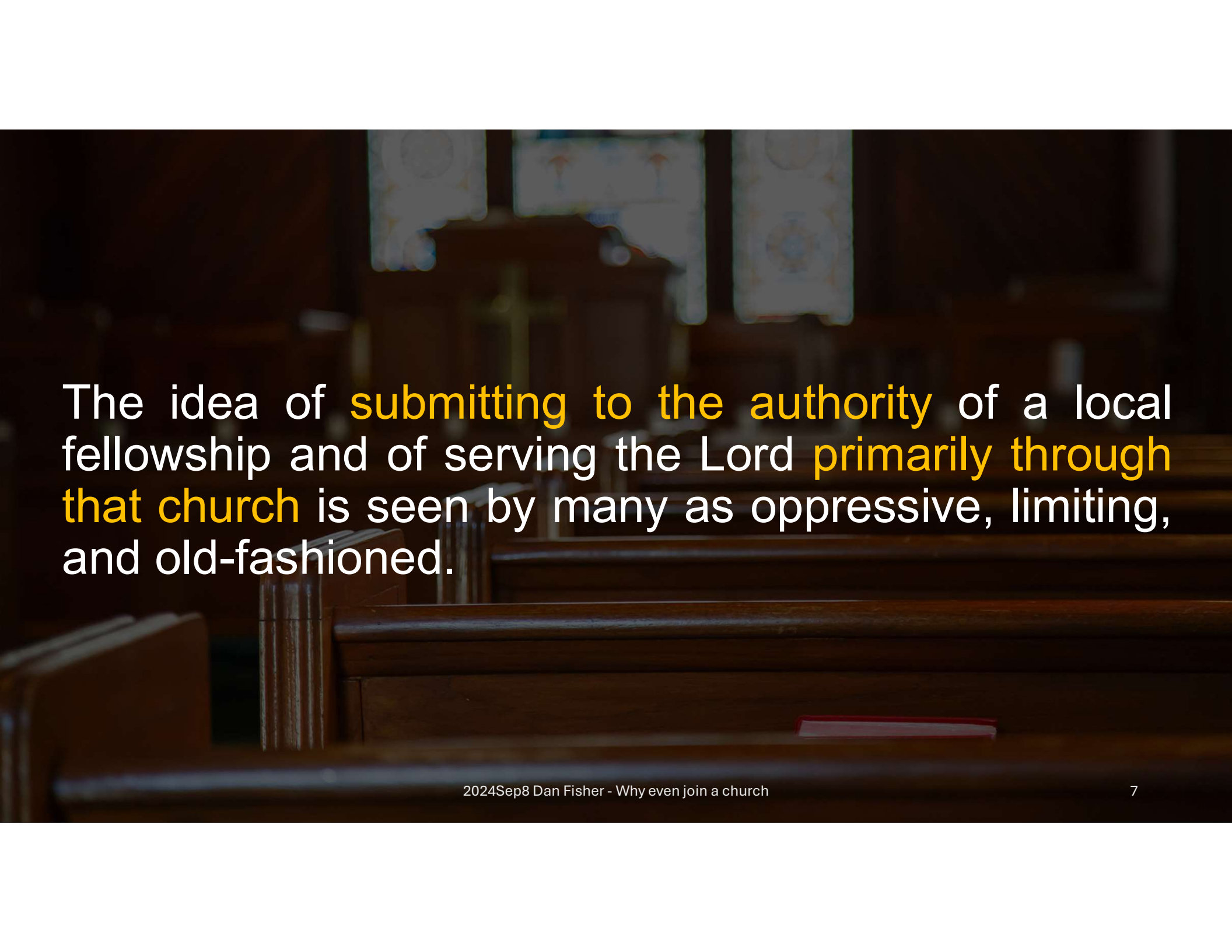
Today's evangelicalism emphasizes a believer's **personal** relationship to Christ.

Individual faith is the dominant theme and rarely is the need for believers to fit into the church even discussed.

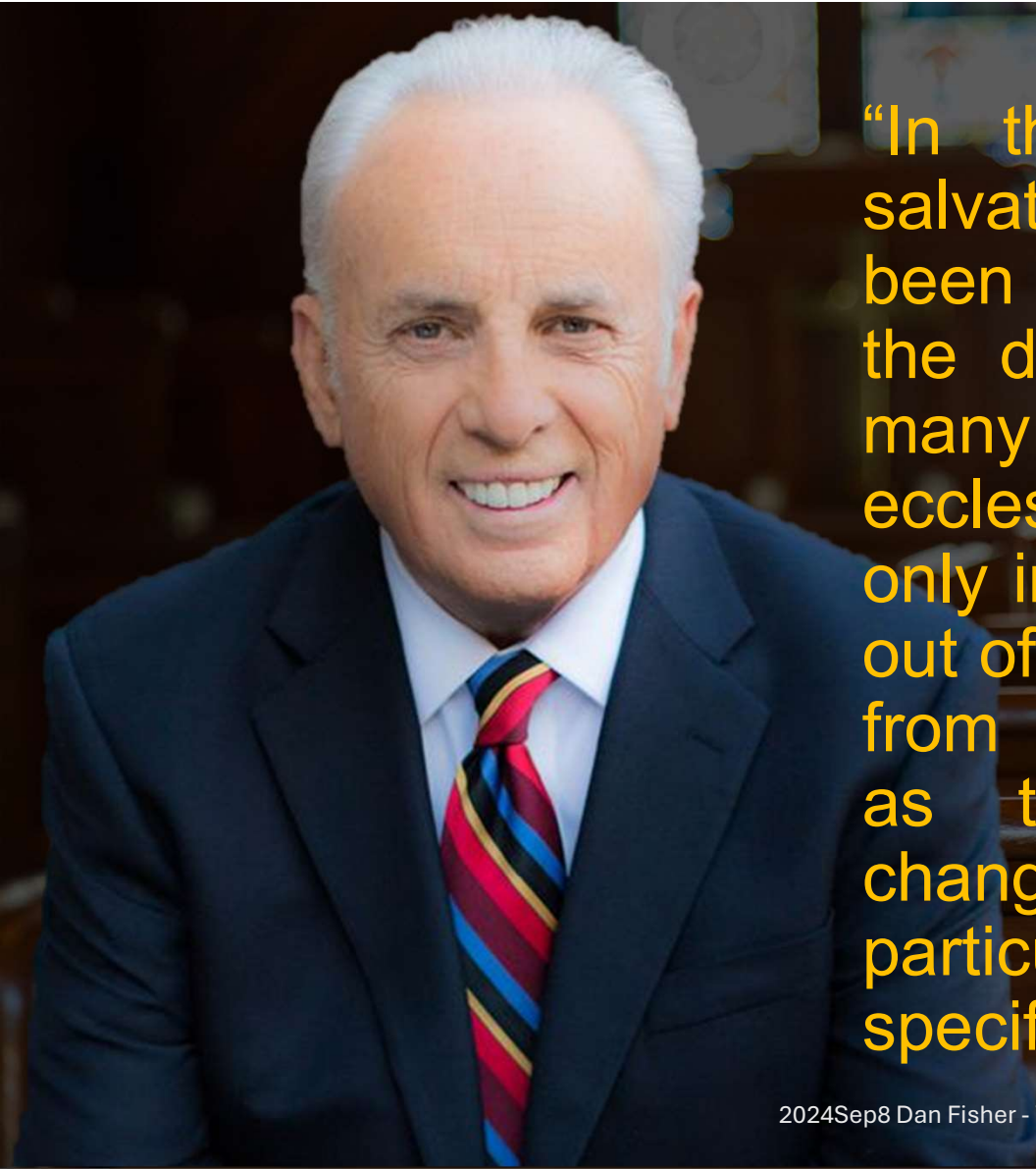


Today, many believers are “free-floaters” attending church the same way they attend a concert or go to a movie theater – it all depends on what is playing.

Everything is assessed upon felt needs and what is considered “in” at the moment.

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful patterns. The lighting is dim, creating a solemn atmosphere.

The idea of **submitting to the authority** of a local fellowship and of serving the Lord **primarily through that church** is seen by many as oppressive, limiting, and old-fashioned.



“In the massive effort to make salvation personal, the church has been left behind and overlooked to the detriment of many souls. Too many people today tend to be ecclesiastical consumers. They’re only interested in what they can get out of their church, and they bounce from congregation to congregation as their whims and interests change. They don’t have any particular commitment or loyalty to a specific assembly of saints.”

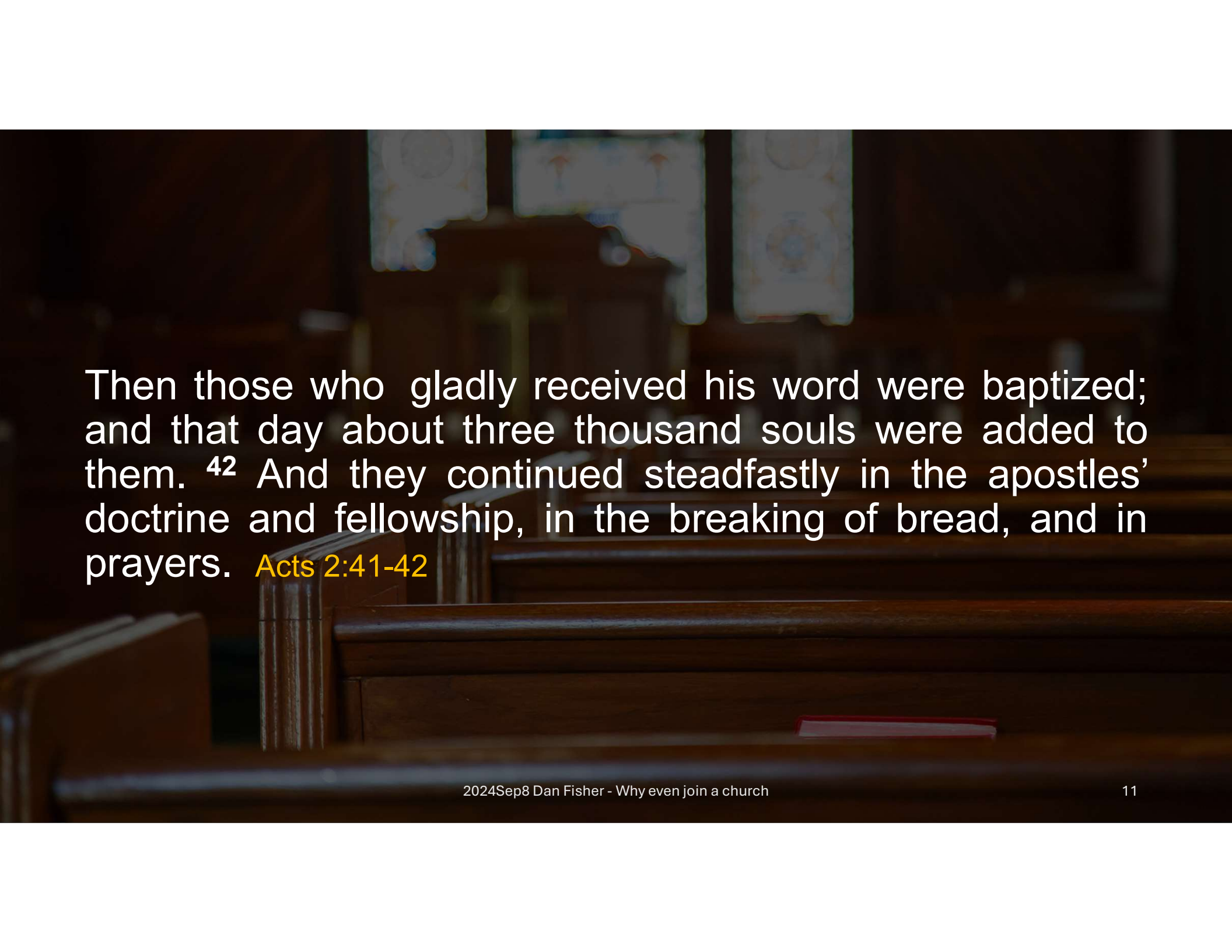
The idea of believers living independent of the church is totally foreign to the New Testament.

In fact, it is expressly forbidden in Scripture.

- The Holy Spirit addressed almost every epistle to a **local church**.
- Other books like 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon were addressed to key leaders **in the church**.
- Examples of healthy believers living “**outside the church**” are not found in Scripture.

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful patterns. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text is overlaid in a bright yellow color.


It is only through the ministry of the local church that a believer can receive the kind of teaching, accountability, and encouragement that is necessary for him to stand firm in his convictions.



Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. **Acts 2:41-42**

Added to what?

Added to the *others*. But no matter where they were being saved, the implication is always that they were immediately welcomed into a **local gathering of believers**.

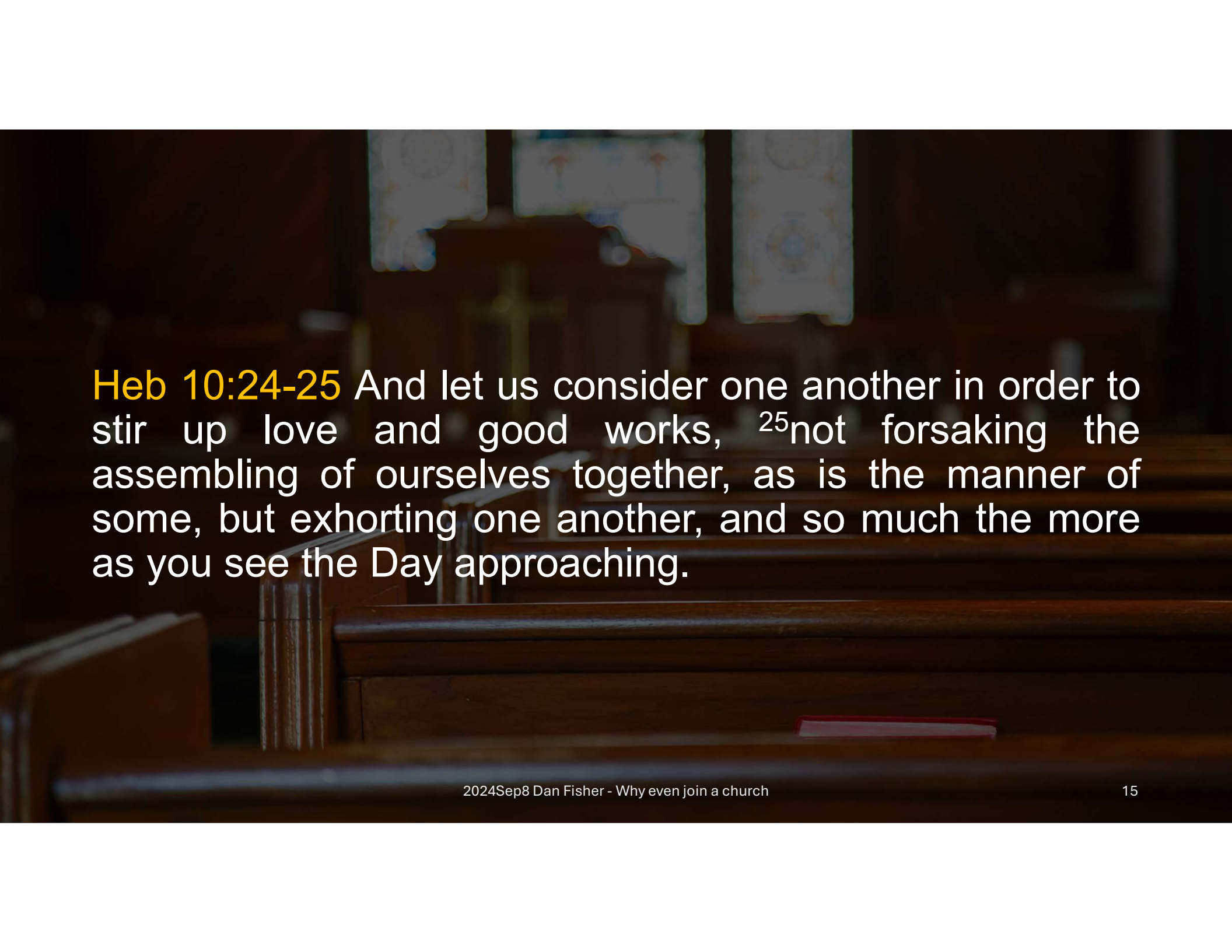


Throughout the New Testament the assumption is always the same: that the people of God are faithfully gathering together in a local assembly where the Word of God is being disseminated.

The local, visible congregation is at the heart of Christianity.

In fact, traditionally when someone moved or relocated, they brought with them or were preceded by letters of recommendation to their new congregation.

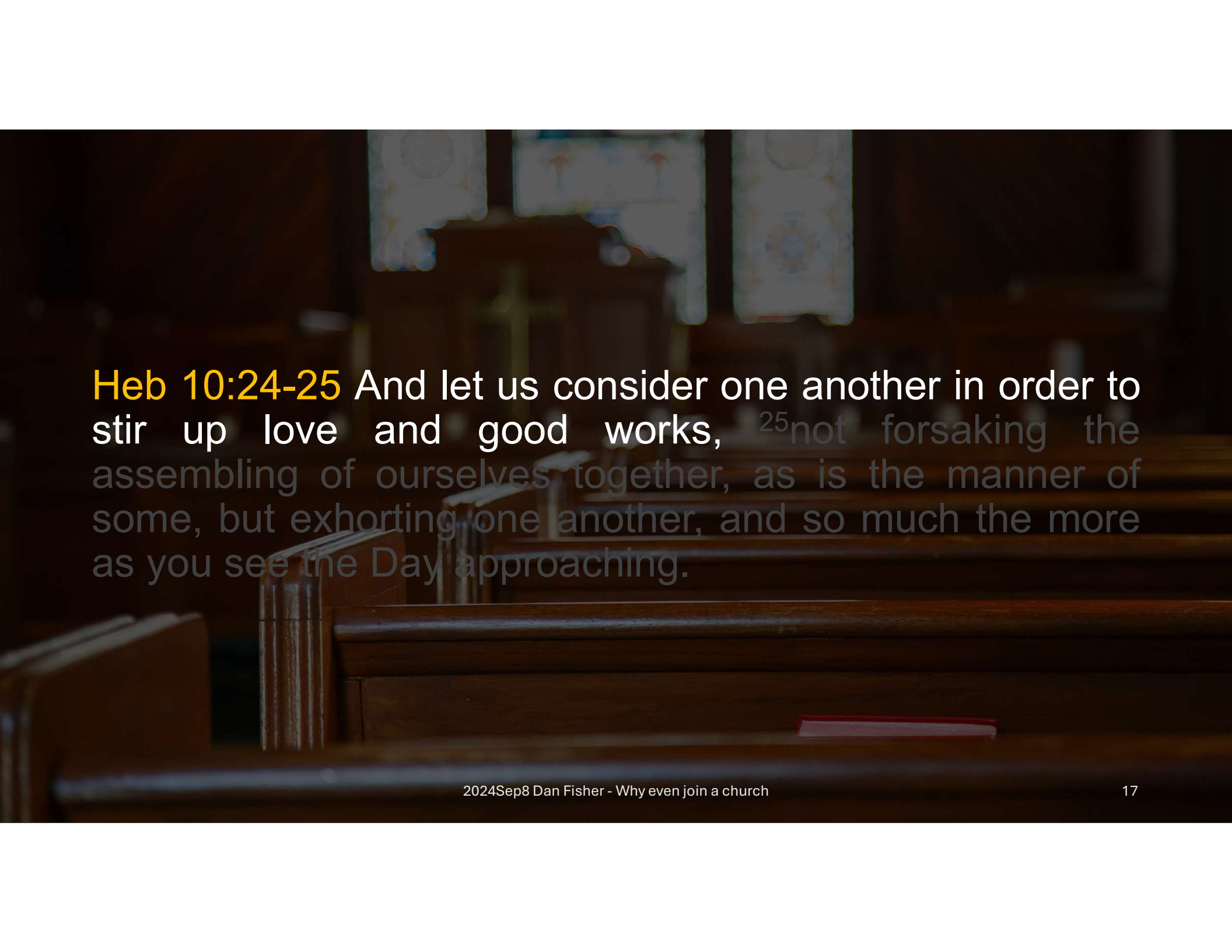
And when he [Apollos] desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; **Acts 18:27**

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with circular patterns. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful patterns. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text "1. The purpose of the church" is overlaid in a bright yellow font.

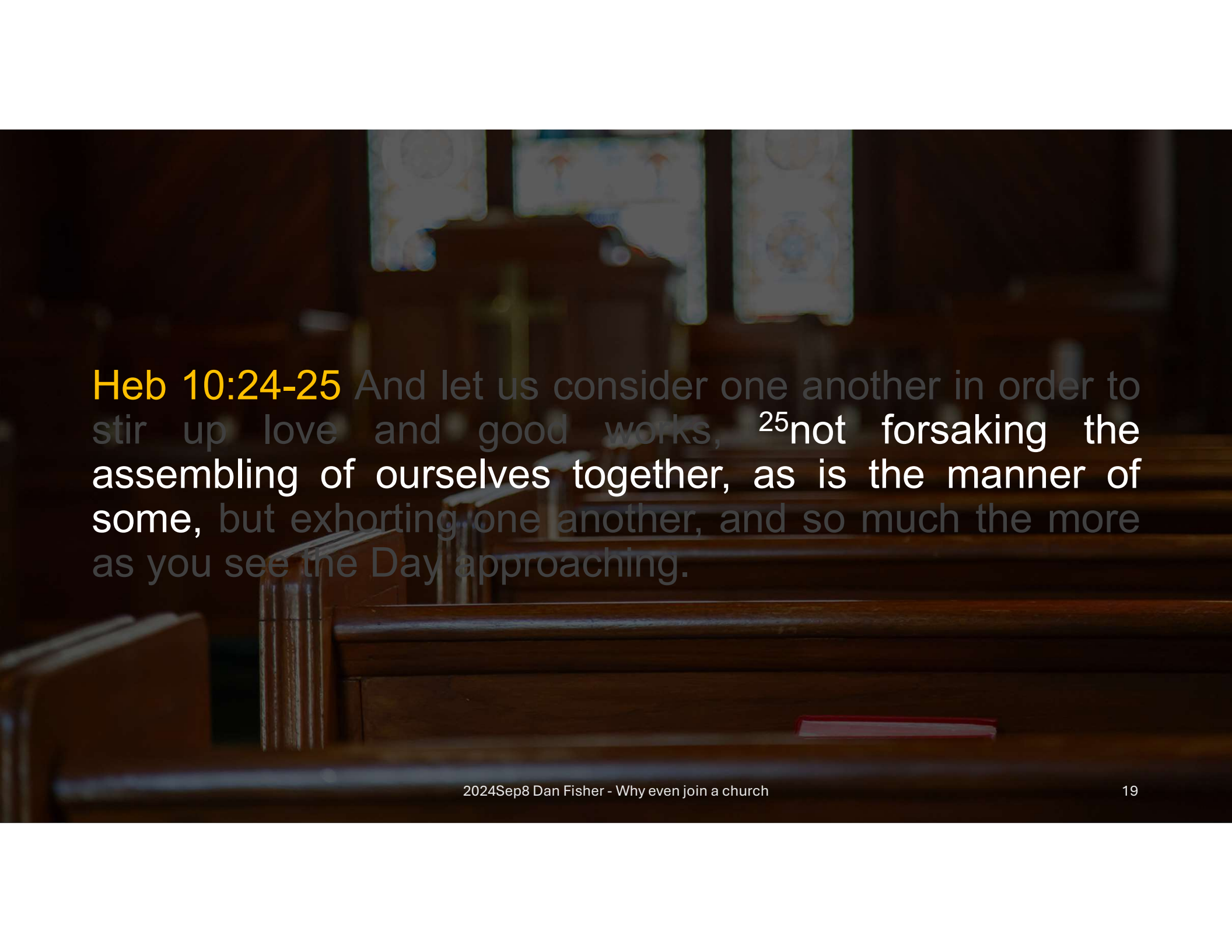
1. The purpose of the church

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful patterns. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the image, with the first part in yellow and the rest in white.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is dim, creating a solemn atmosphere. The text "2. The priority of the church" is overlaid in the center of the image.

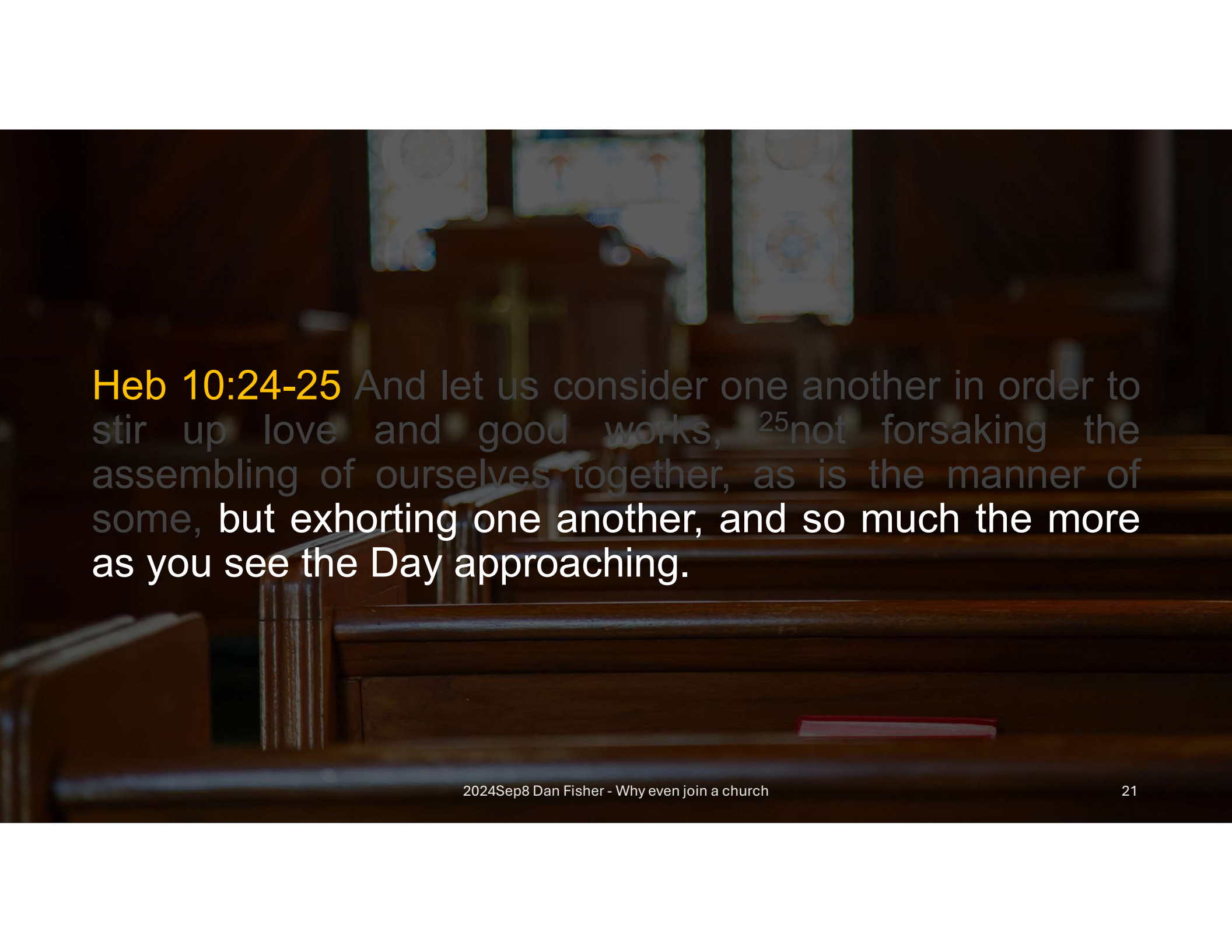
2. The priority of the church

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the image, with the first part in yellow and the rest in white.

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A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is dim, creating a solemn atmosphere. The text '3. The practice of the church' is overlaid on the image in a large, bold font.

3. The practice of the church

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the image.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with colorful designs. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a serene atmosphere. The text "What being a member of a local church provides:" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

What being a member of a local church
provides:



- **Doctrinal purity**

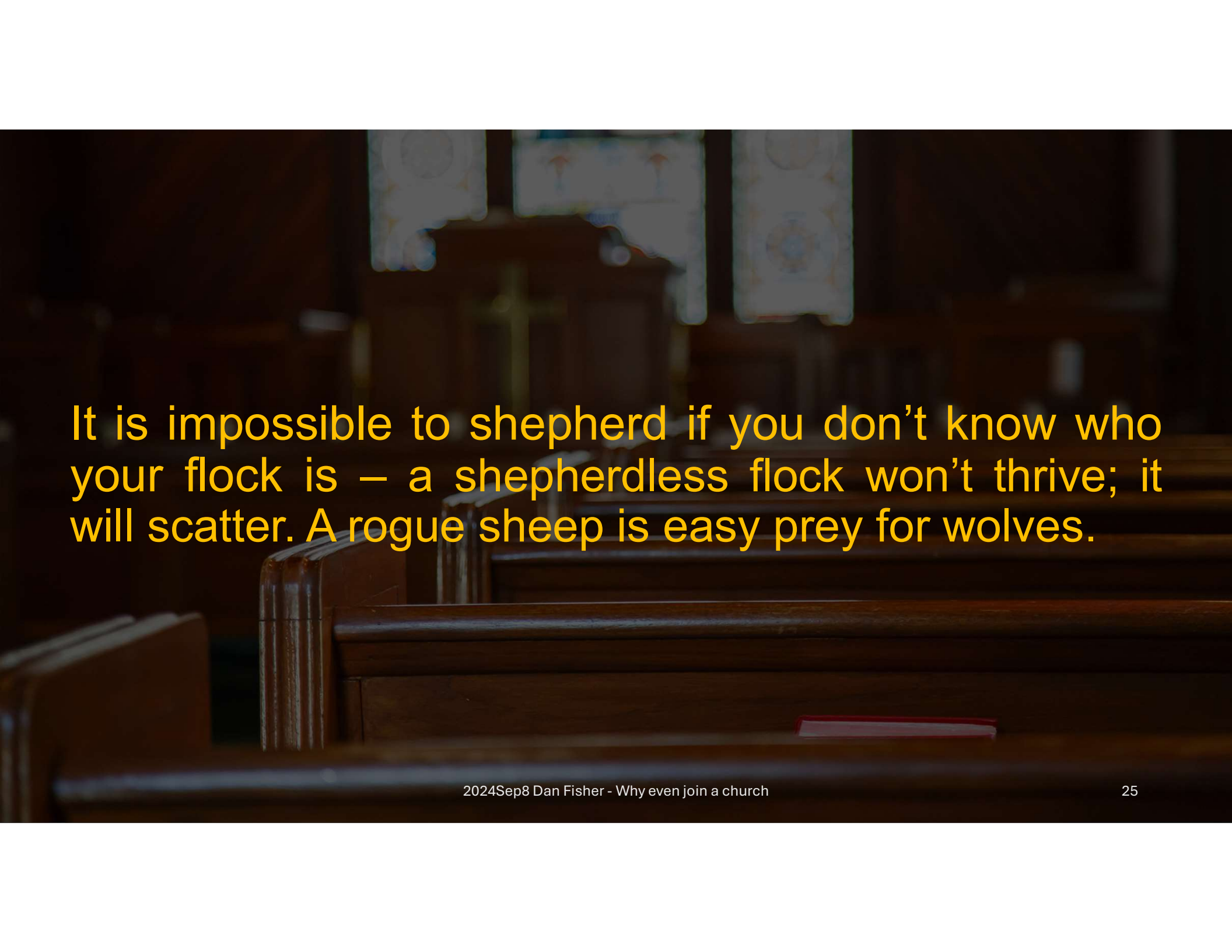
The early church was very concerned about maintaining its purity and keeping out the tares. There were many factious, heretical, sinful people who posed an immediate threat to the church.

- **Congregational identity**

It is obvious that the early church knew its flock well.

“Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.” **Acts 20:17 (ESV)**

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. **Acts 20:28**

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of dark wooden pews. In the background, there are stained glass windows with circular patterns. The lighting is soft and somewhat dim, creating a quiet atmosphere. The text is overlaid in a bright yellow color.

It is impossible to shepherd if you don't know who your flock is – a shepherdless flock won't thrive; it will scatter. A rogue sheep is easy prey for wolves.

- **Spiritual fellowship**

Fellowship = *koinonia* = essentially means partnership.

and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, **Gal 2:9**

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. **Prov 27:17**

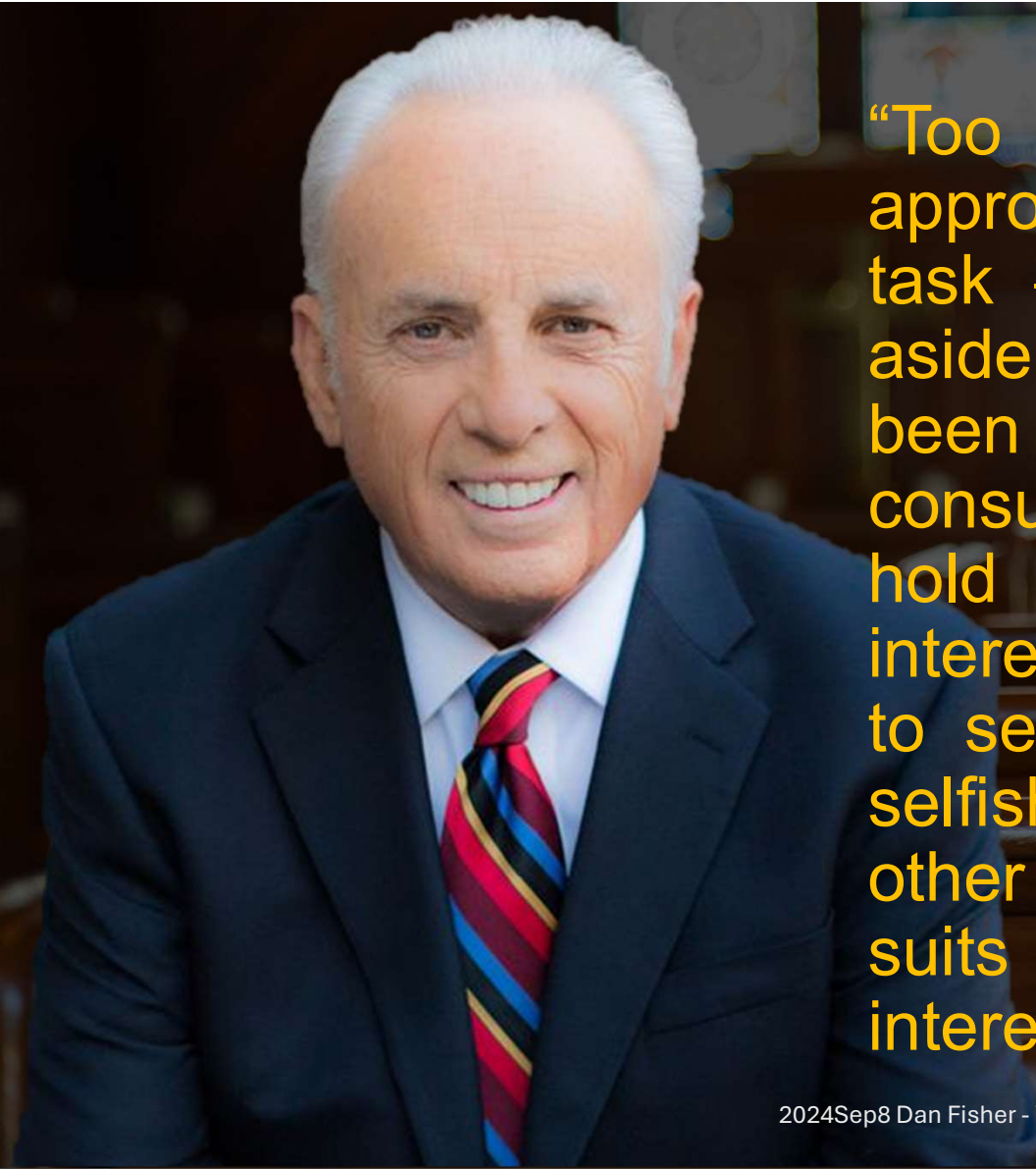
How can believers “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” if they aren’t regularly fellowshiping? It can’t happen.

Forsaking the fellowship of other believers cuts you off from a key, God-ordained source of biblical instruction, refining accountability, and spiritual growth.

Faithful fellowship helps insulate you from the influences of a world that’s sprinting to hell.

- **Organizational loyalty**

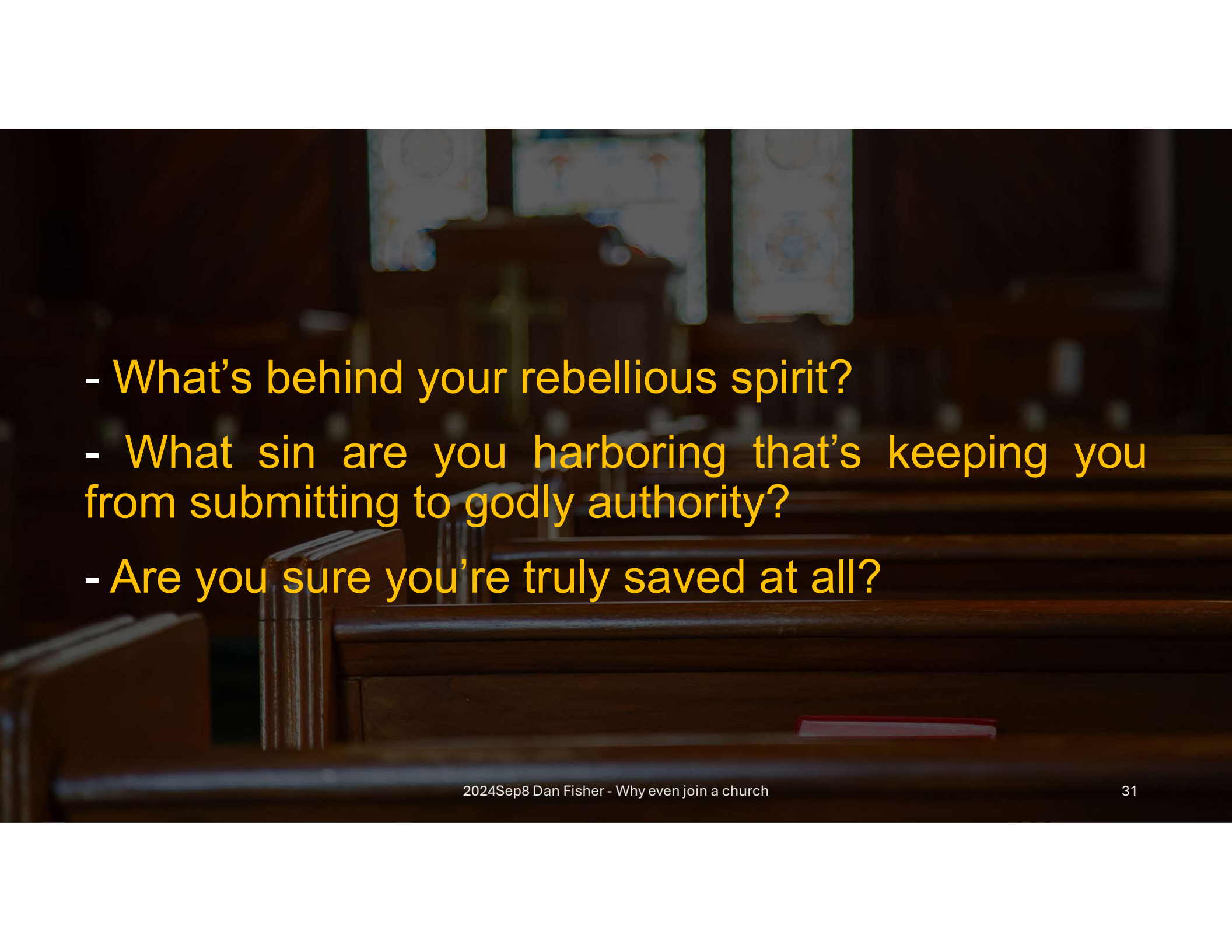
Joining a church causes the believer to **settle in** and **become loyal** to one congregation, seeing it as their “spiritual family” and causing them to become as loyal to that family as they are their biological family.

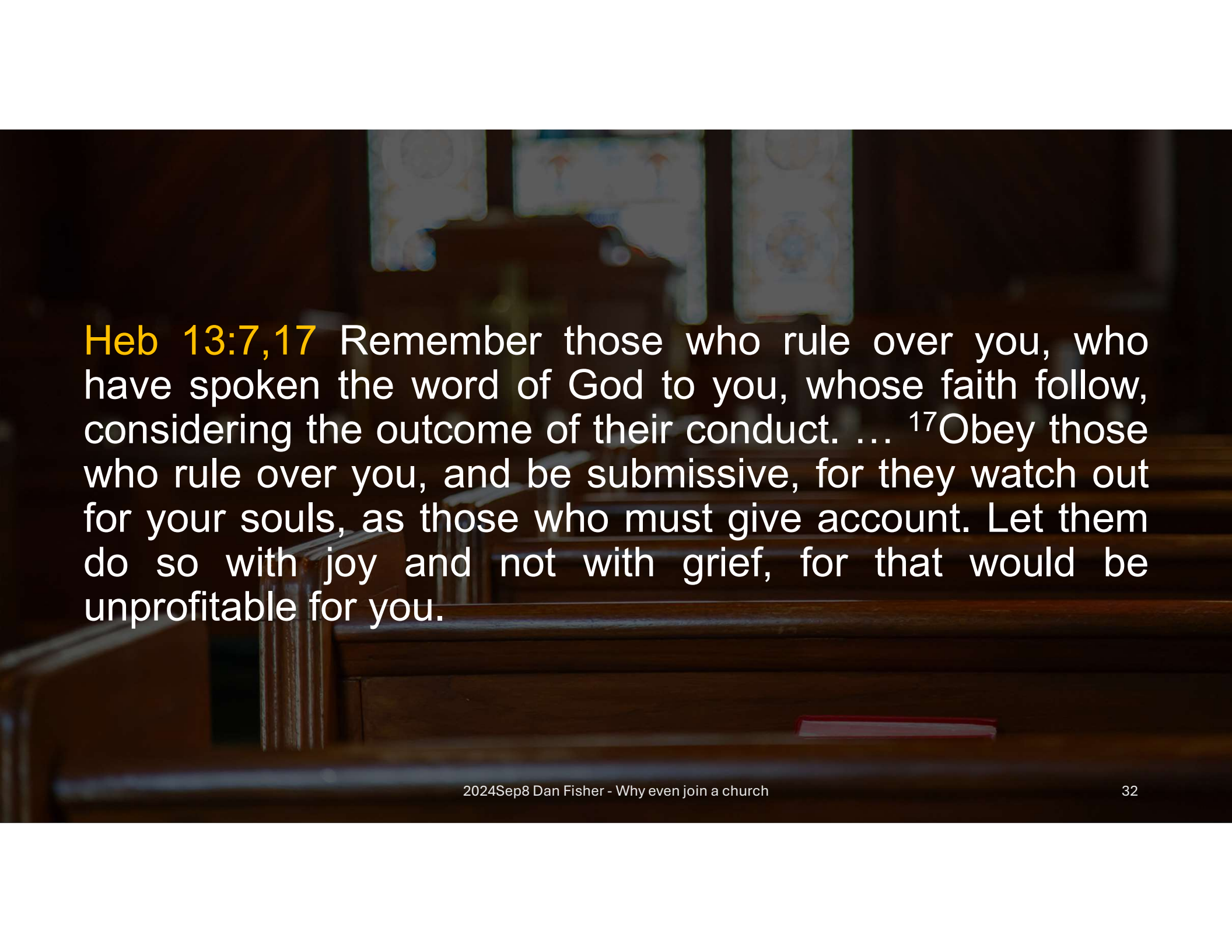


“Too many believers today approach church like a duty or a task – one that’s quickly pushed aside and forgotten as soon as it’s been accomplished. ... The consumerist attitude that’s taken hold in the church today isn’t interested in loyalty. It leads people to see fellowship as a means to selfish ends – they will meet with other believers, but only when it suits their needs and pleases their interests.”

- **Mutual submission**

If you're a believer who rejects the biblical authority of the local church and won't submit to your pastor or church leaders, you need to do a careful, thorough examination of your heart.

- 
- What's behind your rebellious spirit?
 - What sin are you harboring that's keeping you from submitting to godly authority?
 - Are you sure you're truly saved at all?

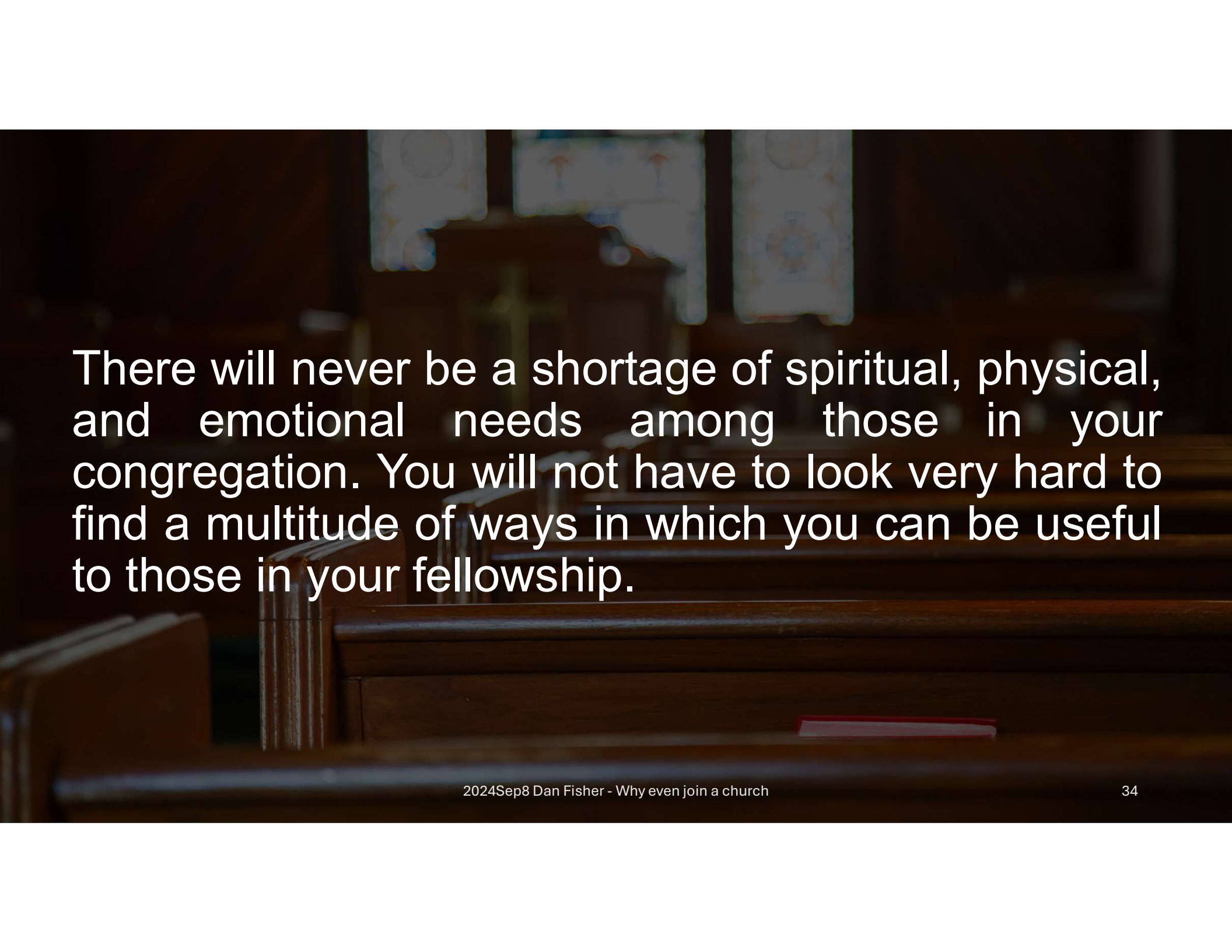


Heb 13:7,17 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. ... ¹⁷Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

- **Effective service**

When considering church, the question should not be: **“What can I get out of my church?”**

It should be: **“How can God use me to serve others here?”**



There will never be a shortage of spiritual, physical, and emotional needs among those in your congregation. You will not have to look very hard to find a multitude of ways in which you can be useful to those in your fellowship.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till 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; ¹⁴that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶from 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. **Eph 4:11-16**

There are four ways you can become a member of LifePoint:

1. By conversion and baptism
2. By baptism
3. By letter from another Baptist church or a church of like faith and practice
4. By statement of faith