

Doing Church as a Team

The Power of “We”

September 13-14

Introduction

Hey everyone, I’m Mark and I want to welcome you to our service! Today we are re-visiting a core value that is critical to our Church’s mission and DNA — Doing Church as a Team.

Now, while this is a powerful value, how many know Church isn’t something we *do* it’s who we *are*. Who is the Church? We are! But as the Church, we have been given something to do and it will require all of us working together as a team.

If the whole point of salvation was to get you into heaven, the moment you prayed “the prayer” [poof!] you’d be in heaven. Mission Accomplished! But the very fact that we remain after coming to faith says that there is more for us to do. What if the point of salvation is not merely to get us into heaven but heaven into us, and then through us to the world?

Jesus confirmed this in His last words to His followers. Shortly after His death and resurrection Jesus appeared to His followers for one final word.

Before I share with you His Words, think about this. When someone is on their deathbed, you want to be fully present and alert. You lean in and pay attention because these are their final moments and the last things they want to leave with you. There may not be a more significant moment. “After a life fully lived, here is what I leave with you.” The *only* thing that could possibly be more significant are the words of someone who has *actually* died, gone into the beyond, and then come back to give us a perspective from the afterlife. That is what we get in this moment. Jesus has died, gone to heaven, and come back from the dead. Now He shares His wisdom with us from *that* perspective.

¹⁸ “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,”
(Matthew 28:18-20).

Wouldn’t it have been interesting if Jesus came back from the dead, gathered His followers, and told them, “Hey guys! So, a little awkward. Remember what I told you about My Kingdom, loving others, and all that. Well, I’ve been back “there” and it turns out none of that stuff really matters. You should all just go back to what you were doing and live your lives. Get rich, have fun, live it up. Sorry for wasting your time but we had some good times right?” That would have been the end of the story! Everyone would’ve shuffled away and we wouldn’t be here today. But that’s *not* what Jesus did. No, instead He says, “I’ve been back *there* and I know what all of life is about! I say this with all authority in heaven and earth. The only thing that will matter in the next life is making disciples of all nations! Do everything I’ve been telling you to do this whole time and pass it on because when you get to heaven that will be all that matters!” And they did. That rag-tag band of misfits and ne’er-do-wells went on to change the world, this is what the Church continues to do, and it is why we’re here today.

This is what the Church is called to do. Another key insight we get into the purpose of the Church is found earlier in Matthew’s gospel. In this passage we have one of only two instances where Christ talked about His Church.

Ekklesia

In Matthew 16:18.

“...upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it,”
(Matthew 16:18).

Now, when Jesus said, “I will build my Church” He didn’t say “Church” (That is our Modern English Translation). Interestingly, the word He used was not “synagogue” or “temple”, which would have made perfect sense to His Jewish listeners. Instead, Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build My ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) and the powers of hell will not conquer it.”

By using this word, Jesus was communicating something that all of His listeners would have understood but none of them would have expected. The word ‘ekklēsia’ was a secular word that meant,

“a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly”

This was a concept that originated with the Greeks and was later adopted by the Romans. When a foreign invading army (like the Romans) conquered a people, they would establish an ekklēsia (an assembly) of citizens whose role it was ensure the policy, culture, language, and values of their kingdom were implemented in this newly conquered territory. These citizens had the full backing and authority of their king and were called to “Romanize” this new territory.

So Jesus’ followers, who were subjugated to the Romans, would have understood the significance of an ekklēsia. They witnessed first-hand how the Romans were “Romanizing” their people. But now Jesus was saying, “I will establish My ekklēsia and not Rome, or the powers of Hell will be able to stand against it.”

You see, if Jesus would’ve said “Synagogue” or “Temple”, His followers would’ve pictured a gathering place. But by using the language of ekklēsia, Jesus was not talking primarily about a place to gather but a world-changing force. Jesus’ vision was that His ekklēsia would have the backing and authority of heaven to be a world-heavenizing force. We would contend for the values, culture, and language of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Jesus has already conquered this world and now His Church is called to “Heavenize” it.

Most would have categorized Jesus’ followers as, uneducated, under-qualified, and unequipped. But Jesus told them they would be a hell-shaking, world-changing, force.

Battleship vs. Cruise Liner

Sadly, many “Churches” today operate more like a Cruise Liner, where a small ragged crew run around keeping the ship afloat while the majority of passengers sit back to be entertained, fed, and served.

New Hope has always operated more like a Battleship, where it’s all hands on deck and every member makes a significant contribution to the mission. The battleship moves with purpose to bring stabilization to troubles waters and to push back darkness in a war-torn world.

On a Cruise Liner people ask, “How was I served today? How was the service?” On a Battleship people ask, “How did I serve the mission today?” On a Cruise Liner the focus is comfort (Was the music too loud, was I entertained, how was the food, etc.) On a Battleship the focus isn’t comfort but calling. How am I walking in my calling to “heavenize” this world?

But What About the Paid Professionals?

At the birth of the New Hope movement, Pastor Wayne knew that God hadn't called him to reach the people in his Church but all across the State of Hawaii. He also understood that this calling couldn't be accomplished through one person — no matter how gifted. But most importantly, Pastor Wayne understood scripture.

When we talk about DCAT and working together as a team some might ask, "But Mark, why do we need to do anything? Isn't that the job of the Pastor? Aren't you guys the paid professionals?" And for many years Churches existed this way! The Pastor was expected to be a spiritual leader, counselor, crisis mediator, teacher, administrator, shepherd, and your best friend.

¹¹ "So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ," (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Is it the job of the pastors, evangelists, teachers, etc. to do all the works of service? No! It is their job to equip God's people to do works of service so that the body may be built up. Our job as pastors and leaders is to equip you to walk in the fulness of your God-given purpose and calling.

DCAT

That is what this series is all about. Each of you was created for a God-given purpose (We'll learn more about that next week). Our role is to help you discover that purpose and equip you to walk in that purpose together as the body so that God's Kingdom will come and His will be done on earth — in your world, as it is in heaven.

Next week you will discover just how intentional God was when He created you. You were created for such a time as this and for a very specific purpose.

²⁴ "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

The Church is not a building. It is not brick and mortar. God's Presence isn't bound to this sanctuary. God doesn't dwell in a temple built by human hands but by His hands. We are the Church, we are His Temple. His Presence lives in you. God doesn't lack. He doesn't have need. We don't serve Him because He needs us but because we need Him. Serving isn't about meeting God's needs or doing something He can't do on His own, it's about finding our intended place in His body and becoming an extension of Him on the earth. God wants to bless people but He wants to use your hands to do it. He wants to speak to people but He wants to use your voice to do it. He wants to reach people but He chooses to use your feet to do it.

²⁶ From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us," (Acts 17:24-27).

You think that it is by some chance, or coincidence, or the sum of your choices that you are here but the Bible says God appointed your time in history and your boundaries. He knew exactly when and where you would be. You are not here by chance. There is a divine purpose for you here and now. Don't you want to know what that is? Don't you want to reach out for Him and find Him? He is not far. He is right here welcoming you in.

Object Choice Illustration.

Group Discussion Questions

1. Am I here as a passenger or crew? Am I evaluating Church by what I get out of it, or am I asking how I'm serving the mission?
2. What step can I take toward serving the mission? Is there a ministry team I can be a part of? Can I take the Spiritual Gifts Assessment test to help find my fit? Is there a Transformation Academy class I can take to grow in my gifting? How can I give of my time, talent, and treasure to serve others?
3. Is there a sphere of my life that God has sent me to "Heavenize" in His Name? How can I walk in greater authority to bring the teachings and values of heaven to the world around me?