

WHY. DO. Be.

We get the **WHY** from **Luke 19:10**: *“the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”*

We get the **DO** from Jesus’ declarative statement in **Matthew 16:18**:  
*“on this rock I will build my Church.”*

We get **BE** from Jesus’ statement about his disciples in **John 13:35**:  
*“by this everyone will know you are my disciples: if you love one another.”*

You can play these backwards as a path forward:

***When I become who I’m supposed to be,  
I accomplish all I was created to do,  
So I can fulfill why Jesus came.***

**DO - Matthew 16:18 – I will build my church**

Jesus goes on building his church, just like he said he would in Matthew 16, through his body - his hands and feet in the book of Acts.

This week we examine Jesus words after his resurrection and before his ascension, as recorded again by Luke.

**READ ACTS 1:1-9**

Between the Great Commission as recorded at the end of the Gospels, and the words of Christ here in Acts 1, we get Jesus’ last words. I want to look at these words because the same way his why should be our why, ***His last command should be our first concern.***

And clearly the focus of Jesus as he spent his last time on earth was the commissioning, birthing and building of the Church.

**Acts 1:4-5** - *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Then he goes on to say in **verse 8**: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

This verse speaks to the power, the purpose, and the plan...

**The Power – The Holy Spirit.**

The power comes first... *you will receive power... and you will be my witnesses...*

**The Purpose** – the WHY – it’s the same – we’re going to seek and save the lost. We’re going to do it to the ends of the Earth.

**The Plan** – the DO – build the Church.

We don't build the Church for a congregation. Or a building. Or a community.  
The smallest common denominator in Acts 1:8– cities.  
Letters in the New Testament aren't addressed to a person. But to cities.  
Ephesus. Galatia. Rome. These are cities.

City Life Church – we aren't just called to a building. We aren't called to a service.  
We're called to love and serve our city, then our world.

How?

By making the ME a WE.

*When I become who I'm supposed to be,  
I accomplish all I was created to do,  
So I can fulfill why Jesus came.*

*[Make the "I" a "we" and it's exponentially more powerful]*

*When we become who we're supposed to be,  
we accomplish all we were created to do,  
So we can fulfill why Jesus came.*

There's power in pronouns.

Our culture has a **pronoun problem**.

We read Acts 1:8 – “*you will receive power... you will be my witnesses...*”  
We like the YOU singular.

There are at least **4,720** verses (2,698 in the Hebrew Bible and 2,022 in the Greek) with *you plural* translated as English “you” which could lead a reader to think it is directed the individual rather than the Church community.

It's a trap laid for our culture. In our individualistic culture Christianity can become the religion of the individual.

My destination.

My finish line.

The Bible is first about a **HE** – Jesus.

Then it's about a **WE** – his bride, the Church.

Before it's ever about **ME**.

The pronoun “you” in Acts 1:8 wouldn't be translated “you” in the singular.  
In the Greek it's plural. “Y'all.” You all. Your group.

The disciples return to Jerusalem with this group identity... and actively waited...

## **THEY ORGANIZED.**

Mary was present amidst the group. As one commentary on Acts put it:

*“[Mary] not only gave birth to her son, she also assisted in the birth of the Church.”*

Before the Holy Spirit came the Church was born. It was birthed. It was taking shape. They got busy working on structure and selecting a new apostle to replace Judas.

## **THEY PRAYED**

**Acts 1:14** says they were **“Together in prayer”**

Together is a favorite word of Luke’s that speaks to our call to community. 10 of the 11 times this Greek word is used, it occurs in the book of Acts.

Acts 2, as the Holy Spirit falls, what’s the setting?

They encounter the Holy Spirit when they were lingering in prayer.

A healthy church will see: Encounter. Embrace. Engage.

People **encountering God’s presence.**

**Acts 2** represents one of the most significant encounters with God you will find in scripture outside of the Israelites and Moses at Sinai.

People **embracing God’s family.**

The verse immediately following Pentecost is **Acts 2:42**

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.*

People **engaging God’s mission.**

Acts 4:20

Encounter. Embrace. Engage.

An easy way to apply these is to think in terms of directions we look in Church.

When we come to church we should be called to look three directions. UP. AROUND. OUT.

We often look in at self.

We have no problem looking in.

We spend our lives looking in.

The gravitational pull of our flesh is to look in.

Becoming a healthy church we will see three things: people encountering God’s presence, embracing his family, and engaging his mission

It’s an adjustment in perspective. Three ways of looking...

## LOOK UP.

The Church isn't about the audience. It's not about the people in the pews.  
It's first and foremost about God. He's the object of our worship and our audience of one.

*"I didn't like worship today."  
"That's OK, we weren't worshipping you."*

We look to God to encounter God.

At a healthy church we should ask the questions:  
*Are people encountering God's presence?  
Are people experiencing God as a living presence and active voice?  
Is there a sense of growing intimacy between God and the people of City Life?*

The Church isn't built for entertainment.  
The Church is created to encounter God's presence.  
If the Church fails in that... it fails.

## LOOK AROUND.

The church isn't just called to sit in rows, but to sit in circles. (see: Life Groups)

### GOD CALLS US TO SHRINK THE CHURCH

It's how we Embrace God's Family, the community he's given us...  
Or as the Apostle's Creed calls it: *"the communion of saints."*

The first thing Steph and I did as a married couple, before we were even publicly announced as husband and wife, before our first kiss... was to take communion.

But most church-goers haven't gone past dating the Church.  
We have **interest**.  
But we don't **invest**.  
We like to feed our cravings and curiosity without commitment.

A healthy Church will be marked by committed, deep relationship with one another.  
A healthy Church will ask the questions:  
*Are people finding an appetite and passion for community?  
Are people building meaningful relationships with others?  
Are people who have been disappointed or hurt by past churches trusting church community again?*

**Raj** – Without a family of faith, we have needs that aren't being met. Development that isn't happening. We aren't called to live spiritually orphaned lives.  
We're called to embrace God's family.

Third mark of a healthy Church: **ENGAGE GOD'S MISSION**

How do we do this?

**LOOK OUT.**

College Square. These people may never set foot in City Life.

But to echo the words of the Archbishop William Temple, the church is *"the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of it's non-members."*

The evangelist Luis Palau puts it this way – *"The church is like manure. Pile it together and it stinks up the neighborhood; spread it out and it enriches the world."*

We're called to spread out.

Yes, God calls us to shrink the Church and embrace God's family.

God simultaneously calls us to expand the Church and engage our mission..

We aren't called to simply follow a crowd into a weekend service.

Following a crowd into a church service is one thing.

Following Jesus is another thing altogether.

We aren't called to follow a crowd. We're called to follow Jesus.

Out of 112 personal encounters Jesus has, only 10 of them happen in the Church, the rest happen out there.

If you follow Jesus you won't just engage a Church service, you'll engage your mission.

The question we should ask ourselves to gage our health in engaging our mission:

*Are people being inspired to believe that God created them with unique abilities, spiritual gifts, and life experiences to build his church?*

*Are people giving their lives to telling people the Gospel and Good News of Jesus Christ?*

John 12:32

*"When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself."*

People won't see the risen Christ.

But they should see the Body of Christ.

The Church. Being built. And lifting him up.