



GOING DEEPER

Discussion Questions and more from Sunday's message, before we begin, here are the verses for this week's study! Open your bible to the book of Ephesians 4:11-14; Acts 2:42-43.

How much time have you spent this past week reflecting on Jesus and the hope of the gospel? How has reflecting on Him been of help to you? Because that is how we grow in how we think about our relationship to God and how we bring Him Glory each day, in each conversation, interaction, our work, our family. **In everything.** The gospel and the love of Christ should indwell us, and we should be burdened to share that good news with others in these last days. ***Have you shared the good news with anyone this week? Have you showed the love of Jesus to anyone this week?***

The Great Reversal

"Over the last few decades, a quiet but massive shift has taken place in Western culture. Many churches are still operating out of an older framework, even though the cultural conditions underneath have fundamentally changed". -Carey Nieuwhof

Billy opened the discussion discussing the Original Church Model across America (@ 2005 and earlier)

Content was scarce

Biblical teaching was primarily accessed through gathered worship

The church functioned as the main distribution point for preaching and formation

Community was abundant

Strong neighborhood ties, civic participation, and regular in-person interaction

Belonging was largely built into everyday life

1. The Goal for a Pastor Is Not Better Teaching... It's Teaching Yourself Out of a Job Ephesians 4:11-14

11 "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds[c] and teachers,[d] **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

In Ephesians 4:11–14, what do you notice about the role of church leaders and the role of the church body?

"In such a dehumanized society, the fellowship of the local church will become increasingly important—whose members meet one another and listen and talk to one another in person rather than on screen. In this human context of mutual love, the speaking and hearing of the Word of God is also likely to become more necessary for the preservation of our humanness, not less." John Stott, 1982.

Billy asked Reagan a question:

Are we/Have we been forming/educated consumers of sermons or disciples of Jesus? It's both, looking at the last 300 years and the pastor and the only church in town and you have sources to get anything now in mere seconds. Even in high school today versus even years ago vs. technology. She discussed the world vs. the church and community. We need to be more focused on community.

"Our relationships with others are reflections of our relationship with God." Edwin Louis Cole, Maximum Manhood

Do you think it is easy to become a consumer of spiritual content instead of an active disciple? Why or why not?

Billy asks Patrick:

Have we mistaken proximity to church for maturity in Christ?
Yes, we do. That is a 2,000-year-old problem. Paul went to the Corinthians, and spoke in Hebrews, always thinking that time in church will grow us and that doesn't mean it's true in hanging around church. Has to be intentionality. Nothing changes in our lives if nothing changes in us. Studying the word and growing together, Acts 2:42 and the result was in Acts 2:43. Emphasis on praying, breaking of bread, teaching. Most of the New Testament was written to clear up doctrinal errors.

Where have you seen genuine Christian community help people grow in ways that content alone cannot?

Billy begins back: a surprising observation is that pastors, teachers, and church leaders are not listed as the primary ministers. Their role is to equip others to minister.

Vs 12 "to equip the saints for the work of ministry..."

Many churches unconsciously measure success by:

How many attend

How well the sermon was delivered

How much people enjoyed the service

Paul measures success by a different question:

"Are the saints doing the ministry?"

The Greek *equip*(katartismos): Setting a broken bone, Mending fishing nets

Restoring something to its intended purpose,

The image is not "teaching information" but "repairing and preparing people for action."

Question for the church from Billy:

"How would our church look different if every sermon was evaluated by what ministry happened afterward rather than by how much people enjoyed it?"

How have you personally measured spiritual growth in the past—by knowledge, attendance, service, obedience, or something else?

In what ways can our church better evaluate fruit by what happens after the sermon rather than only during it?

What practical step could you take this week to strengthen real, in-person Christian community?

The Cultural Shift (≈2010–2026)

Content is abundant

Unlimited access to sermons, podcasts, and global teachers

Community is scarce

Rising isolation and fragmentation

Weakening of local relational infrastructure

Result

High information, low connection

The Current Model (now, 2026)

Content is abundant

Sermons, podcasts, livestreams, and teaching resources are instantly accessible everywhere

The church no longer holds a monopoly on spiritual information

Patrick points out too that content today has a shallow depth.

Community is scarce

Rising isolation, loneliness, and relational fragmentation across all age groups

Fewer stable, deeply connected in-person relationships

The Resulting Tension across America:

Churches often still lead with a “content is scarce” strategy

“Don’t miss Sunday” remains the dominant emphasis

Culture is now shaped by a “community is scarce” reality

People are not primarily lacking information... they are lacking connection

Billy follows up with another question for Patrick:

If truth is everywhere, what makes the church indispensable?

Patrick says that the church is indispensable because it is the messenger for God’s word. He talks about his involvement in Young America as a para-church ministry. But is not the church, discipling and changing the world is the church. There is no plan B. The church sells itself short.

We explain about Jesus’s message, if any man wants to follow me, take up his cross and follow me. We live in Him.

Billy then turned back to Reagan to ask her:

Reagan, are we feeding people content while starving them of connection?

Reagan, from the American church yes. We do an amazing job here and just look at Sports Camp or an Arts Camp. It’s done for connection. Of all the kids signed up 15% are from outside this church. It is all about connection to this faith family. Then we can do discipleship.

Billy talks about the young men and women taking notes in the second service each Sunday. Putting them in practice.

Billy ask the church, are we creating people who need a weekly spiritual download from professionals or from people that walk with Jesus on Tuesday afternoon

when no one is around? Maybe we should be focusing on those people walking with Jesus. He speaks back to Ephesians where he started, Chapter 4:14:

14 "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

The bride of Christ, our church is in our hands. What are we doing with that?

Missional Reorientation for the Church

Shift from content delivery → community formation

Redefine success as relational integration

Sermons become starting points, not endpoints

Church becomes a discipleship ecosystem

"The gospel is NOT about making good people-better, it's about making dead people- ALIVE!" Leonard Ravenhill.

Are you currently prioritizing content, connection, or both in your walk with Christ?

Who has helped equip you spiritually, and how can you begin doing that for someone else? Pray about that opportunity!

What intentional change would help you grow from simply attending church to actively building up the body of Christ? This is heart change!

Howard Hendricks was famous for saying that each believer needs three people in their lives: 1) Someone who mentors them 2) Someone beside them who shares the journey, 3) Someone who they mentor in return. Is this you? Why not?

"Without this dynamic, we risk stagnation-a church where Christians sit, soak in information, and leave unchanged. This isn't the vision of discipleship. It's a cycle that lacks passion, personal application, and multiplication. "- Chuck Swindoll

LIVE IT OUT

Bible Study should ALWAYS lead to taking action with what you learned. Think of it as Vitamin A. "Application" into your day, week and interactions.

Here are some ideas for us this week to live out our faith:

In our church family

Move from attending to serving. Ask, "Where can I use my gifts to help serve?"

Pursue real connection. Don't just come to a service, start a conversation, invite someone to lunch, check on someone who seems disconnected. Be intentional with your weekly calendar.

Encourage one another toward discipleship. Share what God is teaching you and ask someone else how you can pray for them.

Evaluate fruit, not just experience. Instead of asking, "Did I like Sunday?" Look at your calendar of your week, everyone has 168 hours each week. Is Christ more of that time or the world? What needs to be changed in that week to make more time for Christ in your life?

In our community around us:

Be intentionally present. Look for someone who may be isolated, overlooked, or in need of encouragement. Pray for that opportunity!

Show the love of Christ in practical ways. A visit, a meal, a note, a phone call, or helping with a need can become ministry.

Create connection, not just conversation. Invite a neighbor or coworker into your life instead of keeping faith private.

Be ready to share the gospel naturally. Let your words and actions reflect Jesus in everyday moments. How Jesus has changed you and your heart.

In our families

Lead with spiritual intentionality. Pray together, read Scripture together, or talk about Sunday's message during the week.

Choose connection over distraction. Put down screens and make space for real conversation.

Encourage one another in Christ. Ask family members how they're doing spiritually, not just practically. *"Either you are advancing or declining in your walk with Christ," Steve Farrar.*

Model discipleship at home. Let your family see repentance, grace, prayer, and obedience in everyday life. At the end of this year, will you be able to tell Christ and the Holy Spirit is changing you and you see it in your family? Is that what you really want? The decision to do that today will have ramifications years from now from your example or lack of it.

In our workplaces

Work as someone who belongs to Christ. Show integrity, humility, diligence, and kindness.

Be a steady presence. In a fragmented world, consistency and compassion stand out. ***"When do people need encouragement? if they are breathing." Truitt Cathy.***

Look for opportunities to encourage others. Sometimes ministry at work begins with listening well and caring sincerely. You are an "Ambassador of Christ" in your workplace! On mission!

Live the gospel, not just know it. The goal is not simply to consume truth, but to reflect Christ where God has placed you. No one can do this without knowing the word of God. Study it. Does your calendar and that 168 hours we each have each week reflect that?

This week, we live out the message by choosing intentional discipleship over passive consumption and real Christian community over isolation.

How should I pray for this life change?

***"You don't want to ask the Lord for a trouble-free life. You should ask the Lord this, "Lord, work Your work in my heart, don't give me more than I can endure. Show me grace and compassion, you know my weaknesses and frailties. I want to see Your lovingkindness, but I want You to do Your work. I want You to do Your perfecting work. I want You to do whatever it takes in me to make me what You want me to be." You need to come to terms with that. You need to be able to say that."** John MacArthur*

Remember:

***"We are to run the race with endurance, not in our own strength, but by fixing our gaze on Jesus. He is not only the goal of our faith—He is the source and sustainer of it."** R.C. Sproul*

***"The gospel is not only about changing WHERE you will live for eternity, it's also about changing HOW you will live today."** Shane Pruitt*
And that is a heart change. So that we glorify God in all we do.

Having Jesus as Savior will cost you nothing. Having Jesus as Savior will cost you everything. How so?

Who do you say God is? You cannot “come after” Jesus unless you come to Him.

Two roads stand before us in this world today. There is the way of the divine things of our Lord, which is the way of Christ. And there is the way of human things of the world. There is a way to save your life, and you will lose it there. And there is a way to lose your life for the sake of the Kingdom, and there you will find it.

How do we follow Jesus’ ways? First of all, we turn from our sin and entrust our lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. Then, we seek His will in His Word each day and put it into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We learn to deny our selfish desires and give ourselves completely to following Jesus.

This choice we have — to seek first the kingdom of God — is the fundamental choice everyone makes when they first repent and turn to Jesus Christ. Yet every day after that, our Christian life will either reinforce that decision or deny it.

Remember the gospel is personal. Your changed life shows that to others around you based on what happened at the cross. You are at a crossroads if you have not accepted Christ. Which road are you traveling on right now? Are you on God’s side?



Are you in a Growth Group at First Baptist? In this isolated world, Growth Groups help people connect in a healthy way. God has created us for a deep longing for community. We grow when we are living out our faith in a small group with others and we do this by loving, caring for, and encouraging each other. If you have any questions about our Growth Groups, contact the Church Office for more information.