

4. How is following Jesus more than a set of ideas or intellectual commitments?

5. How might you respond to an email from a close Christian friend where that friend informed you that they were out of the habit of gathering for worship and not sure it really made that much of difference because they were doing fine spiritually?

6. How can you grow in your appreciation of and wonder for what happens when we gather as a local church?

**Recapturing the Wonder that is the Church  
(A BLESS Series)**

“4 Realizations That Recapture the Wonder (Part 3)”  
Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 John 1:12; Philippians 2:25-30

“Your most committed people will attend worship services less frequently than ever in 2015.” (Will Mancini predicting a trend in 2014)

Gathering with other believers as part of a local church is still a necessary ingredient for thriving spiritually and for accomplishing God’s mission. But as more and more good things (often necessary things) compete with the gathering, the gathering inevitably is de-valued in our hearts and is neglected in our \_\_\_\_\_.

“If you treat the church like an option [or a consumer product], your children will too.” (Jared Wilson)

The Bible values gathering and warns against \_\_\_\_\_. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

If we truly \_\_\_\_\_ gathering with other believers for worship and fellowship, we find workable solutions for ourselves and our families. And we figure out ways that our churches can change to meet the real needs. The key (and necessary element) is to value gathering for worship and fellowship.

**4 Realizations that Recapture the Wonder (Part 3)**

1. We get to belong to God’s church.
2. We get to welcome others to God’s church.
3. We get to \_\_\_\_\_ as God’s church.

“It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God’s Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the gospel in heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing ... The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer ... The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God ... It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

1 Corinthians 11: 34 ...when I come I will give further directions.

2 John 1: 12 I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

Paul and John are saying there are good things that will happen and things that will be learned by meeting in person, that \_\_\_\_\_ alone can't accomplish.

### **Why we need face-to-face gatherings as Christians:**

- We are more than what we \_\_\_\_\_.

"We imagine human beings as giant bobblehead dolls: with humungous heads and itty-bitty, unimportant bodies. ...it's thinking that defines who we are. ... Such an intellectualist model of the human person—one that reduces us to mere intellect—assumes that learning (and hence discipleship) is primarily a matter of depositing ideas and beliefs into mind-containers." (James K.A. Smith)

- There's power in the \_\_\_\_\_ of others.

Philippians 2:25-30

- We need \_\_\_\_\_ of glory (Luke 22:15-16; Revelation 5; Romans 8:18-23).

**"Jesus will experience in the Supper a glimpse of the goal of his work of salvation.** The meal functions in the same way for us. What we call 'the Lord's Supper' is a foretaste of 'the Lamb's Supper' in Revelation 19. **It's a beginning of the feast we eat with Jesus and his people in the new creation. It's not just a picture. It's the real thing begun in a partial way.** We eat with God's people, and we eat with the ascended Christ, present through the Holy Spirit." (Tim Chester)

"A quick and easy tip for building habits that last: Pick a standard time and place to do it. It's easier to wake up knowing 'I exercise at 4pm' than to decide each time when to fit a habit into your day. If it's already decided, all you need to do is show up." (James Clear)

### **Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions**

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Reread the quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer above. Why is it significant that we get to belong to God's church, welcome others to God's church, and gather together as God's church?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:34 and 2 John verse 12. What are some things we gain through the privilege of gathering together in person?