



Organizations not deemed “essential” were forced to close during the pandemic. Most churches rightly decided to suspend their public gatherings as a way to love their neighbors. Many Christians grew accustomed to not meeting regularly with other believers, and perhaps started wondering, “Is my involvement in a church that necessary?” Essential Church is an attempt to answer that question.

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Rick began by sharing some things he has been grateful for as it relates to our church helping people connect during the pandemic. What are some ways you’ve been blessed by our church this past year? Follow up: Rick went on to say, “I am concerned that this pandemic season has only increased a trend among many Christians of devaluing the importance of gathering together as a church family.” How might the mission of our church suffer if people thought gathering together wasn’t essential?

2 IS CHURCH ESSENTIAL? Has church become a commodity more than a community? *The New Testament knows nothing of a kind of discipleship that does not include a commitment to a specific, local faith family.* When have you been tempted to view church as a commodity? Follow up: When have you experienced church as community? How has that transformed you?

3 IS CHURCH ESSENTIAL? Is church a product to be consumed or a people to be joined? *The New Testament gives no instruction on how to grow disciples apart from the conviction that church is essential.* Why is that truth so important to grasp? Follow up: How has connecting with other people at church recently been a blessing to you?

4 JESUS IS... the church’s owner. *The church does not belong to you or me.* **Read Matthew 16:13-18.** What is significant about Jesus saying “I will build my church” near the end of this passage? Follow up: Even though Jesus is the owner, why is it also pivotal to know that

people (like Peter and us) play key roles in a church family? What is one example of how you have seen someone **Serve Others** at The Hills?

5 JESUS IS... the church’s builder. *The church is Jesus’ chosen instrument for accomplishing his mission.* **Read Ephesians 3:20-21.** What are some examples of how you’ve seen God “accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think” through a local church family? Follow up: Jesus also said this about his church, “All the powers of hell will not conquer it.” What excites you the most about the future of the church?

6 JESUS IS... the church’s lover. *You cannot love Jesus without loving what he loves, and Jesus loves his church.* **Read Ephesians 5:23-29.** What resonates with you the most from this passage? What is one way practical way you can show your love for church?

7 Rick closed by reminding us that **Church is Jesus’ idea, Jesus passion, and Jesus’ strategy.** How does knowing that encourage, inspire, and convict you? Close by praying for the global church and for our church family at The Hills (and for the people you will invite to participate at church over the next few weeks).

