



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 reminding us that “For a number of years research has revealed that Christians in our nation are deciding to meet with their church families less often, and it appears the pandemic has only accelerated that trend.” How have you witnessed this to be true with your family and friends? Follow up: As we dive into reflecting on this message share one reason why **worshipping regularly** with your church family has been a blessing to you.

2 A FAMILY IS FORMED... Belonging is essential to believing. The decision to follow Christ is a personal decision, but it is always a communal journey. **Read Acts 2:1, 41-47.** What resonates with you the most from this description of the early church? Follow up: Why is it so important for us to see that in scripture salvation is always a communal journey (devotion to fellowship is essential)? How has that been true in your experience as a follower of Jesus?

3 MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY... informs my faith. Living a vibrant spiritual life requires coaching. **Read Ephesians 4:11-13.** What stands out to you from these verses? In what way has Christ gifted you for service in the church? How are you currently using those gifts? Follow up: How has your faith been informed (and formed) by others in your spiritual family?

4 MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY... encourages my faith. It is not easy to swim upstream in a downstream world. **Read Hebrews 10:24-25.** What part does the church play in our spiritual growth? Share an example of how

you've witnessed or experienced that recently at The Hills. Follow up: Rick noted that the writer of Hebrews is not “encouraging to attend”; he is saying “attend so you can encourage.” Give an example of a time when you were unexpectedly encouraged by someone at a church service. Also, how can you encourage someone else this week?

5 MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY... exercises my faith.

Family is expensive; fellowship is costly. Rick pointed out that “*It is significant how much space is given in Acts 2 and 4 to describe the generosity of the first church.*” **Read Acts 4:32.** How have you seen this verse lived out in our church family this past year? Follow up: What is one next step you need to take to exercise your faith for the benefit of someone else?

6 MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY... proclaims my faith.

We all have an individual responsibility to share our faith, but our witness is better together. **Read Acts 2:47.** Share the name of “your one” and spend some time praying for them. Follow up: How can you be more intentional in inviting them to experience our fellowship?

7 Rick closed by asking this question, “*If meeting together makes little difference, why does the enemy work so hard to ban church gatherings wherever he can?*” How would you respond to that? Follow up: As you reflect on this message, what is one main reason for you that it is so important to **worship regularly** together?