

How are we? Let's go to 1 Corinthians 12, which is the text we'll be in tonight. I think there are very simple things that can get very complicated very quickly, things that we think we understand and grasp until someone asks us questions. I'll give you an example before I make my point. The other night we had breakfast for dinner. I don't know that you've ever tried this, but it's really a good idea. We had scrambled eggs, bacon and toast for dinner. Now that's not a big deal for me because I understand what breakfast is and I understand what dinner is and I understand the difference. That is until my six year old started asking me questions about breakfast for dinner. At this point I literally could no longer explain to her what breakfast is and what dinner is. I fancy myself an educated man. I read the Wall Street Journal, I read the New York Times, I read books constantly, I feel I am aware of cultural situations. But my daughter started asking me questions of what breakfast was since we were having it for dinner. And so I'm going, "Well, it's the first meal of the day...well no, because back in college, I never ate breakfast." I had lunch and then lupper (the meal between lunch and supper) and then dinner and then a taquito from Whataburger at 1:00AM, which is just standard collegiate fare. And so I was like, "Okay, breakfast isn't always the first meal of the day. It's a type of food like cereal and...well no, because we're having eggs and bacon for dinner tonight." And so breakfast is a really simple idea until you try to explain it and people start asking you questions about it, and then it just kind of breaks down. It's an ambiguous idea. And I think very much the same is true about church. Like everybody can go, "I go to this church" or "I'm a member of this church" or "this is the church I go to," but most people, if you push and start asking them about what it is, what it means, they can't answer the question. They know what it is, but they don't know what it is. And that creates a lot of problems if what the church is is God's way of maturing us and growing us into the fullness of worshiping Him.

And so let me show you some things about what I mean when I say complexity. Romans 16:3-5, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house." So the church is a group of believers gathered in a house. Now over in 1 Corinthians 1:2, it says this, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus,..." So the church is believers in a house, but the church is also all the believers in a city. Acts 9, starting in verse 31 says this, "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up." So the church is a group of believers in a house, the church is also a bunch of believers in a given city and the church is also all the believers in an area. Like the church is also all the believers in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma...well maybe not Oklahoma. Just kidding. In Ephesians 5:25 it says this, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." Okay so the church is a group of believers in a house, the church is all the believers in a city, the church is all the believers in a region and the church is all believers everywhere, over all time. So yeah, we can get confused. Yes, this thing is far more complex than "This is the building I go to where they sing and preach."

So there are all these metaphors about what the church actually is. Like we're a family, God is our Father, you and I are brothers and sisters. You've got the image the bride, we are the bride of Christ; He is the bridegroom. We're wearing the white dress, pure and undefiled on our wedding day, reconciled to God. You've got that imagery. You've got where us gentiles are grafted in to the line. And then you've got the other imagery, one of the biggest in the New Testament, and that's where we'll be spending the majority of our time. Let's look in 1 Corinthians 12, starting in verse 12, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” This is one of the greatest, most consistent imageries of what we are as the church. We have one head, Jesus Christ, and all of us are parts of the body, interdependent on one another, needing one another to become all that God has asked us to be. This is the imagery.

And then what does the church do? Well it does three things, maybe four. One is it worships, which is a good idea because that’s what we were created for. And I can speak to men better here because I am one. That weird thing that draws us to sports and stuff like that, that’s just a deep, innate desire to worship something. That’s all that is. And so it’s a good thing the church worships, because that’s what you were created to do, worship. And for the record, we’re not made to worship 20 year old boys that play with a ball. Now, we worship and we nurture one another. My wife took me to see a movie yesterday; it was really great, because she didn’t take me to a movie that I didn’t want to see. I don’t know if your wife has ever done that, “I want to take you to a movie” and it’s *Marley and Me*. That’s not for me. I already know how it ends; I’ve seen *Old Yeller*. If there’s a dog in it, we know how it ends. She took me to see a movie, and there was a preview of this movie that I thought was so American. It’s a movie called *Taken*, and the brief preview showed a man played by Liam Neeson and a man snatches his daughter in Paris. It shows him on the phone and he goes, “I have a very unique set of skills...a set of skill that makes me a nightmare for people like you.” And then he basically says, “I’m going to hunt you down and I’m going to kill you.” And then it just starts moving to all these scenes where Liam Neeson, all by himself, takes on all 6,082 people who are shooting at him at once, but he’s dodging bullets and moving and killing the bad guys. And that’s almost every American movie ever made. It’s one guy vs. all these other guys. Guys, if you remember playing guns in your backyard and you shoot your friend, he’s like, “No, I dodged it.” And so this is the American way of thinking, “I’ve got it. I’ll handle it. I’ll conquer it. I’ll take care of it.” Now it’s not a biblical way of thinking whatsoever, but it’s absolutely an American way of thinking. This faith was not designed for you to handle it, conquer it and overcome it by yourself. No, we desperately, desperately, desperately need one another. Look, some of you are just ears. Some of you are just eyes. You need other people to speak life into you. You need other people to challenge you and push you. We need each other. The Bible would even say it like this in places, particularly the Old Testament, “I cannot be all that I was meant to be without you, and you cannot be all that you were meant to be without me. We are in Christ woven together to such an extent that we need one another to be all that God has asked us to be. And the more we isolate ourselves, the more our sins are our sins that have to get handled and it’s nobody else’s business, the more you live like that, walk like that, understand our faith like that, the more you’re robbed of life and power that you were meant to have in Christ. We nurture one another. And then we love the world. That means that we fight for justice where there is not justice, we extend mercy where there is no mercy and we use every bit of position and authority God gives us to care for, love and reach out to the poorest of poor and the weakest of weak. And we share our faith. Those are the three. And then I would say there’s one more that’s very important. The church balances those three callings. Lest you get a church that all they ever do is nurture one another but not do anything else. Or you get a church that does all outreach but nothing else. Or all you get is a church that sings a lot but nothing else. Those are weak models.

So here’s the big question: If that’s what the church is supposed to be, and a church can be in a house, in a city, in a region and it can be all the believers everywhere all time, then what actually is a church? What defines it? So let me throw out a hypothetical situation. Let’s say that we’re here today, we just finished singing and I come up and go, “Um, I want to talk to you and start a series called ‘Debt is Dumb.’ And in it I have seven points. So point number one of why debt is dumb...” And I roll through point number one, then point two, then point three and I say, “We’ll get to the rest

of those next week, but remember debt is dumb." And then as I walk down, the worship leader comes up and gets his guitar and he wrote a song called "Debt is Dumb." And he sings, "If you have four bucks but you spent seven, you're dumb." And then on the way out, just to remind you, you get a bumper sticker or a t-shirt that says, "Debt is Dumb." And then I pray after the debt is dumb song, "God, thank You for showing us that debt is dumb. And I pray that we would operate within our means. Amen. Debt is dumb." So here's my question: Did we just do church? The sign out front says "Church." I'm an ordained pastor, a licensed minister. Did we just do church though? Let's just say a couple of us met at a bar. I'm in disguise wearing glasses and a hat. And we go in, we order a couple of O'Doul's Ambers and we sit there and talk about Jesus and the Bible. And one of your friends walks up and he's like, "What are you guys talking about?" We're like, "Jesus." And he sits down and two or three are gathered. And we talked in a circle for about an hour about Jesus and philosophical ramblings about how life works. And then we just say goodnight and leave. Did we just do church? What constitutes a church?

Well biblically and historically there are two things necessary for there to be a church. And if it's lacking either one of them, it's not a church regardless of what the sign says out front and regardless of how many credentials the man on stage has, whether or not he has a PhD in Theology or he's deemed himself a bishop. If you're missing one of the two pieces, it's not a church. Both the Scriptures and almost every great theologian in history, Luther, Calvin agree. It's a very rare thing for every one to agree on something, but in this case historically you have agreement. A church exists where the Word of God is rightly taught and the ordinances are rightly administered. Which means a church is where the Bible is taught in its full and baptism and communion occur. Where you do not have the Bible taught, where you do not have baptism and where you do not have communion, you no longer have what the Scriptures would call a church. The Rotary Club is an awesome organization that does amazing things for people, but they're not a church. There are tons of churches that have church in their name who do not preach and teach the Bible. Those things are not historically nor biblically church. Where a church is, the Word is rightly divided and baptism and communion take place. And here's what's so amazing. That happens everywhere. Like in 1998 I flew into New Delhi and then took a train down to Jaipur. One of the funnest moments of my life was taking the train from New Delhi down to Jaipur. I can't tell you the story because it was completely inappropriate, but it was awesome. I get there and there's this group of about 200 Indians. They break bread and they do communion and they baptize. I'm like, "Oh my God, we do that at home." In China, I got to sit in a room with 150 house church pastors. And they broke bread and they drank wine and afterwards they baptized.

These things are everywhere. It's what marks us as people of God. So let me try to explain them, because they're kind of weird. Grown people being dunked under water, that's a weird thing. Drinking out of such a small cup, it's an odd deal. Let me try to explain them. I'm not a jewelry guy. I really didn't start wearing watches until my wife started dressing me. This ring was given to me on my wedding day. My wife put it on my finger and then she made these vows to God concerning me. Like she was going to love me this certain way, and she was going to do life with me until I wasn't alive anymore. And she gave me this ring. So this ring for me has just got an unbelievable amount of meaning. And I wear a second ring, which people ask me about all the time. When Audrey was born, my wife got me a St. Christopher medallion, and when Reid was born, she got me a ring. I was like, "Baby, this is a little too much stuff for me. I'm uncomfortable." And so I threw out the idea, "Maybe we could get one ring to rule them all." So she got one ring and it's got Psalm 145 put on the inside. "One generation shall commend Your works to another." So I don't know how your home works, but I have a six year old, a three year old and one on the way. And there were times with my children that I wish there was some place to take them. I mean, sure you might be super dad or super mom and are like, "I always love all of my children." I do always love all of my children, but sometimes I'd love them more if they could go away for a little while. But for some reason, this ring just reminds me. Like when I'm feeling that I don't have patience, when I want to be self-seeking, it's just a weird reminder of what God's me to do and what He's trusted me with. Because here's the bottom line, you can outsource a lot of things, like you can outsource your kid's athletic growth, you can outsource your kid's intellectual growth, but at the end of the day, you will stand in front of God and give up an account of how you

trained up your child and the way they should go concerning the Lord. You can't outsource their spiritual development; that falls on you. So it's just a reminder. And I don't know how your marriage is, but sometimes in mine there's tension. Sometimes we don't even know where it came from. Like Lauren did something wrong or she didn't do something. You know, something like that. Just kidding. It's always me, I swear. And I just don't feel like loving her like Christ loves the church in that He gave His own life for her. I just don't feel like laying down and being selfless and serving her. I know I'm probably a very rare breed and most of you super romantic studs here aren't like that. So these two rings are just rings. Combined, they're worth like around \$100. They don't mean a lot to you. If you found it, you wouldn't pick it up and go, "I just feel like there's this spiritual, emotional weight to this ring. Yes, there is." If you found this one, I don't know that you would pick it up and go, "I feel all the hope of generational curses being broken in this ring. Yes, I feel that in it." No, it would just be a ring to you. It would be a cheap silver ring to you. To me these are rings, but they are much more than rings. There's a symbolism in them, there's a reminder in them.

That's what our ordinances are. That's what baptism is, that's what communion is. It's a reminder of something bigger and thicker than just the act themselves. Now we're talking about the universal church, all Christians everywhere. The ordinances are part of our faith. We believe that baptism is immersing in water after you've come to know the Lord. And let me tell you why we land there, because there are Christians that don't believe this way, but we believe this way because of how we read the Bible. The Greek word baptizo means to immerse. That's what it means. Not only does it mean that in Koine Greek in the New Testament, but in any other 1st century literature that you find the Greek word baptizo it means to immerse. Every baptism in the New Testament is done by immersion, every one of the. And let me give you some examples. By the way, if you haven't been baptized by immersion, I'm not trying to discredit your baptism at all. I'm just trying to explain to you, because we're about to do baptism, why we do it the way we do it. In Mark 1:5 it says, John the Baptist is baptizing people in the River Jordan. So it wasn't on the side of the River Jordan. They were in the River Jordan. In Mark 1:10, they baptize Jesus and Jesus comes up out of the water. In John 3:23, the Scriptures tell us that John picks the spot where he was baptizing because there was a ton of water. If you're sprinkling, you don't need a ton of water. In Acts 8, Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch riding are in this chariot for a pretty good period of time. And then the Ethiopian eunuch believes and they come across a river and he goes, "Is there a reason I shouldn't be baptized?" Well if they're in a chariot on a long journey, you would have to believe there's some sort of canteen or some sort of water already on the chariot. But they're looking for a river. But here's the big one. If you have your Bibles, go to Romans 6 with me. We'll pick it up in verse 3, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." He used the word baptize three times there and here's the illustration, here's the picture, here's the weight behind the symbol. You and I died to ourselves in the death of Christ that all our sin is laid on Christ, and in His resurrection, we're raised to walk in the newness of life. The symbolism around baptism is that of dying, being buried and being called back to life. That symbolism of which the Scriptures are rich in disappears if it's not believer's baptism by immersion. That picture no longer exists. And so this is why we baptized by immersion here. This is why we say, "This is what the Scriptures command," because I've just shown you what we think they command. Now, there are some who believe in what's called covenantal theology and that's where they go back to the Old Testament with this, and they'll say on the eighth day a Jewish boy was circumcised as a mark of God's covenant into His people. And so the reason they baptize babies is because they're a part of the covenant body. They might not be believers yet, but eventually they'll be a part of the covenant body. And so they do that as children, but that is not a New Testament ordinance at all. You've got to trace it all the way back to Abraham. And so this is where we land.

And then there's communion. Turn to 1 Corinthians 11:23, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper,

saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." He's saying, "Don't forget the cross...don't forget the cross...don't forget the cross...if you forget the cross, you're going to think your discipline made you superior, you're going to think that you did this thing. You'll become boastful people. Don't forget that this is what I did, not what you did. I purchased this, not you. Don't forget the cross." How about this. How many of your sins were future sins when Christ went to the cross? Every one of them. When we take the bread that represents the broken body of Christ, what we're saying is that God knew all of our struggles, all of our problems, all of our issues, all of our debauchery, all of our blasphemy, all of our wickedness and He went to the cross still. And when we take the cup and drink of the blood of the new covenant, we're acknowledging God loves us, that He died for us. There's this remembrance of what is right and good and at the center of our faith. Which is why Jesus says, "As long as you meet together, do this."

And we're not all the Village Church here. We're not all the church local here. Most of us are the church universal here, but I've already met some of you from out of town. Some of you are from Idaho. Welcome. We're not all church local, but we are church universal. So I wanted to celebrate church universal stuff: baptism and communion. I wanted to do family. And so we're going to end today by seeing a few baptisms and then celebrating communion.

Let me pray. "Father, thank You for these men and women. Thank You for the church, that You've called us to be a part of it. Help us. Thank You for the stories we're about to hear. I think my favorite night ever in the history of the Village was the night we baptized a woman who said she had been a witch, and then the next man he had been an Atheist, and then the third kid said he had been a Baptist. If that's not diversity of salvation, I don't know what is. So I thank You that You still save and that You continue to do exactly what You said You were going to do 6000 years ago. Thank You. Amen."