



# DYING CHURCH RISING HOPE

Higher Things Conference 2026

## 2026 Higher Things PRE-CONFERENCE BIBLE STUDY LEADER'S GUIDE

What does the world think of when they hear the word "church"?

What do you think of when you hear the word "church"?

Let's take a look at a few Scripture passages:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-3

How does St. Paul describe the church?

*Those sanctified in Christ and called to be saints. He also speaks of the local church, called to be saints together in Corinth, and the Church universal in every place, both of which call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### ACTS 2:42-47

What is the church doing in this passage?

*Devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, in other words, to the Scriptures; to true fellowship at the altar as they celebrate the Lord's Supper, and the prayers, the liturgy. They had all things in common, that is, a common doctrine and confession of The Faith. They were helping the needy. They gathered to hear the Word of God and celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar.*

### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27; MATTHEW 18:20; AND COLOSSIANS 1:18

Who makes up the church?

*The individual believers gathered together around Christ Jesus, who is the head.*

### EPHESIANS 4:1-6, 11-16

What are the attributes that make up the church?

*Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, unity of the Spirit, bond of peace, unity of the Faith, and correct doctrine. The church speaks the truth in love.*

What are the gifts Christ gives to His church here?

*The apostles and prophets (God's word of the Old and New Testaments), evangelists (those who wrote the Gospels), and pastors who teach.*

### VIDEO #1

### READ MATTHEW 16:15-19

What is the rock upon which Christ will build His church?

*It is the confession which Peter made, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Why can the "gates of hell" not prevail against this confession?

*This confession comes not from "flesh and blood" but by the work of the Father. This confession, the rock on which Christ builds His church, is Jesus dying and rising for the forgiveness of sins, which robs Hell of souls, and cannot fail.*

### READ EPHESIANS 2:19-22

Who builds the church?

*The Holy Spirit*

On what is the church built?

*It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.*

*This church is built on Christ Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. It can not fail.*

But there are things in the church on earth, a church filled with sinners who sin, that must die, as well as things which must remain. Take a look at the list below. Draw a line through those things that must die, and draw a circle around those things which must remain.

Pride	Lust	Rising
Absolution	Praying to the saints	Sin
Processions	Jesus	Organ
Lust for Power	Creeds	Guitar
Pulpit	Artwork/Icons	Opinions
Skipping the Divine Service	Ties	Law
The Lord's Supper	Idolatry	Worldly Culture
Prayers	Hypocrisy	Gospel
Arguments	Teaching	Genuflecting
My wants	New Life	Higher Things
Confession	Head coverings	Lies
Screens	Good Works	Pastor
Sweat Pants	Dying	Suffering
Baptism	Church calendar	Kneeling

So there are clearly things which must be put to death and die within the church and our lives as Christians.

### READ GALATIANS 5:19-21

What do these sorts of behaviors do to the church of Christ Jesus?

*They destroy it, causing fights that break the unity of faith. See 1 Corinthians 3:3.*

### READ COLOSSIANS 3:3-8

St. Paul has a similar list here with more behaviors. What does he say must be done with them?

*Put them to death.*

So how do we put these things to death? Let's read the Fourth Part of The Sacrament of Holy Baptism. What does such baptizing with water signify?

*It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a New Man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

How do we put sin to death?

*Remember your Baptism.*

### READ ROMANS 6:1-10

What happened in your Baptism?

*You were joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Your sinful nature has been drowned and put to death. You have been raised from the font in new life joined to Christ Jesus.*

*There are also many things that must be retained in the church.*  
Read the following passages to see what we must keep:

### MATTHEW 28:16-20

*Baptism and preaching/teaching are clearly instructed here by Jesus, but also Absolution and the Lord's Supper.*

### LUKE 22:14-20

*The Lord's Supper*

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-27

*The Lord's Supper*

### ACTS 2:37-39

*Baptism*

### JOHN 20:19-23

*The Office of the Keys*

### 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-4

*Preaching*

### ACTS 2:42

*The apostle's teachings, i.e., the Scriptures, and the Lord's Supper*

### MARK 13:31

*God's word*

### COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

*Paul gives a long list of attitudes and behaviors for the Christian in the church.*

### EPHESIANS 4:1-6

*Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, love, maintaining unity of doctrine by the work of the Holy Spirit, one Lord, faith, and Baptism.*

### JUDE 1-3

*The Faith as delivered in the Scriptures to the saints, the church.*

### VIDEO #2

As we conclude this pre-conference study, let's look at a few more passages about Dying Church Rising Hope.

### HEBREWS 10:22-25

What is the Day that is drawing near?

*Judgement Day, the end of the world, and the beginning of eternity.*

As this day draws near, what are you to be doing?

*Holding to the confession of Christ Jesus as Lord, helping each other do good works, and meet together, that is attend the Divine Service to receive the Gifts of God in Christ Jesus.*

### **EPHESIANS 2:4-10**

What has God done for you in these verses?

*Made the dead alive; saved us by grace; resurrected us with Christ; given us a seat in eternity with Christ; gifted us salvation; made us in the image of Christ; given us good works to accomplish.*

### **ROMANS 6:1-10**

We previously looked at these verses. We concluded with them again. What has God done to you in the waters of Holy Baptism?

*Killed you, buried you, resurrected you with Jesus.*

What happened to our old, sinful self?

*It was killed by crucifixion with Jesus so that we are no longer enslaved to sin, set free from it.*

What came out of the water with Jesus?

*The New Man, set free from sin to live with Jesus, now and for eternity.*

What must we do daily?

*Remember your Baptism, that you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*So every day, remember what must die — sin and all the trappings of the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh — and there is resurrection, new life now and for eternity in Christ Jesus, whom God did not spare but gave Him into death so that you are forgiven.*

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

