



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 of his thesis for this series, “I am contending that every follower of Jesus who can needs to be actively engaged in the kind of community that demands presence.” What resonates with you from that statement? What have been some of the blessings of online church and of being back in-person in the midst of this pandemic?

**2** **Read Romans 8:28-29.** *Our mission as a church is to make and grow followers of Jesus—people who in ever increasing ways resemble Jesus in the way they live.* Rick mentioned that to talk about growth is to consider the question, “Who do I want to become?” Why is that question so pivotal? Follow up: Rick also noted that **coming is essential to becoming.** How has that been true on your journey of faith from the beginning until now?

**3** **IT TAKES A TEAM.** *Content alone is never enough to transform people. Why is that true?* Follow up: Rick went on to say that “Jesus gave no one a self-study discipleship plan. Fellowship demanded fellowship (and it still does).” How has connecting relationally with other followers of Jesus helped you grow spiritually (share a specific example of this)?

**4** **JESUS-FOLLOWERS GROW... by gathering.** *Jesus was a consistent public worshipper. Read Luke 4:16.* Why is the example Jesus sets here to **worship regularly** so important and how does it challenge you? Follow up: **Read 1 Corinthians 5:4 & 14:25.** In what ways has our weekly worship gatherings been a transcendent

space for you and/or your friends to have an encounter with the living God?

**5** **JESUS-FOLLOWERS GROW... by serving.**

*To become like Jesus is to become a servant. Read **Philippians 2:3-8.*** What encouragement do you find from the example of Jesus? Follow up: Rick said that “*Saved people serve people—starting with their church.*” Why is church the pivotal place to begin serving (see **1 Corinthians 12** and **1 Peter 4:10**)? **NEXT STEP:** Take a moment to look at the options you have at The Hills to **Serve Others** by visiting this page on our website and finding a place to serve – [thehills.org/serve](https://thehills.org/serve).

**6** **JESUS-FOLLOWERS GROW... by loving.** *Jesus calls us to love real people, not ideal people.* What are some of the challenges of loving people via digital communities? How can we grow in love if we never have to deal with people who frustrate us (people who have views that are not compatible to ours—issues of race, worship style, politics, etc.)? Follow up: **Read 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:11-12, & 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.** What resonates with you the most from these verses? Share an example of how loving others (especially someone who is different than you) has helped you to grow as a follower of Jesus.

**7** Rick closed by reminding us that “*Posts don’t prove love; presence does.*” How has that been especially true in your life recently? What is one thing you can do this week to show up and be present for/with someone in need?

