

Customer or Minister?

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[0 : 00] We are, we are the church. All right, welcome to First Baptist Henrietta. My name is Sam Bedell. I'm the pastor here. Has it been a good service so far? Amen, I agree. Let's go to, in your Bibles, to Matthew chapter 22.

Matthew 22. I want to read this by way of introduction to kind of set up what we're going to talk about today. Matthew chapter 22 and verse 34. Jesus is meeting with the Pharisees. The Pharisees had heard that Jesus, by his wisdom and his knowledge of the law and his divine wisdom and understanding, had silenced the Sadducees, another group of religious leaders.

And so this kind of foremost group of religious leaders, the Pharisees, came together and they wanted to question Jesus and tried to nail him on something, try to catch him off guard and make him slip up.

And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question of Jesus to test him. Verse 36. Teacher, which command of the law is the greatest? Which command in all of the law? Talking about the Mosaic law that God gave to the children of Israel way back in the Old Testament.

And then many more laws were given over the period of the next many hundred years. And so what do we see here? They're trying to trip him up. They say, which one of these is the greatest?

[1 : 33] Jesus says in verse 37, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command.

Verse 39. The second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commands.

All of the law. All of the prophecies. Everything that was given depend, hinge on those two commands.

Let me tell you, if man-made religion had followed that, if they had wrapped their minds around what Jesus just said, then religion on this earth would look very different than it has over the history of the church.

Oftentimes, what has been done in the name of Jesus has been nothing like what Jesus commanded. Oftentimes, what has happened, what has been taught, and what has been enacted in churches around the world had nothing to do with loving the Lord or loving our neighbor as ourselves.

[2 : 46] So, Jesus came to change it. Jesus came to introduce, to reshape, to reform our thinking.

He came to ask us to pivot from something else. So, let's get into it. This morning, we're talking about ecclesiology.

We're talking about the doctrine of the church. Our little introduction video reminded us that we are the church, reminded us that the church is not a place. It is a people, right? So, this is a practical preaching series on we are the church.

Let's all say it together. Ready? We don't just go to church. We are the church. Y'all are going to get it on the first try next week, okay? Let's do it again together. Here we go. We don't just go to church. We are the church. That's right. And so, that kind of is a pivot away from the thinking that says the church is the place, the church is a building, it's somewhere we go.

[3 : 48] Well, actually, it's a group of people. One of the questions that the kids have submitted recently said something along the lines of, I'm trying to remember the exact wording and I can't, but basically, it was kind of like, where is the church?

And where can we have church? I think that was the question. Where can we have church? And my answer to that is anywhere. You can have church as the body of Christ anywhere.

If we wanted to go have it at the park, we could, but we'd get a little warm. We could have church anywhere, but we are grateful that God has provided this beautiful place for us to assemble.

It is certainly very functional for our needs. It's got classroom space. It's got a nice fellowship hall. We can gather together and break bread, which is biblical. All right. It's not just Baptist. It's biblical. All right.

We can get together and eat together. It's in the Bible. Jesus did it. It's okay. It's all right for us to do it. So, the church building provides all sorts of advantages and is a blessing for the church.

[4 : 53] But the church building is not the church, is it? We are the church. This thing skipped ahead. There we go. Just as a reminder, again, *ekklesia*, that is the Greek word that we find in the Bible for the church, and it literally means an assembly, a congregation.

And so, again, it is the gathering of people. It is not the building. So, ecclesiology is what we're talking about throughout this series, the doctrine of the church. Two weeks ago, we talked about the church.

It's not about me. It's about God. Okay? The church is not there to please me. It's not all hinging on what I think, et cetera. It's about God.

And so, everything we do in the church should be, first and foremost, bringing honor and glory to God. If it's not, then we've got to put it on the magnifying glass and say, Huh.

God isn't really getting glorified from this, so should we be doing it? Or should we be changing it? Should we be tweaking it to make sure that God gets the glory in whatever we're doing in this church?

[5 : 55] All right? Secondly, last week, we talked about how the church should find unity in its diversity. Guess what? We're not all the same. I know that's shocking as you look around here that we've got kind of a colorful group of folks here this morning.

Colorful is a nice way to put it, isn't it? Everybody's a little different. Everybody does things a little differently. We're all a little unique. Come from unique backgrounds. We've got different ideas about things. And that's okay as long as that diversity brings us together in the body of Christ.

That in and of itself should bring glory to God and saying, Wow. How could God bring this diverse group of people together? What binds them together to keep coming and hanging out each week? Coming together on Sunday night, on Wednesday night. Getting together in the community and doing things together. Why are we all hanging out so much? Because it's God that binds us together. It's not necessarily common backgrounds.

It's not necessarily we're all in agreement and everything all the time. We're certainly not. But that's okay. We can agree that God is good. That God loves us. That Jesus died for us. That he rose again.

[7 : 00] That he wants to save us. He wants to change our lives. He wants to mold us into his image. And we're going to walk this road together as the body of Christ. So there is unity in that diversity which brings glory to God.

Which is the purpose of the church. So today we're talking about the church customer or minister. Customer or minister.

We're going to fly through some of this. So y'all hang with me if you will. The church. Customer or minister. Turn it over in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 5.18. Listen, I'm going to give you a lot of different scriptures today.

You don't have to turn to each one physically in your Bible. We have a good amount of material to cover today that I'd love to give to you. And so if you just want to jot references down in your bulletin or wherever you'd like to do it, that's fine.

But we are going to bounce through several different parts of scripture. Because we're teaching some biblical principles about the church. And if we had about three hours, we could take the time to give the full context of each passage.

[8 : 05] And teach that whole truth. But in our limited time this morning, I just want to kind of spark your thinking about the church. Mark some things down. And then in your own personal quiet time or family devotional time, if you'd like to go back and study more about this, we certainly can.

So 2 Corinthians 5.18, let's look at it. Everything is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry.

See that word? The ministry of reconciliation. When he says us, he's talking about the children of God. He's talking about the people of God. The church of God. Our First Baptist Church here in Henrietta, Texas is an expression, a local expression of the greater church, the body of Christ.

So we can self-identify with this. As Paul was writing this in his second letter to the church at Corinth, the church in Henrietta can also take this and adapt it to us. We can identify with what Paul's talking about. So he says, God, Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Well, that right there qualifies you for ministry. [9 : 17] You are a minister. Okay? That doesn't mean you're a pastor. That doesn't mean you get up and preach on Sunday mornings in a church. But if you are a child of God, then you are a minister of God.

And you have a ministry that God has given you. The grander spectrum of ministry that God has assigned to you is this ministry of reconciliation. What does that mean? Reconciliation means restoring a relationship, right? Being reconciled. Well, the first need of reconciliation for you and for me is reconciling God away from our sin and back into unity and fellowship with God.

So he does that at the moment of salvation. He offers reconciliation. He says he wants to reconcile us from darkness into light, from sin into salvation.

So that is the first reconciliation that we have. Well, so how are you and I ministers of that reconciliation? We get to go share that message with others.

[10 : 24] We get to go take that gospel message and share it with people who have not yet been reconciled. We thank God that somebody shared it with us. But let that not die with us.

Let that be a ministry that continues on through us, our ministry. And then the second reconciliation is reconciling each other to ourselves.

Making sure that there is no strife between one another. Oftentimes in a church, as we're all striving toward the same goal, sometimes we'll have different ideas on how to reach that goal.

Sometimes we'll be in disagreement with one another. Being in disagreement is okay, isn't it? Being in discord is not okay. Disagreeing is fine.

But living in contention with each other, living in anger and strife with each other, bitterness, that is not okay. And so reconciliation must happen between each other.

[11 : 27] So much of the thoughts that I'm giving you today come from this church. It's one of the most effective books written about the church. That has been, it's principles put into practice in thousands of churches across our nation and around the world.

And so I want to let you know this is a good read for those who are interested in diving more deeply into some of these subjects. And we drew much of what we're talking about today from the principles of that book. So number one, every Christian is created for ministry.

Every Christian is created for ministry. How do we know that? Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10. We, you and I, are his workmanship.

We are his creation. Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. From the very beginning, God knew that he had a plan and a purpose for you and for me. And if you are still breathing, then his plan and purpose for you is not done. Okay? Say, man, my time's over. It's time for the young people to step up and take it. Well, you're half right.

[12 : 33] It is time for the young people to step up and take it. But your time is not over. God is still wanting to work through you. God still has a plan and purpose. It might look differently for you now than it did 30 years ago.

But God still has a purpose for you. He still has good works that he created you for. A ministry that he created you for. So he created us, all of us, for ministry.

We find that in the Bible. Number two, every Christian is saved for ministry. We are saved for ministry. Guess what? God didn't just save you to keep you out of hell.

We believe in this church because it teaches in the Bible that if you sin, if you break God's law, which guess what?

We all have. Every one of us are in the same boat in that regard. We've all done wrong. We've all failed. Not one of us are perfect. If you say you are, you're lying and everybody knows it. Okay? You're not fooling anybody into thinking that you're perfect.

[13 : 37] All of us have made mistakes. And all of those sins, all of that wrongdoing has qualified us for punishment for our sin, which is death in a terrible place called hell that God created for Satan and his demons.

But if we choose Satan's way, which is sin, which all of us do, even if we don't want to, we find ourselves doing it. The Apostle Paul wrote about that in the New Testament.

He said, the things that I want to do, I end up not doing. And the things that I don't want to do, that's what I find myself doing. I can identify with that. Right? Because we are surrounded by this weak flesh that ends up sinning.

So we are qualified for hell. That is the punishment that God has prescribed for our sin. That's why Jesus came. Jesus came as the one sinless one.

The only one who didn't have to go to hell. The only one who didn't sin. He came down here. He wasn't just God looking down at us and saying, why can't you be like me?

[14 : 42] He came down here, was born. As a little baby. Grew up as a child. Became a man. Walked around on this earth. Was tempted in all the same ways you and I are tempted.

And yet he never sinned. Because of course, he was 100% man, but he was also 100% God. So he could be perfect. He could be sinless.

So even though he didn't deserve any punishment. He didn't do anything wrong. He allowed himself to be crucified. Put to death.

Laid in the grave. And then he came out of the grave. To prove he is God. He can conquer anything.

He can conquer death. He can conquer sin. He can conquer the grave. And now he offers salvation to us. And he says, since I took the punishment, I died so you don't have to die that spiritual death.

[15 : 43] So you don't have to suffer the punishment for your sins. He says, now I offer you forgiveness. I offer you salvation. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

And you believe in your heart that God did raise him up from the dead. Then you can be saved.

God can forgive you. Cleanse you from all your unrighteousness.

Okay? So he does that. He offers that. And if someone is in this room today, I ask it every Sunday.

And I'm convinced that there are still people in the room that haven't yet put that faith in Jesus to say, God, I believe.

Okay? I believe. Sign me up. I believe that you are God. I believe you died on the cross. You rose from the grave. And I want you to forgive my sins.

Make me your child. Part of your family. If you have not done that, don't leave here today without doing it. In just a couple of minutes, we'll pray. We'll have a time that you can come down. I'll talk to you.

[16 : 40] We can sit down. We can pray. We can pray together. And we can work through that. But please, please don't leave this place today without making that most important decision.

Everything else we're talking about hinges on that relationship with Jesus. Okay? And so when God saves us, He saves us for a purpose.

It's not just to keep us out of hell. It's not just to say, okay, you're good now. You don't have to pay the punishment for your sins anymore. Go have fun. He's got a plan for you. He's got a purpose for you.

How cruel would it be for God to take you away from one master and not give you another? Now, sin is a terrible master.

It is a terrible boss. Okay? When you do what you want to do, what sin wants you to do, what your weak, sinful flesh wants you to do, that gets you in all kinds of trouble.

[17 : 36] That gets you in all kinds of places that you don't want to be. So when God frees you from that and says, you don't have to serve that master anymore, and then if He just left you and said, okay, figure it out, how cruel would that be?

But instead, He gives us the Holy Spirit. He gives us His presence inside us to go with us everywhere, to admonish us, to help guide us, to help lead us, to help us make decisions then according to His will, which is always right.

So that is what He saves us to do, and those purposes that He has for us is your ministry. This comes from 2 Timothy 1 and verse 9. He has saved us, and He has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works.

We're leaving that alone, right? That gets us in trouble. But according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

You notice a theme there? All this was planned out. We saw it in Ephesians. We saw it in 2 Timothy here. All this was planned out before we were ever even created. God knew what He was going to do with us.

[18 : 44] He knew the job you'd be working. He knew the kids you'd have. He knew what you'd name them. He knew the struggle that you would have between husband and wife. He knew the friendships. He knew everything that would come into your life, and He tailored it all for His divine purpose.

Are you fulfilling that purpose? Are you fulfilling your ministry? Number three, every Christian is called into ministry. Every Christian has a divine calling.

We just saw it a moment ago in 2 Timothy. Did you see that? Here we go. There we are.

He has saved us and called us with a holy calling. So that's why we say every Christian is called into ministry. Over in 1 Peter 2 and verse 9, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of Him, the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

That is our ministry. Proclaim the praises of God. Okay? Proclaim the praises of God. In your relationships, are you praising God?

[19 : 59] Are you proclaiming His praises? In your workplace, are you proclaiming His praises? Do His praises enter your mouth? Are they on your lips?

Let His praise be forever on my lips. None of us are praising God as we should, but we are called to do just that.

Number four, every Christian is gifted for ministry. We got into this extensively last week when we talked about spiritual gifts, and Sunday night, we dove into it even more and passed out individual spiritual gifts.

I don't know, tests, exams, whatever you want to call them. Surveys, just to kind of go through and answer questions that might help reveal to you what God has gifted you, prepared you, equipped you for.

And so every Christian is gifted for ministry. How do we know that? 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 10. Each one, each one has received a gift, so we should use it to serve others as good stewards of the buried grace of God.

[21 : 03] The buried grace of God is what God has given each one of us. It's various. It's changing. It's different. It's unique. Each one of us does not have the same gifts, but each one of our gifts are valuable.

And each one of us has received a gift from God. We are gifted for ministry. That's not just to make you look good. That's not to just impress people. That gift that God has given you, whatever it is, that isn't just to help people like you and raise you in the estimation of others.

It's to serve. It's to serve others. So if you don't find yourself increasing in service each year, then go back and say, God, help me use my gift more effectively for you.

I don't want my gift to go to waste. Every year, we should walk a little more closely with God. Every year, He should work a little more through us.

It's not a zero to a hundred overnight. It's a slow, progressive walk and journey with the Lord. But we must be improving. Otherwise, we start slipping back.

[22 : 17] We start slipping back. We start becoming more selfish, more self-focused. It starts becoming more about us. The cares of this life, the fear that is so tempting to give into, starts to distract us from the purpose, that great and glorious purpose that God has given to us.

So if you don't feel like you're accomplishing your purpose, if you don't feel like maybe that's what best describes your life at this moment, let's go back to the drawing board. Let's sit down. Let's sit down and talk. But let's let the Scripture be the magnifying glass that shows us exactly where we went wrong, how we can go back and start using our gifts for service.

And then number five, every Christian is authorized for ministry. This doesn't mean that every Christian is authorized for every ministry. Okay?

There are some ministries that I should not do. If y'all put me in the kitchen to cook, it's not going to work. Okay? I will come out with some microwave cheese quesadillas or something, okay, for everybody.

Open up a can of salsa, we're good. But if you put me in the nursery, you know, that would maybe not be the best fit for me. Not everybody is authorized for every ministry, but everyone is authorized for ministry.

[23 : 40] Okay? Don't let anybody tell you you can't be a minister. Don't let anybody tell you you can't serve with the gifts that God has given you in the local church.

Okay? Every Christian is authorized for ministry. We know that from Matthew 28. We call it the Great Commission. That's where we received our commission from God. Jesus said, all authority has been given to me.

Say, well, that's great. We know that Jesus is authorized. Okay? We know that God authorized Jesus. What does that have to do with us? Well, in verse 19, he says, you go. Go.

Go, the royal you out there, the church, us. He says, go. Because I have all authority, you go. What does that make sense?

How does that work? You're the one that has the authority. Why don't you do it? Because Jesus says, you go, make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 35] Teach them to do all the things I've commanded you because he is with us. I think I forgot to put verse 20 in there. He says, I am with you. The one who has all the authority, the one who's been authorized, I go with you.

You have access to all that power, all that authority. You are authorized to go. So that's how we know. Anybody says, you shouldn't do that.

God says, I sent you. I sent you to fulfill your ministry. You know, the reality is, sometimes we fail on this earth.

Sometimes we fall on this earth. Sometimes the consequences of what we do disqualify us from doing certain things in the church for God.

You know why that happens? You know why it disqualifies us? Because it hurts our testimony.

We're going out and presenting ourselves as ambassadors for Jesus Christ. And so certain things can compromise that.

[25 : 43] So your ministry might be limited in certain areas. But God never takes back his callings on your life. God never removed his ministry that he has for you.

You can still minister. You can still serve. You can still fulfill your purpose even though you might have messed up. Guess what? Everybody in here is messed up. There's not a man, woman, or child in this room that hasn't messed up.

So whatever God is still allowing you to do, don't let that responsibility, don't let that ministry slide. Fulfill your ministry.

ministry. Because number six, every Christian is needed for ministry. We are all needed. Every single one of you, from Billy Carlton who stands out there and hands out bulletins when people come in, to every one of our children's volunteers.

God bless those people. Those people who will go in there and from the babies all the way up to teenagers and beyond, that is such a vital ministry in this church.

[26 : 55] To the people who pick up trash, to the people who cook on Wednesday nights, to the people who do all the different things that make this church tick, that make us keep going, the kindness ministry goes out and sometimes not everybody jumps in and helps, but they're out there spreading the love of Jesus in the community.

I can tell you that every single role is needed. It's vital. And there are roles that are currently unfulfilled that are needed. There are slots that we have nobody in that are absolutely needed.

1 Corinthians 12, 27, you are the body. It is you. If you come, if you're a part of this church, then you're the body. You're individual members of the body.

Guess what? We need all the parts of our body, right? If you lose one of the parts of your body, you notice it. Even the tiniest little part, you still notice it.

One time, I just about lost a toenail. Stubbed my toe so bad, it just, yeah, it's not fun to think about. Just about ripped that thing off.

[28 : 10] That is a very, very small part of my body, but I was very aware of it in that moment. I absolutely noticed that that part of the body was just about gone and it was not enjoyable.

Every single part of our body is essential and every single part of our church, every single member of our church is needed. Number seven, every Christian is accountable for ministry.

We are accountable for it. God has given you a ministry and he wants to know that you're going to do it. Okay? First Corinthians, I'm sorry, second Corinthians chapter five, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

It's not just the pastor, it's not just the staff, it's not just the committee members, it's not just the deacons or trustees or anybody else, it's not just the ministry team leaders. Every one of us is going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

This is not the great white throne judgment. That's where the lost must be held accountable for their sins. Those who rejected Jesus, those who never got saved is what we like to call it, but putting our faith in Jesus Christ, they have to stand before the great white throne seat of judgment before Christ and be judged according to their sins.

[29 : 24] You and I will not be judged according to our sins if we put our faith in Christ. We then go to the judgment seat of Christ. We are judged for the good that we did for Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil.

The things we did for ourselves, that will be burned up. We're not going to be judged for it and sent to hell. That's all done. Jesus paid that. But it's not going to produce anything good.

The things that we did for God, the work that we did for him, that will produce gold, silver, precious stones, things of great value and God will reward us for that. He will give us crowns.

He will reward us greatly and we'll then turn around and cast those crowns at Jesus' feet because we know it was all through his power. We're accountable for what we do with the ministry that God has given to us.

And then number eight, every Christian will be rewarded for ministry. We just talked about it a moment ago but in Colossians 3, Paul writes about it. He says, whatever you do, do it from the heart as something done for the Lord and not for people knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord.

[30 : 31] You serve the Lord Christ. Guess what folks? God is going to reward you for ministry. It doesn't matter if you get all the pats on the back that you think you should on this earth, in this church.

We're not doing it for each other. We're doing it, number one, for the Lord. Okay? Now we should love each other. We should try to help each other. We should try to serve each other but our motivation is we are serving Jesus Christ and He is the one who will reward us.

We will receive the reward of our ministry from God. Anybody know what this stuff is? Take a wild guess.

It's purposefully small. Okay? Because I'm not doing advertisements here. Okay? The one on the left is Southwest Airlines. The one on the right is Sam's Club.

Okay? These are the two memberships that I have that I've reached a certain status in. Okay? Let me tell you, back in my previous job when I was working for Southwestern Seminary, I was doing a lot of traveling and I will never forget the day that I became A-list on Southwest Airlines.

[31 : 46] Okay? It was just a special moment. Now unfortunately, I was not A-list preferred because of course there's always another tier up from where you are, you know?

But still, I wasn't just one of those ragtag passengers who had to like board later, you know? I got to go on in like the third boarding group or something.

It was really important. How many of you guys have flown Southwest Airlines? Slip your hands up real quick. I love it in the Metroplex especially because I get to go to Love Field and avoid the nightmare that is DFW.

But yeah, so you know on Southwest Airlines you have to check in on the app or whatever when. Anybody know? 24 hours in advance, right?

If you want to get any kind of decent seat, you got to check in then. Now they have A group, they have B group, they have C group. I quit paying attention after that. I don't know how far it goes.

[32 : 50] How many of you guys have made A group every time? Just like every time. Wow. Okay, Laura Lee, just flex on everybody right now. That's called blessed and highly favored right there.

Yeah, it's, you know, it's annoying because you sit there and my flight leaves at 327. So at 327 the day before, I'm going to click the button and check in.

Man, I still got B group. How did that work, right? Because all us A list people, we don't have to check in. It does it automatically for us. So we're guaranteed to get A list.

I'm doing all this like I still have it and my A list definitely expired so it's gone now. But let me tell you it was so fun. It was so fun. The other one here, I've reached a certain level of financial prosperity because I went from Sam's Club club membership to plus membership.

Yes, that's the kind of coin I got, okay? Sam's Club plus. It's amazing, I think. I'm not 100% sure. I'm looking at the X's.

[34 : 00] Yeah, the big thing we got it for is the free shipping that they do. That's cool. Yeah, there's optical savings. I don't even wear glasses. So anyway, I don't know.

But you know what? It felt good to me to be a plus member and guess what? You get a black card instead of a blue card. So that's always great. Where am I going with all this, right? Most of you are wondering where are you going with all this?

We were on a roll and now we're talking about Southwest Airlines and Sam's Club. The idea here is these are clubs, right? These are members. These are memberships.

It's really special to be a part of this. The problem is no matter what level I get to, there's always something better. And those memberships expire.

I was a Hilton Hotel Diamond member or whatever for a while. It was great. Sort of. It wasn't really worth it. Then it expired.

[34 : 58] The week after my Diamond membership expired, they started putting in this new policy at Hilton Hotels where they have reserved parking for Diamond members right up next to the door.

the week after my Diamond membership expired. I roll up to the hotel. Again, I was doing a lot of traveling. Roll up to my next hotel and right up there I see Reserve for Diamond members.

Platinum, whatever they call it. And I'm like, are you kidding me? I've been one for a calendar year and yeah. Anyway, it was a rough moment.

Y'all feel bad for me, don't you? First world problem. Look, those things are more silly than they are anything else really. Often, usually, especially with the airlines and hotels, what that means is you're probably traveling too much, you're away from your family more than you would want to be and that's certainly true.

And now I'm not a Diamond member with Hilton and I'm not even A-list with Southwest Airlines anymore. I'm just a regular old person. But listen, the idea is you and I are members of an exclusive club.

[36 : 15] But this is the most inclusive, exclusive club you'll ever find. It's the body of Christ. we are members of it.

When man puts a club together, he puts all these strict policies attached to it. He puts all these hoops that you gotta jump through, you gotta qualify, you gotta spend a certain amount of money, you gotta do all this stuff to be part of their club because the reality is they're not doing that club or giving you those perks just because they think you're cool.

they're not doing it just to be your buddy and be nice to you. The reality is they want more customers, they want you to keep doing your business only with them and they want you to tell other people to come do business with them.

They want to make money off of it, right? I mean, that's the point of the workplace is usually to make money. So they attract us in by, hey, spend a certain amount, you can become this important person, VIP.

VIP. Jesus says, come be part of my club. It's exclusive. It is exclusive. It excludes all those who will not put their faith in Jesus.

[37 : 31] So it might be excluding some of you here this morning. But you get a constant 24-hour, never expires invitation to join the club.

But there is an expiration date on that. And that's when your death occurs. There is an expiration date on the offer to join the club. That's when your time on earth is over and none of us know when that will be.

So Jesus wants you in his club. And then once you're in, you get to go try to bring in as many other members as possible.

and it's free. There's no cost to join. There's no obligations. But once you become a member, you got some assignments.

That's the difference in human membership and church, godly, divine, spiritual membership of the body. when we think of the word member, we think of perks.

[38 : 43] We think, what am I getting from this? The church, membership versus partnership.

membership. I want to introduce a concept to you. What do you think of when you think of membership? Leave church out of it for a minute.

When I think of membership, I think of benefits. I think, how does it benefit me? What are the perks?

When I think of partnership, I think of responsibilities.

responsibilities. So the Bible says we are individual members of the body of Christ. But we, as members of the church, are supposed to partner.

We are supposed to partner with one another because we have responsibilities. We have a ministry with the church. Members have privileges.

[39 : 41] Partners have responsibilities. Whether you have officially joined this church as a member or not, I'm talking to everybody in the room right now. That's not what I'm talking about.

I encourage you to take that step if you haven't. I encourage you right now today at the close of the service, if you have not yet put your membership in this church, go ahead and take that step.

I urge you to do that. And if God is urging you to do the same thing, then please step out as soon as the music starts. Come talk to me and we'll get that taken care of today. But every person who attends this church has a responsibility.

responsibility in this church, a ministry that God has given you. So here's the question, what's the next step for you? What's the next step for you? Would you bow your heads with me? What's the next step in your ministry?

What's the next step in this church for you? are you a customer of the church or a minister? When we're customers, whether it's Southwest Airlines or Sam's Club or whatever it is, those people will do everything, they will bend over backwards to keep our business to get us to spend more money with them.

[40 : 51] And oftentimes, the perks that sound so great kind of leave you feeling empty afterwards. Was it really worth it? We don't have customers in the church.

We are called to minister. Maybe you've been in this church for a long time and you've been acting more like a customer. Where are my membership privileges? Where are my benefits?

As opposed to saying I am a God-called minister in this church. Doesn't mean I'm up on the platform preaching, doesn't mean I'm even necessarily teaching in a class.

It doesn't mean I'm in charge of something, but I understand that Jesus saved me and called me and equipped me and authorized me to be a minister of the gospel, a minister of reconciliation.

So what's my next step? Every man, woman, every teen, every child must ask themselves this question this morning.

[41 : 50] What is my next step? Every one of you have one. Has one. It does not matter how long you've been a Christian. It doesn't matter how long you've been in this church or another one. It doesn't matter how short you've been a Christian.

Every one of us, myself included, has something that God wants us to do next for him. And it's going to benefit all of us. It's going to benefit the whole church.

We need each other. Lord, I ask that you would work in each heart right now. Whether somebody needs to step out of the aisle in just a moment, I know we're a little past our time today, but whether somebody needs to step out of the aisle in just a moment and come down and put their official membership in this church and join together, partner together with us for this common ministry, I ask that you would give them the boldness to go ahead and do that today.

Let them understand that, humanly speaking, that's a big move to identify and say, you know what, this is my church. I'm going to be part of this church. It's not required in scripture that we come transfer a letter or something like that, but that is an outstanding way to signify this church is my family, this is a part of my life, and I want to be a part of the life of this church.

God, whether you've got something else that somebody needs to do, start serving in a ministry here. Start telling others about you. Start inviting people to come.

[43 : 17] See what God's doing in this church. Start giving more. Start giving it all. There are all kinds of ways to partner, to minister, and I ask that you would give us the boldness to say yes to whatever that next step is.

Put our yes on the table and then you tell us what it's going to be. That's what we pray right now in Jesus' name. Amen. Brother Greg's going to come sing.

We'll have just a moment, so don't wait too long. Just a moment. I'll be right down front. You come talk to me if you'd like to talk about putting your faith in Jesus, putting your membership in this church or something else entirely.

Y'all stand together. Come down here. if you like, you're given an accord.

You're so bloom. You're damn good. I'm gonna be right there. Have just a moment.