

BECAUSE OF EASTER



Church Thru Jesus' Eyes

Matthew 16:18

On Easter Sunday, 2,000 years ago, Jesus rose from the dead to build His church. And yet today, there are a lot of people who say they love Jesus, but not His church. I understand the sentiment. Most of us can think of something that happened within the church to hurt us. You expected the church to be a safe harbor of joy and belonging. Instead, you discovered a very disillusioning truth: This side of Heaven, the church is made up of imperfect people who still struggle with doing sinful things. Things such as gossip, anger, abuse, manipulation, prideful prejudice, and lying, to name a few. And when we realize this harsh reality, the temptation is simply to focus on Jesus and forget the church. Believe me, as a pastor for nearly five decades, very few have seen it, and encountered it, like I have. But here's the deal ... *it is impossible to love Jesus and not love His church.* Now I'm not talking about the organizational structure or the programs per se, but the church for who she is as the collective **followers of Jesus**. To combat this lack of admiration and appreciation for Jesus' church, in this message, we want to look past our limited personal disappointments and see the **church thru Jesus' eyes**.

I will build My Church and the power of death and Hell will not defeat My Church.

(Matthew 16:18)

WHAT IS JESUS' CHURCH?

WHAT DOES JESUS' CHURCH OFFER?

1. PURPOSE

2. BENEFITS

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST HINDRANCES TO OUR CHURCH FULLY BEING JESUS' CHURCH?

HOW DOES NCCF NEED TO STEP-IT-UP IN 2014-2015?

FOR THOUGHT & TALK

Take no more than 5 minutes to quickly review the main points from Pastor John's message. As you discuss the questions, don't expect to answer all of them. Just discuss the ones your group would most like to explore together. Remember, the goal of your small group is to grow together relationally, to **apply** God's Word to our daily living, and to pray for one another and our church.

1. Think about this statement: *I love Jesus, but not the church.* Why would someone say that? Can you understand, and empathize with, why they might feel that way? And yet, as the Bible points out, *it is impossible to love Jesus and not love His church.* Why is that true?
2. What can we do to help someone who has been disappointed with Jesus' church, and then become disillusioned with His church, to move forward and reconnect with Jesus' church? What does that person need to do, for himself or herself, to move past the past and fall in love with Jesus' church again? Do you have a story of your own to share?
3. How important is the church to Jesus? Based on that, how important to you, as a follower of Jesus, should the church you belong to, be in your heart and life? What are the main benefits you derive from being part of NCCF? How are you helping NCCF achieve our God-given purposes?

4. What are the hindrances that cause a church to decline or fail?

5. In what ways do you think NCCF needs to step-it-up this next year? Close your group by fervent prayer for NCCF!