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## CHURCH: GOD SENDS

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### Part 10 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 08, 2008

You are listening to Doctrine, a sermon series where Pastor Mark Driscoll covers the basic beliefs of Christianity. This series also serves as a prerequisite for membership at Mars Hill Church. For more audio and video content, visit [MarsHillChurch.org](http://MarsHillChurch.org).

Howdy, Mars Hill. Is it sunny out there? Nice. I'm working, indoors. (Laughter) Good to see you all, both of you – very good to have you. We are dealing today with the church, and so here's what I'm gonna do. Before we get into the sermon itself, I'm gonna give you a little business update. You're welcome.

I'm gonna start by telling you that our budget year goes from July to June, so we're finishing up our budget year. So I'm supposed to give you kind of a year-end summary report. Overall in the last year we had a pretty good year. Hundreds of people became Christians – that was cool. Hundreds of people got married. Hundreds of people had babies. So lots of new babies, new weddings, new Christians. We went in the last two years from one to six campuses, so now we're Mars Hill Ballard, Shoreline, Downtown, Wedgwood, West Seattle, Eastside – they're moving to Bellevue. And we're getting ready to open up Mars Hill Olympia. That'll be the next one on the docket. So putting that altogether as we speak, so that's pretty cool.

Challenges. Well, we're still in Seattle: most overpriced, least-churched, least generous city in America – thank you, Lord, lots for us to do here. As well, here's what we've decided to do. In light of the fact that we're a growing church sort of in a budget church, we've decided to commit suicide. That's what we've decided to do. We figured, "Hmm." Suicide for us is increasing our expectations for membership. Usually at a church of our size – there's 400,000 churches in America, only about 100 are 6,000 are more. That's kind of where we're at. And usually to be a member of that church, here's what you need to do: fog a mirror. That's it. If you're breathing, you're in. They give you a water bottle, you breathe, done.

Now, what we've decided to do is to increase our standards for membership; hence the 13-week Doctrine series I've been hammering out, and also The City, which is our social, online, secured networking too, created by our own tech guru pastor Zack Hubert. And that means today we are wanting you to become a member, to get plugged, and I know you're not gonna 'cause I know you're all too-cool-for-school indie rockers from Seattle. But we're here to compel you to get signed up, to get plugged in.

And some of you, really, you're the Christian equivalent of ninjas. You quietly sneak in and you sneak out, and we can never find you. So today we are making a concerted effort – it's our anti-ninja campaign. We are going to find you. (Laughter) So here's what I'm asking you to do. You got a card that said "Become a Member." You'll never guess what this is intended to cause. It's to cause you to become a member. On the back, on the white portion, there are two things: your name and your e-mail. You fill this out and you hand it to someone wearing this highly attractive shirt. Or you leave it in the communion/offering baskets, or you leave it in an information desk on the way out. And we are going to make every effort to follow up with you, let you know what we got going on, invite you into the church membership process, get you connected. You can also grab somebody with a keyboard – or, a keyboard – a clipboard, and they'll just grab your name and phone number on the way out, if they've got one of these shirts. Or you can sign up with The City out in the foyer on a computer on your way out.

Now, in saying all of this I know some of you are concerned. "What will happen?" Well, here's what will not happen. Two young white guys on bikes with white, pressed shirts will not show up at your house and try and close you. We don't go that way. (Laughter) Okay. We'll just send you an e-mail. It's very simple. And we're not gonna put you on a list and spam you all the time and bug you, but we want to know who you are because you are the 7:00 service and we know that you will never organize yourself. We just know that. We love you, but I mean, look, people show up late to the 7:00. (Laughter) I mean, you know, these are people that need to help to get organized. They're like, "Oh, I – I gotta set my alarm to go the 7:00." Like, we love you. We want to know you. We want to plug you in. Give us your contact information.

And we're gonna do this for six weeks. The goal is to hassle you, to wear you down through attrition until you just tap out and give us your e-mail address. And if that doesn't work, we're sending white guys to your house on bikes. (Laughter) That's what – don't make me do it.

Now, that being said, I will give you a financial update as well for two reasons. One, I know when you woke up today you said, "I hope I can hear a mega-church pastor talk about money." And I'm here for you. Secondly, when I was a little boy I wanted to grow up and be a mega-church pastor that talked about money to indie rockers who were broke and committed to anarchy. (Laughter) So today your desires and mine coalesce perfectly into a PowerPoint presentation. (Laughter)

You'll notice the colors are in red because we are jacked. Yes! Thank you, Lord. Here's where we're at ending our budget year. We're \$544,000-ish American dollars – not rupees – in debt. Our actual deficit that's budgeted is about \$419,000, 'cause we laid some people off, we've cut our expenses, we've whittle things back and we're still short. Now, thankfully, this is just in time for the summer when people don't go to church or give any money. Yes! Perfect timing for death! Yes!

So I'll tell you where we're at as well. Here is the Mars Hill average. We just – if you guys could be average, that would be awesome. We're hoping to get you up to average. Okay, Mars Hill average is \$1,800.00 per year per adult – \$35.00 a week. Here's how it breaks down. Shoreline, up north, right, where they have jobs and they tuck their shirts in before they go to work, those guys are killing it – two-and-a-half thousand dollars per year per adult. The Eastside – opening the Bellevue campus, right now they're in Redmond – \$2,200.00 a year. Wedgwood and West Seattle – two newer campuses, \$2,000.00 a year per adult. Downtown, brand new campus, \$1,900.00 a year per adult. \_\_\_\_\_ Ballard! You guys are the Mariners of campuses. (Laughter) \$1,500.00 \_\_\_\_\_ strikeout. Okay, you guys are the Mariners. We love you!

What is so weird about this, when we started doing video – 'cause all the other campuses are on video, if you didn't know – the big thought was, "But Mark, if you're preaching live then everyone will come there, and those will be the committed people. Nobody will be committed on video." Apparently I am the great killer of all momentum and generosity. (Laughter) The place that I am is the place that stinketh the most. (Laughter) It's awesome. I am ready to start just with a handheld cam in my underwear at home preaching sermons and simulcasting them, because apparently as soon as it goes to video you guys give more generously. So from now on if you only see a headshot on a screen you know who's home.

Here's where we're at – and seriously, I'm here 'cause I love you. I'm at this campus because it's our biggest campus, our oldest campus. And here's what happened. Here's some reasons why Ballard is \_\_\_\_\_ not so good, okay? First is we have sent out lots of our other leaders to start other campuses, which has left a vacuum here. Secondly, you guys are, generally speaking, young, non-Christian – tons of non-Christians at this campus, new Christians – tons of new Christians at this campus, and college students and high school students, and – you know, many of you are just getting your life put together. Okay, that's understandable.

What I would warn us against at this campus is pride. We're Ballard. We're the big one. We got the cool band. Our woofers are the most impressive. And we've been here for a long time. And what I want you to see is that the illusion is this campus is killing it. The reality is this campus is getting killed. The other campuses have, you know, far less overhead and far more generosity.

So that being said, I am gonna preach today on the church, but before I do, you're going to do what with this card? You're gonna fill it out. You're going to fill it out. That's it. You can do it, Mars Hill! We believe in you! How many of you just took finals? How many of you just had finals? You can ace this. (Laughter) Name, e-mail – you can do it! Even if you get one right, (Laughter) we'll give you a B.

Okay, I'm gonna pray and we're gonna get to work on the doctrine of the church. Fill out the card, grab somebody with a t-shirt and give them your information for the clipboard, or sign up on The City on your way out. We'll deal with the church today: God sends. I'll pray, we'll get to work. You guys ready? The whole day the crowds have been horrible. The 11:00, I mean, it was just – I felt bad waking people up with making points. The 5:00, they were no – that crowd, we need to trade them for Pentecostals. If it was like baseball I would just do – I would just trade, like, "Give me some Pentecostals." I hope, I trust, I pray you guys are awake, you're here with me. I just ate a ton of pie. I feel happy on the inside. (Laughter) I totally did. Earlier today I thought, "Pie sounds good." It's been a depressing day talking about money, but I had pie! So I'm really in a pretty good mood and I'm hopped up on pie. (Applause)

So I'm gonna pray and we're gonna study the Bible together – love pie! It's a perfect food! It's awesome.

Thank you, Lord, for pie. And thank you for Mars Hill Church. And thank you for these people. And thank you for the Bible. And thank you that Jesus is alive. Thank you that the Holy Spirit has been poured out. Thank you that I get to teach the Scriptures. And I pray that by your grace, because of your Son, through the power of your Spirit, this campus would be a great campus. In Jesus' name, amen.

All right, we're gonna talk about the church. Here's where I'll start. I'll start by telling you I love the church – love our church and I love all churches that love Jesus. And if you love Jesus you're supposed to love the church 'cause you're supposed to love what Jesus loves. Jesus loves the church. Jesus died for the church, the Bible says. And so Christians should love what Jesus loves. And if you love Jesus, you love the church.

I didn't love the church until I became a Christian. I didn't actually really care much for the church. And then I met Jesus and I found a cool church. They loved Jesus. They taught the Bible. Nice people – 19 years of age in college. I started giving, serving, helping, and ever since I met Jesus at age 19 I am totally into the church. Some of you say, "But the church is all jacked up." That's why I'm into it. I'm trying to help, right? And that's my thing. People criticize the church from a distance. I would rather get in and try to do my best to make it better, 'cause that's what Jesus is doing. That being said, here's where we're gonna go. We're gonna ask this first question: how did the church begin? Awesome story from your Bible – I'll make it succinct. 39 times in John's gospel alone Jesus says, "The Father has sent me." So Jesus is God who comes as a missionary on a mission into the culture of the earth to reveal God and to save sinners. He's on his mission on the earth. The Father sent him. Jesus says elsewhere in John to the Christians, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." So the church – Christians – are following Jesus' command and we are on Jesus' mission.

Here's how it works. The gospel of Luke, I think, is very insightful, and here's what it says. It says that the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit is unprecedented, unparalleled, and prototypical for how we are to live our life. What that means is that Jesus was empowered, enabled for his missional ministry on the earth through God the Holy Spirit. I'll show you quickly in the gospel of Luke. Everything I'm gonna cover today is in about a 400 page book called Vintage Church that we published in January. I finished the manuscript last week, so I'll give you guys some of the highlights. But the point is this. At the beginning of Luke's gospel about the life of Jesus he says that Jesus' mother Mary conceived Jesus by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus was named by God Christ, which means "anointed by the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, early on we see that Jesus is baptized and the Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove, anointing him publicly, visibly, for ministry. Luke then records that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to 40 days in the wilderness. He ultimately is tempted by Satan, resisted Satan, and then he was led by the Spirit, the Bible says, back into town. And he began his public ministry by opening the scroll of Isaiah to Isaiah 61 and 62 – 61:1-2, rather. And he read this: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me." The Holy Spirit was on Jesus. And then Jesus rolls up the scroll and says, "Today this has been fulfilled in your hearing." From that point forward, Jesus casts out demons, preaches, heals people, does miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here's my big point. To be Spirit-filled, to be Spirit-led is to be like Jesus. How many of you have heard Spirit-filled, Spirit-led is someone other than Jesus as the example? Some of you are here, and even when I say Spirit-filled, Spirit-led you go back to those youth groups from that charis-maniac

church and go, “Oh, no. I hope he doesn’t bring people up, hit them on the forehead, they lay on the stage and twitch like a perch on a dock.” No, we’re not gonna do that. And too often when people say Spirit-filled, Spirit-led they’re thinking of the guy on TV with his wife who looked like she lost a paintball gun war (Laughter) sitting in huge thrones. He’s got a white suit with the pants all the way up to here, peering out the fly, telling you to give a love gift, right? That’s not it. That’s not Spirit-filled. That’s whack job. That’s a totally different team.

Spirit-filled, Spirit-led is who? Jesus. Both of you got it right. Awesome. So Spirit-filled, Spirit-led is Jesus, so if you want to be Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and spiritual, Jesus. That’s it. Be like Jesus. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and live the life that is patterned after the life of Jesus.

Fast forward. Luke writes another book. What is it? Acts. And here’s what he’s going to show. The first book, Luke, is the record of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led ministry of Jesus. Acts shows how the Spirit descended on the church, the early Christians, just like the Spirit descended on Jesus, to empower the Christian church to keep doing the ministry of Jesus. Ah, that’s where we get the church. Acts 1. We’ll move over it quickly.

Acts 1:1: “In the first book” – what book is that? Luke, here’s the sequel – “O Theophilus” – that means lover of God – “I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit” – there’s the Holy Spirit again – “to the apostles whom he had chosen.” He said, “Now, the book of Luke was about the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit until he died, rose, and ascended back into heaven.”

“To them he presented himself alive” – verse 3 – “after his sufferings” – after he died and rose – “he gave many proofs, appearing to them for 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” Jesus got his disciples together, said, “I’m gonna teach you for 40 days then I’m ascending back into heaven. I lived, I died, I rose, I fulfilled my mission on earth. Before you go out and tell the whole world that I’m alive, preach the gospel, evangelize people, plant church, wait. Wait for the Holy Spirit to anoint you, as he anointed me, to continue the ministry that I’ve begun.”

Verse 6: “So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth’” all the way to Ballard and Fremont. True story. “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up in the clouds and taken out of their sight.” So after finishing his commissioning Jesus ascends back into heaven. His earthly ministry then concludes and he is handing off the duties to his people, who are awaiting the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 2 – we move quickly. “When the day of Pentecost arrived” – that was a big Jewish holiday, people get together from all the different languages and nations and tribes and cultures. They all get together – “they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

I’ll deal with this briefly, tongues. In the 1 Corinthians series I did a while back there’s a whole sermon on tongues. You can grab the notes. You can download the sermon if you want to go into this in more depth. When I taught it, here’s my basic position. I believe that there is a prayer language, heavenly, angelic language, based out of 1 Corinthians, and some of you have a private prayer language of tongues. I believe that’s a viable, legitimate spiritual gift. In addition, tongues is also used of a known earth language – it’s a missionary gift, to where let’s say someone loves Jesus and other people don’t know Jesus. And the person that loves Jesus doesn’t speak the same language as the people who don’t know Jesus, and Jesus wants to save those people. So he gives the person who loves him the ability to speak to them in their native language. So this is different than the private prayer language that is angelic and it’s to connect you to the Lord. This is to help you evangelize people. That’s what’s going on in Acts 2, that other missionary, known language of the earth capacity to be multi-lingual.

So it goes on: verse 5. “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.” Lots of people groups. “And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own” – what’s the word? – “language.” Okay, this is languages of the earth. “And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Partheans and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians – we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of our God.’”

Here’s what happens. Handful of disciples all of a sudden have the supernatural ability, through the power of God the Holy Spirit, to speak in the tongues or language of a bunch of different people. And the people hearing it say, “That’s amazing. These guys don’t know our language, and they’re speaking it perfectly, telling us about Jesus.” Furthermore, they’re speaking the dialect of the various people groups. So it’s not just English, but the guy from the south is hearing a southern drawl, y’all, right? He’s getting that. And then the guy from Detroit who’s a huge Snoop fan, he’s hearing Izzle. (Laughter) And the Canadian guy is getting the occasional “eh.” And everybody’s hearing it, not only in their own language, but in their own dialect and in their own form of that language. And what they’re hearing is, “God loves my people. God loves my people group. He’s speaking our language.” This is the reversal of Genesis, where all the languages were one and the people were uniting to oppose God, so God scattered them, confusing their languages. Here, through the Holy Spirit, God is saying, “Around Jesus, all nations and peoples and tribes and tongues and cultures can and should come together, because I love all people.” And with the Holy Spirit empowering and with Jesus as the center, now we actually have cross-cultural racial reconciliation. It’s showing God’s love for all peoples of the earth.

And some of the people hearing this were confused – verse 12. “They were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocked, said, ‘They’re filled with new wine.’” Oh, they’ve been doing breakfast beer. And it wasn’t alcohol. I don’t know if you know this. Just ‘cause you drink, it doesn’t make you bilingual. You’re college students, you’ve tried. (Laughter) It doesn’t work that way. This is a supernatural capacity.

Then what happens is Peter preaches an amazing sermon, and I won’t get into all the details of the sermon but we’ll pick up the summary in chapter 2, verse 36. “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him” – that’s Jesus – “both Lord and Christ, this Jesus you have crucified.” He said, “Here’s who Jesus is. He’s God become a man. He’s the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He lived without sin. He died for

sin. We killed him. He rose three days later. He's Lord, God, and Savior." That was the gist of Peter's sermon.

In verse 37: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?'" You told us the truth; what do we do with it? "Peter said to them, 'Repent'" – here's repentance. Here's sin, Jesus. Let me make this as simple as I can: sin, Jesus. You can't go both directions at the same time. If you go toward sin you're turning your back on Jesus and you're faced towards sin. Repent is when you have a change of heart, mind, desire, will, and life. You turn your back on sin and you turn your face to Jesus and you walk to him. Everybody is going one of two directions: sin or Jesus. Your face is to sin as a friend, or your face is to Jesus as a friend. Or your back is to sin as a foe, or your back is to Jesus as a foe. Those who are non-Christians, their face is to sin, their back is to Jesus. Repentance is, "I'm walking away from sin, and I'm gonna pursue Jesus. I'm gonna get to know him. I'm gonna walk after him. I'm gonna love him, serve him, know him, be with him, be like him." That's what Peter says Christianity is.

"Repent, be baptized" – Jesus died and rose. We're showing that as Christians when we're baptized – "every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You can live a whole new life as a Christian with Jesus. "For the promise is for you and for your children, for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.' So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls." The church was about 120 people, the early Christians – boom. 3,000 new Christians in one day. That's awesome. We've seen hundreds in one day. We've never seen thousands. I hope, by God's grace, we do.

As all these new people become Christians, the Holy Spirit compels them to start living a certain way. This is the birth, the dawning of the New Testament church. And in the next section of verses, you'll see what they did. And here's the big idea I want you to know and I'm drilling down on in the book. The church is what happens because of the work of God the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives and minds of people. It's not just a tradition or being part of an organization. It is the Holy Spirit changing you from the inside out and giving you a new life with Jesus and his people – that's the church.

Here's what they start doing as the church. Chapter 2, verse 42: "They devoted themselves" – the first thing is Christians are devoted people, devoted to Jesus and other Christians – "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" – that ultimately became the New Testament, so they're essentially studying the Bible – "fellowship" – that's getting to know one another, friendships, relationships. Not just pouring in and pouring out of a service, but actually stopping to get to know others and do life with them – "the breaking of bread" – that would be communion, and also communion meals in homes and friendship – "and prayers" – praying for one another. During communion you can come forward for prayer. Pastors are here during communion every week to pray for you. If you need prayer for something or you want us to pray for someone that you know or love, let us know. Come on up, we'll pray for them during communion. Additionally, there is prayers in our community groups. If you're part of a community group, there's people to be regularly praying for you. And again, The City, our online social networking tool is a way for you to join a group, community group, campus group, post prayer requests, people will pray for you. They post their requests, you pray for them so that we can be in prayer for one another.

It goes on to say here, "And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles." We believe in miracles. We believe in healing. We believe in the supernatural. We believe that God can and does answer prayer. We don't believe that God's people should chase signs and wonders, but we believe that as God's people pursue Jesus signs and wonders will follow them. Do we see people healed here? Yes. Do we see prayer answered? Yes. Do we see demons cast out of people? Yes. We believe in all of it. We believe in all of it, and that's part of the power of the New Testament church.

It does on to say, "And all who believed were together" – verse 44 – "and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings, and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." They became generous, right? Single mom needs a car, we know her, we all we pitch in, buy her a car. This gal just had a baby, she's home. We're gonna start bringing meals over for a few weeks, just care for her and her family and love and serve, right? This person's sick and in the hospital. We're gonna go visit him, pray for him, cheer him up. It's generosity, and this is not mandated. This is not, like, taxation where it's required that it comes out of your pocket. This is \_\_\_\_\_ out of love, helping and being generous and sharing with those in need.

"And day by day, attending the temple together" – so big meetings like we're having right here – "and breaking bread in their homes" – we call those community groups, meals and prayer and Bible study and friendship in homes. If you're not in one, get in one. "They received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God" – that's worship – "and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." That's the birth of the early church. It's awesome. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, empowered him for ministry. Jesus finished his ministry, returned to heaven. Holy Spirit descends on Jesus' people so that we would be able to do the stuff that Jesus was doing.

That leads to a couple additional subsequent questions. What is Jesus' relationship to the church? One thing I don't want you to see is that when Jesus ascended back into heaven after his bodily resurrection, that he abandoned us and now we're on our own. That's not true. Six things that the church says about the ongoing relationship of Jesus in his church: First, four times in Ephesians alone it says that Jesus Christ is the living head of the church. He is supreme. He is prominent. He is preeminent. It's always, only, solely, totally, fully, thoroughly about Jesus. He's the head of the church – all churches, including ours.

Number two, he is the apostle who plants a church. Hebrews 3:1 said, "Jesus is apostle." Apostles are people who plant churches. There's no faithful Christian church that comes into existence unless Jesus plants us. Now, people are working with him, but Jesus is the one who ultimately plants it. This church was planted 11 years ago. We were part of the team, but Jesus planted the church. Apart from Jesus, no Mars Hill – he's the one who got it done.

Number three, Jesus is the leader who grows a church. Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, “I will build my church.” Any church like ours that learns, grows, multiples, reproduces – it’s Jesus. He builds it.

Number four, Jesus is senior pastor in every church, including ours. 1 Peter 5:3 calls him “chief Shepherd.” I’m not your senior pastor. I’m one your elders. I love what I do. I’m glad to be here. Right now there’s 32 pastors. I get one vote out of 32 guys. I’m not senior pastor. I don’t take that title. That’s Jesus’ title. I had a guy ask me recently, he said, “Well, if you get hit by a car and you die, then what are we gonna do? We won’t have our senior pastor.” I said, “Jesus does not get hit by a car. You will still have your senior pastor. You will be fine. And I’m quick – I’ll move.” (Laughter) You know, we’ll be all right. But the point is Jesus is senior pastor. And what I really – what I really want to emphasize to you is that we follow Jesus, we submit to Jesus, we learn from Jesus – he’s alive, and leaders are those who follow Jesus. But none of us is senior, he’s senior. He’s senior.

Number five, Jesus is present with the church. Matthew 28, after his resurrection Jesus gives the great commission to the church. He says, “Go forward into the nations. Make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Jesus is omnipresent God – he’s everywhere. There’s a very real sense that he’s actively involved in all Christian churches, including Mars Hill.

Number six, Jesus is also the one who, when they’re faithless or fruitless, shuts a church down. Revelation 2: he warns one church, “If you guys don’t know it off, I’m gonna come and turn the lights out.” 80 percent of all churches are plateaued and declining. Three and a half thousand churches in America die and close every year. Why? Ultimately Jesus shuts them down. He says, “You’re doing more harm than good, or you guys are way off base. I’m shutting things down.” That’s what he sometimes has to do.

Perhaps the best analogy for Jesus’ relationship with the church is Jesus’ own analogy. He says, “I am the vine; you are the branches.” Okay, now Presbyterians are a branch. Methodists are a branch. Episcopalians are a branch. You know, Assemblies of God is a branch. Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Free are branches. Foursquare is a branch. Mars Hill’s a branch. And the truth is there’s no life apart from the living Jesus. Unless we’re connected to him we’re not really a church. We may have a name or a title or a building or an event, but if you don’t have rootedness in Jesus, connectedness to Jesus – he is the source of all life.

And what sometimes happens is that denominations or churches can start to church that they’re the branch and everybody else is a vine. And if you’re not plugged into us, you’re not really biblical or Christian. That’s silly talk. People believe the Bible, love Jesus, and the churches are plugged into him. He’s the vine. We’re just branches. That’s a good analogy, and I appreciate Jesus giving us that one.

That leads to the next question – moving fast. What are the marks of the church? ‘Cause you know what? There’s the church, there’s cults, and then there’s other religions. How do you know which is which? How do you know which is which? And when I’m speaking of church here, let me give you a few theological categories. There’s the universal church and the local church. The universal church is all the Christians all around the world today. A few billion people say they’re Christians. They’re in different nations, countries, languages, styles of church, cultures – universal church. And there is the local church, and that is Mars Hill Ballard, Mars Hill West Seattle, Mars Hill Shoreline, Mars Hill Wedgwood, Mars Hill Downtown. Those are each local churches – local expressions of the universal church. When we speak of church we’re speaking in both terms. When you become a Christian you’re automatically part of the universal church, and then you need to plug in and become part of a local church.

Secondly, there’s the invisible and the visible church. This goes all the way back to the church father Augustine. The invisible church is the church as God sees it: all the people in the past, present, and future who really have regenerated hearts and really do love Jesus. And the visible church is the church as we see it. We see people who come together for services, but even in this service not everybody’s a Christian. There’s some Christians, some non-Christians – only God knows the heart. Only he knows out of this visible church which ones of us are really part of the invisible church that he alone sees.

That being said as well, the church exists in gathered and scattered form. Right now, we’re gathered. When we’re done, we’ll scatter, but you know what? We’re still a church. We still belong to each other in Jesus, and we’re still supposed to pray for one another and love one another and serve one another and care for one another, even when we’re not meeting.

That being said, with this book we’re publishing, my friend Dr. Gerry Breshears and I, we wrote a lengthy definition of what a church is, as opposed to a cult or other religions. And I’ll share it with you. Here’s the functional definition; we’ll break this down in a minute. “The local church” – here’s what we’re publishing. “The local church is a community” – so it’s people in relationship – “of regenerated” – I’ll explain that – “believers” – believers in Jesus – “who confess Jesus Christ as Lord” – he’s above everybody and everything. “In obedience to Scripture” – so it’s biblical – “the organize under qualified leadership” – we’ll get into that – “gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe the biblical sacraments of baptism and communion, are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scattered to fulfill the great commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries in the world for God’s glory and their joy.” Point is, when we do what the Bible says is the Christian life as the church, God is glorified and we’re happy ‘cause we’re doing what God made us to do. And it’s nice to participate in what he’s doing.

We break this down into eight what we’ll call marks. I really like that point, ‘cause that’s my name. (Laughter) The first one here – I get goofy at the 7:00, especially when I’m hopped up on pie. The first one is regenerated church membership. Here’s what it means. To be a member of our church you need to be a Christian. Regenerated means this: in the Old Testament, it used the language of new heart. In the New Testament, it used the language of being born again or a new creation. What it means is this: you met Jesus and you’ve changed. Now, you’re not perfect, but you’ve changed and you want to keep changing and be more like Jesus. How many of you have had that experience, where you’re like, “I didn’t love Jesus, now I do. I didn’t

care about the Bible, now I do. I used to like to sin, and now I want to stop.” Ah, that’s regeneration. God’s changed you from the inside out. Regenerated church membership is to be an official member of the church, you need to be a Christian. That’s why we set the bar of membership so high at Mars Hill. If we’re gonna have people be members who are leaders and leading others, we need to make sure, “Do you love Jesus? Do you know your Bible? You know, are you walking with God? Do you understand what we’re trying to do here?” Regenerated church membership.

If you’re here and you’re not a Christian, we love you. We’re glad to have you. We don’t want any of your money. You’re welcome in community groups, Bible studies, classes, services, welcome to ask questions, meet with leaders. If you can’t afford a Bible we’ll give you one. If you really are seeking Jesus and you want a book and you can’t afford it, let us know and we’ll give it to you. But to be a member of the church you’ve gotta be a born-again Christian. And to be a member here is not like being a member of a community council or social club. Paul says in Romans that the church is like our physical body and that members are like parts. So some of you are a finger, or an ear, a toe, an eye – that’s what Paul says to the Corinthians as well. You’re each connected. You’ve got an important part to do. You need us. We need you. All together, we do better serving Jesus.

Number two, qualified leadership – won’t get into this in great detail. I’ll summarize these offices as elders and deacons. You can read of them in 1 Timothy 3. If you want, I preached the whole book, online or my notes, in the sermon 1 Timothy 2, 1 Timothy 3. I’ve got a book called Church Leadership out next month, gets into this as well. I’ve got six books coming out in 12 months. I’m writing as fast as I can. But church leadership is basically this. Elders: qualified, godly men, they’re also called pastors. The words are synonymous – elder and pastor – in the New Testament. They love God. If they’re married they’re really good husbands and fathers, if they have kids. They know their Bible. They serve others. They care about the church. We have 32 elders.

In addition, the second office is deacons: godly men and women who also are in ministry and love God and meet criteria and are gifted in helping to lead the church. Qualified leaders – your leaders here, they’re all giving. They’re all serving. They all love Jesus. They’re all Christians. Are we perfect? No, but even in our recent go-around we’ve examined the giving of the elders and the deacons, and you know what? They’re the most faithful people in the church. They’re serving, giving, caring the most. Some are paid, some are unpaid, but they’re leaders.

Number three, gathering for preaching and worship. The New Testament word for church *ekklesia* in the Greek text; it means “assembly” or “meeting,” like this. When we get together, preaching – Paul tells Timothy, “Preach the word,” so I preach – long, okay? Here’s where we’re going with our preaching. We’re finishing the doctrine series. Then I’m doing a series on the prayer life of Jesus. The campus pastors, while I’m out this summer, are gonna do Jonah for a couple weeks. And then in the fall we’re gonna do the Song of Solomon. Just so you know, we will grow ‘cause this is a filthy town and lots of people will show up for that. That’s why we’ve gotta get you guys all plugged in as members, find a place for you, so when all the new crowd of thousands of people come in September, we’re ready to welcome them and plug them in. So get on board. And then we’re gonna take about a whole year and do a gospel – probably the gospel of Luke, and just go right through the life of Jesus for at least a year. That’s where we’re going with the preaching. And worship, which is singing and celebrating and thanking Jesus and responding with tithes as offerings as well.

Number four, sacraments – that’s communion. We do it every week to remember the death of Jesus in our place for our sins. The bread shows us his body. The drink shows us his blood. And baptism – we love baptizing new Christians. They go under the water, showing that Jesus was buried for them. And they come out of the water, showing that Jesus rose for them and he gives them a whole new life. We love baptizing folks. I think that’s why God put us in Seattle. There’s water everywhere. We can just pull over and dunk ‘em. We love that. (Laughter) If you were here for Easter, we baptized hundreds of Christians on that day. We’ve got our big outdoor beach bonanza this summer where we baptize. About half – I don’t know, five or six guys in the college ministry got baptized this week. We’re always baptizing new Christians and we love it.

Number five, unified by the Spirit. This means we agree on what we will and will not fight over. Closed-handed issues: Jesus, the Bible, the Trinity, heaven, hell, sin – big issues, right? These are the points of our unity. Eh, open-handed issues? Ah, private school, public school, home school for your kids, you like a certain kind of music or not, you have an opinion about the rapture – I don’t know, whatever. You wish I’d wear a suit or a robe. (Laughter) Whatever, send me one. We’ll see. (Laughter) You know, they all go in this hand, and what this means is the secondary issues, we’re gonna discuss them. We’ll debate them. But we’re not gonna divide over them. We’re not gonna get divorced over those things. The whole point of the doctrine series is to define, “Here’s our points of unity, here’s our points of diversity.” We’re unified around the things that are big to the Holy Spirit, and the other things we’re gonna have grace and flexibility and a little bit of diversity and variance in our church.

Discipline for holiness – this means if you’re in sin and you’re a Christian in this church, someone will come to you and say, “You know, this is not good. I think you need to repent and change.” And if you get hard-hearted, stiff-necked, self-righteous, proud, defiant, well, then a few other people who love you come along. And the whole point is to lovingly bring you into a position of health if you’re being unhealthy. You may say, “Okay, cool. I appreciate it.” Great, now we want to walk with you. We want to love you. We want to help you. But if you’re still stiff-necked, hard-hearted, rebellious, obstinate, proud, defiant, well, then, maybe church leadership gets involved and says, “Look we love you. You need to acknowledge this is not right and you need to stop. And we want to help you. It’s not just, we’re pointing a finger at you. We want to walk with you.” The goal is always reconciliation and restoration.

But sometimes even then people get super defensive and self-righteous and proud and defiant. And sometimes it’s obvious. You know, a guy’s cheating on his wife or screaming at his kids, or – and you go, “Dude, this is – you say you’re a Christian. This is unacceptable. It’s gotta stop.” And if the guy keeps pushing and pushing and pushing it, the last step, last resort, is to remove him from fellowship in the church – not to destroy him, but to say, “Look, we love you. We’re walking with Jesus. We want you to walk with us. If you’re willing to change we want to walk with you, but you’re sick and you’re rebellious and you’re defiant and you’re toxic and you’re – you’re affecting everybody in a real negative way. And until you want to change, there’s really nothing we can do with you other than pray for you and wait for you – not in bitterness or in anger, but in hope that you would come to

your senses.” In a church of our size, it’s very hard to practice church discipline. We still do. We still do.

As well, obey the great commandment to love, okay? Church is about people loving one another. This really does happen best in our serving groups and our community groups – smaller groups meeting every week, eight, ten, twelve people – whatever it might be. You actually get to know each other, care for one another, serve one another, pray for one another. Get in a community group. Sign up on the way out or give us your information and we will send you an invitation.

And what love doesn’t mean is this. It doesn’t mean we all get a matching sweatshirt and ride a tandem bike, you know, and that we all like each other, even. You can love people you don’t like. You say, “I don’t have anything in common with them. You know, I don’t feel like we have anything that really is cool between us, but you know what? I love them ‘cause Jesus loves me and he loves them, and he wants me to love them.” So love overrides like and affinity in the church. See, most people love people who are like them. We call that affinity. Community is you like people that are not like you – in fact, you love them, even if you don’t like them.

And lastly, we obey the Great Commission to evangelize and make disciples. I’ll just tell you the bottom line. If you’re here, you’re like, “What? I’m not a Christian. You trying to make me a Christian?” Duh, totally. Yeah! Hey, you’re a sinner. Jesus is God. He died for sin. Confess your sin to him. Receive a brand new life. And have Jesus change your life right now and live with him forever. Yeah, that’s what we’re into – totally. And some people, they always criticize. They’re like, “Oh, you guys are all about just making converts.” Well, duh. So is the porn industry, you know? I mean, everybody’s doing it. We just want people to meet Jesus, get a changed life, not go to hell. If we had to vote more or less people in hell, I’d be like, “Less. I vote less.” (Laughter) You know? I mean, and we live in this weird town where it’s like, “Hey, don’t impose your thing on me!” Oh, really? If I stop recycling, is this reciprocal? You know, everybody’s got their little thing. (Laughter) Ours is Jesus. We love you. Jesus – that’s what we’re into.

And also, it’s not just evangelizing people, it’s making disciples, meaning you grow in your faith, read your Bible, mature, become more like Jesus. That’s why we do community groups, classes, conferences. That’s why as well we have redemption groups who those who are sexually addicted, sexually abused, drug addicts, alcoholics – we’re trying to help. Premarital – we’re trying to help, man, not just meet Jesus, but then also grow in him. It’s a both/and – totally! I’m pretty fired up about this.

Who harms a church? This could be a whole series of sermons for the rest of my life, but for the purposes of brevity, I will give you four. First is me – burned out leaders. I’ll tell you what happens with the church. The church can totally kill leaders. The average pastor, just a couple years, burned out, gone. Sometimes it’s really brutal. I’ll give you guys a brutal example. I was down with Rick Warren – he’s a pastor and an author in LA. I was down having dinner with him a few weeks ago, and he told this sort of horrifying story. He said, “Five years ago I made a list of the most” – what he considered to be influential young pastors in America and he started praying for them, and I was one of those guys. And he said, “I recently revisited the list, and half of those guys are out of ministry forever.” Half of them burned out, just physically broke, or mentally or spiritually, emotion broke. Half flamed out through sexual sin, misconduct, pornography, adultery, and the like. Some of them it was drugs and alcohol as well.

It is – I mean, I don’t – I don’t mean to whine, but I will. Sometimes it’s hard to express being a young pastor, first church, raised millions of dollars, lead thousands of people, write dozens of books, married, five kids, finished grad school, church planting movement, massive media pressure, tons of critics and the occasional death threat. Okay? You throw that all in and you’re like, “That’s a lot.” That’s a lot for the first ministry you ever have. And the result is that occasionally leaders under certain kinds or levels of pressure, they reach their max breaking point and they crack.

I’ll give you a couple of examples. It was a year or two ago – something of that nature. I got together with some of the youngest pastors of the largest churches in America. We’re all meeting, and it was me and I think maybe one other guy in that room that hadn’t been hospitalized in the previous year. One guy was 28. He said, “Pray for me. I’m going in for stress-related abdominal surgery” – 28. I’m like, “28, dude, and they’re cutting you open for stress?” I mean, that’s pretty serious. Another guy in the room, he was about 32. I said, “Tell me about your family.” He said, “I’m married but I don’t have any kids.” I said, “Oh, I’m sorry.” He said, “No, no, no, we’ve decided the ministry is so much pressure and work, I already don’t get a day off and we’re not gonna have any children ‘cause I can’t have children and be a pastor.” I was like, “No babies? No kids?” He sent me an e-mail a few months later that said, “Pray for me. I just had a heart attack.” He’s 32! Heart attack!

About 18 months ago – some of you know this story – I hit my wall. Ten years of Mars Hill – blowing, going, pushing, writing, growing, raising money, working hard, doing my job, preaching 50-ish Sundays a year, four, five, six sermons, counseling, weddings, controversy – the whole deal. And I took two weeks off for Christmas. I was fried. I was gonna sleep. I went to bed and I’d sleep an hour, two hours, three hours a night – wake up, could not sleep, exhausted. Big black circles under my eyes – I looked like a raccoon, it was ridiculous. I went to one doctor. I said, “What do I do?” The doctor said, “Quit your job.” I was like, “Jesus told me to do it. I can’t do that.” I found another doctor, I said, “What do I do?” He was a Christian guy – good guy. He said, “Change your diet. Change your exercise routine. Change the church. Organize it. Take things off your plate. Share the power. Distribute – change everything.” I said, “What if I don’t?” He said, “You might not see 40.” I said, “40? I got five kids. I gotta see 40.”

I’d blown out my adrenal glands. I’d been running off adrenaline for a decade, and finally my body just tapped out. See, I’m not a guy who will ever tap out. I’m not an ultimate fighter, but if I were I would have all my bones broken and I would not tap out. I would just die. (Laughter) That’s me. I’m stubborn. I won’t tap out, so I’ll play hurt. And so we had to get Mars Hill organized, get things off my plate. And a year and a half later – here’s the God’s honest truth – happiest I’ve ever been, holiest I’ve ever been, healthiest I’ve ever been. I take, like, 20-some vitamins a day. I work out. Some of you are like, “He doesn’t look like it.” Imagine if I didn’t, what I would look like. (Laughter) I sleep like a Calvinist, which is awesome – God is sovereign. And I work from home a lot. And now with the campus pastors and the executive elders and the board of directors, the decision-making and the responsibility is shared across really good teams. And our goal is not to burn our people out, but to have them in good, loving, working teams, from the elders, through the deacons, through the members. And my fear is, especially with the Ballard campus, some of the people who are most committed

and most devoted, we're gonna burn them out unless we get you guys plugged in as members to serve and help out.

And just so you know, here's my deal. I want to be here for my whole life, and this is not a – it's very rare that a pastor says that or actually plans to do that. My family and I, we attend the Ballard campus. We love it here. We serve here. We tithe here. This is our campus. We love it. We love you guys. We're glad to be here. And my plan is just to be here for another 40 years. And I've always told you, and you can join me in prayer for this, my goal is as I'm sensing the end, I'm gonna call a big funeral – you guys are all welcome to come – and I'm gonna preach it. And it's gonna rock. And that's gonna be my final sermon, and I am gonna put the bat on the ball, I tell you that. And then I'm gonna climb into the box and shut the lid and tell Jesus you said hi. That's my plan, okay? (Laughter) So I don't want to burn out. I don't want to be one of those guys that has a heart attack in his 40s. And so the church can't just work for the people, it also needs to work for the leaders so that we can all lead it. But burned out leaders can kill the church.

So can false teachers – these are cult leaders, single-issue voters, people who come in with their bizarre secondary issues wanting to fight. False teachers are dangerous in a church like ours. I know many of you are high school students, college students – do you know we have cult leaders and other religions that regularly come to these services and try and fish people out? Do you know that we actually have cult leaders that stalk some of our college students? Do you know we actually have cult leaders that try to become members so they can lead community groups and teach you false doctrine that's not biblical? It's why we raise the bar of membership so high. If you want to be a member, teach, lead, we want to know that you know the Bible. We want to know that you know us, and that we know you, and that you're safe. False teachers are dangerous.

Also there are wolves. Okay, in a church, there's sheep – that's people, goats – non-Christians. Sheep are Christians, goats are non-Christians. Shepherds, who look after them, and wolves – wolves attack the shepherds and try and take the sheep. That's what they do. That's what they do. Wolves are real. They love power. They love authority. They love control. And they'll attack a shepherd, and their whole goal is to take sheep away.

Now, the problem is sometimes wolves don't know they're wolves. They just think they're misunderstood shepherds. But it's the goal of the shepherd to say, "That's a wolf – nope. That's a sheep – protect him." That's the job of shepherding. And sometimes wolves do come in. We've had people come into this church throughout the 11 year history literally trying to just take people. We don't mind sending people out for campuses, church plants, other ministries. We've sent hundreds of thousands of people, saying, "Go here and serve Jesus. Go" – great! Not wolves – go with other shepherds. And even if you're here and Ballard's not gonna be your campus, or let's say you go to another church in the morning and you come here in the evening, here's what I would say. Pick one place, one church, plug in. Stop dating three churches. Marry one, okay? But just, whatever you do, don't follow a wolf. There are other churches that love Jesus. There's other pastors that believe that Bible. If Mars Hill's not what God has called you to have as your devoted place of worship, let me tell you, well, then, God bless you. Just go to another place where there's a shepherd and sheep. Watch out for the false teachers. Watch out for the wolves. Just be smart about it, that's all.

And lastly – I love you, but what kills a church as well is consumer Christians. These are the takers. Do you give any money? "Nope." Do you take? "Yep." Do you serve? "Nope." Are you served? "Yep." Do you download? "Yep." Do you show up? "Yep." You have needs? "Yep." Do you give anything – money, time, prayer? "Nope." If you're not a Christian, don't give. We love you. If you're a brand new Christian, we understand. You're getting caught up, just getting your life together.

But if you've been a Christian for a while, we have so many non-Christians and new Christians to be like those Christians have that some of you have. When you all go out to dinner together, as soon as the check comes they conveniently go to the bathroom for a very long time. (Laughter) Some of you – yeah, you chuckle. You're like, "Yeah, I'm here with that person." Those are freeloaders, okay? When you're a baby somebody feeds you. When you're an adult you feed yourself and you feed somebody else. And I know that the pain point for many of you is you're just getting your life together. But as quickly as possible you need to feed yourself and start feeding others – serving, giving, helping, praying, caring and participating.

If you are here and you attend another church in the morning and don't give, and you attend this church in the evening and don't give, pick one and give, right? There are so few Christians in Seattle, and there are so few churches in Seattle that believe the Bible and love Jesus – and we are by now means the only one, but there's not a ton. And if you're taking from here, and taking from here, and taking from here, you're taking all the resources that would allow us to go out and get people that don't know Jesus yet, or help hurting people. I mean, truly, I've been disappointed with some people, even in this campus, who are saying, "I want hours of this pastor's time, and hours of this pastor's time, and hours of this pastor's time," and they don't really have any great need. They're just demanding. I asked one person recently, I said, "If you keep taking that pastor's time, they're giving a large number of their hours to help rape victims. And if you take all their time, then they can't help the rape victims." And the person said, "What about my needs?" I said, "Your need is to grow up and stop being so selfish. You're doing fine. These people were raped. Stop demanding more time and help!"

If you're a Christian, your goal in your heart should be, "If I have needs, I want to be helped. But I also, even if I have needs, want to help others." At some point it's getting off the bottle and starting to feed yourself. Consumer Christians, if you are here – and I'll say this, if you're a pastor or a leader in another church and you come here in the evening just to grow and be served, we love you and you're welcome to be here, actually, 'cause you're not just taking. You're really giving somewhere else, and we want part of our ministry to be to welcome you. If you're checking us out, trying to figure out if Mars Hill should be your time, I get it. Take your time, figure it out.

But truly, are you one of those Christians that you don't land in any church 'cause none of them's right for you? None of them's biblical? None of them's good enough? If you've been to 27 churches and not one of them is right, just remember this: you're the only constant variable. It's probably you. I'm not at Mars Hill because everything's right, but because I'm needed and I'm trying to help. And people who love Jesus that love this church, they know we're not perfect, and they're wanting to help. And if you're here, we'd love to have you help. And if you don't want to help and you're a Christians, you've gotta search your own heart and find a place where you can help. And honestly, if that's us, great. If that's another church, great. But in a city like this, we cannot have the Christians just sucking resources in the least-church city in America. There's still way too much work to be done.



That's my little scolding. You're welcome. (Laughter)

Now, last point. What is Jesus doing at Mars Hill Church? This is where I get actually really excited. This is why I don't clean my gun all the time and listen to emo. I'm actually really excited, okay? (Laughter) And I'll tell you what Jesus is doing at Mars Hill. And even in telling you this, I know I'm walking into a controversy, 'cause if I don't tell you what we're doing you won't plug, 'cause you'll say, "Well, they're not doing anything." But if I tell you what we're doing, you'll say, "They're being proud," and you'll blog about it. So I'm jacked either way, so I'm just gonna tell you what's going on, okay?

And here's the deal: we're in Seattle, least-churched city in America, right? Less evangelical Christians than dogs – that's where we're at. Most overpriced city in America, least generous city in America – it's a joke that's not funny. That's where we're at. (Laughter) Now, we love the city, but what a – what a difficult place it is to be.

But here's what God's done. We got all kind of awards for what God's doing here. It's amazing. Second-most innovative church in America, out of 400,000. Second-most reproducing church – church plants – in America. Number eight most-influential – now, this is crazy, 'cause there's 400,000 churches. There's churches that are much larger than us that are on TV. And when all they – this huge survey of pastors was taken, they said, "Of all the churches in America, which ones do you pay attention to?" Number eight? Mars Hill Church, Seattle, and that's crazy 'cause, like, we're not on TV. My wife and I don't have Glamour Shots on buses, you know? (Laughter) That's not how we do it, and people are still tuning and paying attention, which is awesome. Two years ago we were the fifteenth fastest growing church in America. This year we were the twenty-third fastest growing church in America, in the least-churched city in America. That's awesome – tons of people becoming Christians, hundreds of new Christians, hundreds of new weddings, hundreds of new babies every year. Go from one to six campuses, working on our seventh. Only 100 churches in America are 6,000 or more. Only 40 are 10,000 are more – that's what we're pushing toward.

Some of you will say, "It's all about the numbers for you, isn't it? It's all about" – yes, it is. It's about the number of people that meet Jesus. I want that number to go up! We just read in the book of Acts, how many were added in a day? 3,000. You know what that is? That's a number, just so you know. (Laughter) They were counting! There's a whole book of the Bible called Numbers! There you go. (Laughter)

And it's not just about that, but, like – you know, what's cool for me – it's cool for me to say, "That person met Jesus. That person met Jesus. That person met Jesus. That person met Jesus." I recently was at a church event, and I just started asking people, "When did you become a Christian?" Literally, dozens and dozens of people: "I became a Christian this year at Mars Hill." Like, that's great. I remember being 19 as lost as Dick Cheney in the woods, not knowing what I was doing. (Laughter) And then I met Jesus, and Jesus is amazing! I really like Jesus, and I want people to meet him – lots of them! And that's why we're here! And those who know him, I want them to know him better because he's great!

I get bored with everything. I never drive to or from work the same way twice. I refuse to eat leftovers. And the only thing I've not gotten sick of 19 years is Jesus. I'm still fired up. Jesus is great, and I have good news! He's alive! You can pray to him. You can talk to him. You can sing to him. You can walk with him. He'll help you. Yeah, I want lots of people to meet Jesus. That's the big idea.

How about this one? Technology – I'm thrilled with what's going on technologically. Satellite – now we can go anywhere in the country or the world. Website's killing it. They built a new multimedia library which will even take us to the next level. I love The City that Pastor Zack built so we can have online communication with one another in a secure environment. People are now asking if they can use that around the world. I love what's going on with discipleship, community groups, membership, redemption groups, training classes, intern programs – all cool, people growing.

And in the end, too, I know some of you will be like, "Oh, it's all about Mars Hill." I get this all the time. I get so frustrated. I'm cranky today, but it's your fault. So, they'll be like, "Oh, it's all about" – it's not all about Mars Hill. Ten percent of all the money that comes in we give away to other churches. Very few of you give ten percent. Your church gives ten percent to other churches. We always have. This year it will be a million dollars – million dollars (Laughter), given away to other churches to help start other churches. 125-plus church plants in America, plus those that are overseas – it's awesome!

In addition, at TheResurgence.com we give away tons of content for pastors. When we host conferences, we give all of that away online. We give away our stuff at Facebook and MySpace and YouTube and iTunes, and – (Laughter) it's late, I need more pie – and in the middle of it all, we're just – we're giving away, 'cause we – and you know what happens, is millions – millions of people a year download the content from Mars Hill Church all over the world. Every time I publish a book we give hundreds of copies away to pastors. Every year we host multiple training events for free for pastors. We feed them. We give them books, Bibles, resources. We teach them. We train them. We invest in them – hundreds, and from different denominations, even denominations that we don't agree with on everything, but they believe the Bible and they love Jesus. I even go out and teach and consult for denominations that have women pastors. Like, "What are you doing here?" Loving you – we totally disagree (Laughter), but we agree that Jesus is God so we're brothers and sisters. And even if we don't agree, if more people meet Jesus, I praise God for that.

And the goal is just help as many as we can, serve as many people as we can, and now it's gone global. See, I get this cool perspective that very few get. I get to see all of what's going on globally. So I'm going to London to train 5,000 pastors in July. After that, I'm going to Australia in August and we're doing events up to 10,000 people at a time. We just opened the first pastor's training event – 2,200 seats sold out in 11 minutes. You say, "How do they know?" They log on to the Internet and get all the free stuff we give away.

And so, guys, we are giving, serving. We consult with other churches. We invest in other churches. Every service at this campus today had pastors from out of state, here for learning. There's so much going on. And here's my big idea. If you shop up and you're like, "The parking kind of sucks and the coffee's not so good," I don't care! That's not the big idea! You're out of shape – walk! Bring your own coffee! Just get on board with what we're

trying to get done! (Applause) So here's the big idea. You become a member. Get plugged in, right? You can do it, Mars Hill! Fill out the little form! You can do it! It's two lines! You can do it! You can do it all by yourself! You'll have a sense of completion, satisfaction, fulfillment! For the first time in your life, you finished a task! Here you go, Mars Hill! Fill 'er out! Let us know who you are. I know you won't. (Laughter) I know you won't. And you know what? We're gonna bug you again next week, and we're gonna be here forever, (Laughter), and we're gonna keep buggin' you 'cause we love you and we're not gonna give up on you even though you drive us crazy. (Laughter) We still love you. That's why I'm here.

I'm gonna pray. You're gonna respond. Give your tithes and offerings. Leave your handy-dandy card. Take communion, remembering the body and blood of Jesus. If you're not a Christian, give your life to Jesus. And then you're gonna sing, Mars Hill. So I'm gonna bring out Pastor Tim, and his legendary ZZ-Top goatee. Pastor Tim in the house! And I told him, "No more of these suicidal, kill-myself-for-Jesus indie rock songs tonight." Everybody who ever sang a big song in this town killed themselves. We need to fix that, sing some happy songs. Jesus is alive. The Holy Spirit's been poured out. We have great work to do. And so we're gonna have ourselves a little Holy Ghost party. Ready to roll, Pastor Tim? You will see Pastor Tim do something amazing while he is singing. He will raise his hands! Now, this is possible for others to do likewise. These are hands, and they go all the way up (Laughter) toward Jesus. And I know if you raise them, people will think, "Is this is a charismatic church?" Just a little bit. (Laughter) Okay? So I'm gonna pray and we're gonna get to work.

Lord God, thank you that Jesus is alive, that the Holy Spirit has been poured out, that most of these people will never turn in their cards or tithe, but you love them because you are a God of grace. I thank you that we're not a cult. I thank you that we're not another religion. I thank you that ultimately our hope is not in ourselves, that our hope is in you. And you're gonna make me a better pastor. You're gonna make us a better church. You're gonna make the non-Christians Christians. You're gonna make the Christians mature. And so we come tonight to celebrate you. You are good. You are alive. You are God, and we are glad. Amen.

Love you, Mars Hill. Sing!