

PERSPECTIVE

MAY 2021

SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

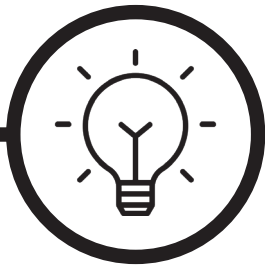
RAS AL KHAIMAH EVANGELICAL



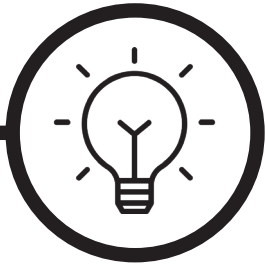
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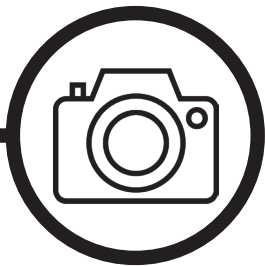
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Serving Other Churches: Ras al Khaimah Evangelical Church, United Arab Emirates

Throughout 2021, we are giving attention to the theme of serving other churches. This means we—Mount Vernon Baptist Church—are to be knowing, encouraging, strengthening, and sharing with other churches all for the sake of the gospel. This ministry of serving other churches is a two-way street of goodness. Just as when we disciple others, we are, simultaneously, discipled by *them*, so when we serve other churches, that congregation is serving us as well.

One church we would put in that camp is Ras al Khaimah Evangelical at the northern tip of the United Arab Emirates. Josh and Jenny Manley both left high-powered careers in politics to enter the mission field. They moved to the Middle East to plant a church after the sheik of their emirate agreed to give a small plot of land for an evangelical church building.

Below is their story, told by Josh. Be encouraged because their story is also *our story*. By God's grace, we are "fellow workers for the truth" (3 John 8).

MVBC: How did you become a Christian?

JM: By God's grace, I grew up in a Christian home. I distinctly remember hearing the gospel preached when I was a boy at a wedding and going home to talk to my parents about it. My faithful dad (who recently went to be with the Lord) sat in my bedroom with me that night and explained how my sin separated me from God and that Jesus had come to die for sin and sinners that we might be made right with God. I repented and put my trust in the Lord that night. While I had ups and downs in the Christian life growing up, I believe the Lord saved me then and praise God that I grew up in a Christian home and a gospel-preaching church where I heard the gospel proclaimed regularly.

MVBC: What circumstances led you to enter pastoral ministry?

JM: While I was in college, I became involved in a ministry called RUF (Reformed University Fellowship). Through that ministry, I began to grasp the big picture of the Bible and the glories of salvation in new ways. When I was nearing the end of my college years and moving to Washington, D.C. for work, my RUF pastor suggested I attend Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. The Lord used faithful pastors there both to help me grow in the Lord in ways I desperately needed and also to allow

me to meaningfully test gifting for ministry. During that time, the Lord allowed me to marry my wife (Jenny) and for both of us to work in good jobs in the U.S. Senate. That season was a time of tremendous opportunity but also tremendous sanctification as the Lord graciously exposed much selfish ambition in my own heart and gave me more and more ambition for his name and his church. Ultimately, after much counsel and prayer, I decided to leave my work and future in D.C. for seminary in hopes of pursuing preaching ministry long-term.

MVBC: Tell us about your family. Most of your kids only know the Middle East. How has growing up in a different culture impacted them?

JM: Jenny and I will celebrate 17 years of marriage later this year. Outside of my salvation, she is God's greatest gift to me. While we had three children when we moved to the UAE, we now have five! (Reeves, 13; Caroline, 11; Miriam, 9; Harper, 5; and George 2). We certainly live in a much different part of the world and know some costs are associated with that, we are grateful for the opportunities our children have had here. There is a mosque across the street from our house. Our children attend schools and are friends with quite a number of Muslims and so have come to know the world outside of the United States pretty well. While Jenny and I can at times struggle with anxiousness because of the much different childhood they know from ours, we trust the Lord's good purposes even in this.

MVBC: When did church planting in the Middle East hit your radar screen? Were you immediately interested or reluctant about moving overseas?

JM: In February of 2012, John Folmar (long-time pastor and dear friend in Dubai, UAE) called me in Louisville, Kentucky, to let me know it looked like their church (UCCD) was going to be given land for an Evangelical Church in the northern-most part of the UAE. He asked if I would be interested in coming to plant the church and raise funds to build a building—which would give ability, visibility, and legitimacy to be in Ras al Khaimah long-term.

The fact that it would be an English-speaking congregation (English is spoken widely in the UAE) was compelling because I would have the opportunity to preach in the 10/40 window in an unreached place among unreached peoples.

I was certainly interested, but Jenny was reluctant! Over time, the Lord drew our hearts toward this, and we decided it was a gospel-risk work taking. We've been here 8.5 years now.

MVBC: Would you describe some of the biggest challenges in your first few years of church planting? What has gotten easier as the years have progressed?

JM: Initially, our biggest challenges were loneliness and the difficulty of leading in a church without many like-minded people. Since then, the Lord has raised up elders (we just nominated two more!), and the church has formed in unity around God's Word. By God's grace, our diverse church is unified and seeking to make Christ known in Ras al Khaimah.

MVBC: What kind of reputation does your church have in the city?

JM: The Lord has given us wonderful relationships with local Emiratis, and many have heard the good news as a result. We also strive to be known as a doctrinally committed church that seeks to be faithful to what God has revealed in his Word regarding his church. And I think we are also known as a church that is experiencing great unity and fellowship, which is a gift from the Lord considering how diverse we are as a congregation. I think we are marked by joy in Christ, his gospel, and the great hope we have in him. I rejoice that the church is now here and for the many gospel conversations, opportunities, and growth that have come about in God's kindness as a result.

MVBC: How would you describe the growth of your church, both numerically and spiritually?

JM: Our growth numerically is up and down. We live in a very, very transient place, and that affects our actual numbers very much. This last year, we saw a fourth of our congregation move away to different parts of the world. It often feels like the church changes in deep ways every few years. However, I praise God for the genuine spiritual growth happening here. We just added an elder who was converted in our church. And most recently, we received a new member from India who thought he would never be part of a faithful church because of his life circumstances. The joy he knew when we took him into membership was deeply encouraging. To see the Lord work in these kinds of ways gives me great joy and are part of the privilege of ministry in the Gulf.

MVBC: Jenny has written a wonderful book on the doctrine of Christ. It has served members of our church well. What kind of ministry has God given Jenny in your church and city?

JM: Praise God! Jenny flourishes in our church and in relationships with all kinds of people. She has led the women in Bible studies for years now, and the fruit from that has been remarkable. Jenny is the chair of the

Parents Council at our kids' school and is well-known and respected by Christians and non-Christians. What amazes me about Jenny is how content she is to serve in whatever way might be needed. The Lord has given her wonderful gospel opportunities and influence. She is truly excellent, and I am well-aware of the undeserved gift I have in my wife!

MVBC: Being so far from your American home—Mississippi—is certainly a huge challenge. How has that distance affected you and your family? What would you tell brothers and sisters in America who are leaning toward going overseas but are not sure they could handle being that far from family?

JM: There are great challenges and costs in this. My father died earlier this year, and Jenny's dad is now declining in health. Being away from them is hard. We feel the cost of our kids not being able to see and be more involved with their grandparents. We miss simple joys—like our kids being with their cousins more. At the same time, the Lord is faithful and never ceases to surprise us with his kindness. God will give abundant grace wherever he calls you, and you will have the privilege of seeing his kingdom in new and precious ways outside of the United States. Also, don't underestimate the joy and depth of the relationship of the spiritual family he will give you as well. Jesus said, "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." (Mark 10:29–30)

MVBC: It seems like God has given your church an influence that goes beyond the United Arab Emirates. Would you explain what kind of reach RAK Evangelical has?

JM: For years now, we have led an internship program—specifically investing in young men from this region. To date, we have had young men from Afghanistan, Egypt, Pakistan, Nepal, Ethiopia, India, and Germany. Praise God—many of these brothers are now doing faithful work back in their home countries. We have seen these brothers go back and plant churches, work toward more faithful preaching, labor in translation, and even start podcasts to engage their nations with the gospel. I rejoice in the many ways I know (and certainly ways I don't know) that the Lord is using these brothers in their countries to serve the church and make Christ's name known.

MVBC: How can we be praying for you, your family, and your church family?

JM: Pray for Jenny and me to have wisdom and to be faithful as parents. Pray we would not grow weary in well-doing in life and ministry. Pray for the Lord to bear fruit for his name through our church and for the Lord to use RAK Evangelical to be a faithful witness for many years to come.

MVBC: It has been our joy to get to know you these past few years and to pray for your work. Would you share how we have been able to encourage you and the church you serve in your ministry?

JM: I can't adequately say thank you to Mount Vernon for the partnership and encouragement in the gospel you have been to me. I have known more personal encouragement, prayer, and friendship from you than I could have fathomed. Larry Chandler writes me at least once a week to tell me ways he is specifically praying for me. Aaron has been and continues to be a dear friend to me. I was recently telling someone about him and could not commend him enough for who he is, not just in his generosity but also in his friendship and encouragement. What the Lord has done in and through MVBC is remarkable. You are a model church in partnership and encouragement. The Lord truly is using you as a church to bear fruit for the gospel all over the world (Col. 1:6). We thank God upon every remembrance of you (Phil. 1:3).

Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God's People

Written by Matt Merker

Maybe you are new to Christianity and have attended just a handful of Sunday morning services, or perhaps you have attended thousands of services. In either case, have you ever stopped to reflect on the church's Sunday morning gathering? All around the globe, both today and for thousands of years, churches have gathered and continue to gather week in and week out, typically on Sunday mornings. Have you ever wondered why? Why does the church gather? Why does it do the things it does?

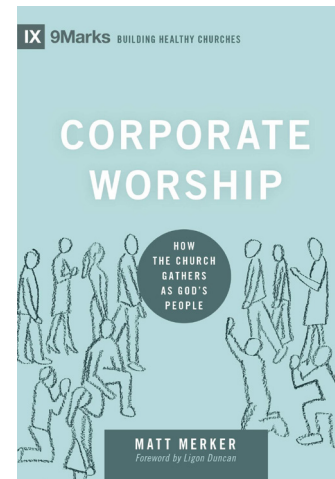
Matt Merker, in his new book, *Corporate Worship: How the Church Gathers as God's People*, clearly and concisely summarizes the immense topic of the corporate worship of the gathered church. Merker argues that to properly understand what should happen in the corporate worship service of a local church, one needs to first have a proper and robust understanding of what a local church is. He devotes the first few chapters to help the reader see that God gathers his people according to his purposes. So it naturally follows that when his people are gathered (by his own initiative!), they should seek to do what God has called them to do.

With this in mind, churches should humbly submit to God's Word as it decides what should take place in its Sunday corporate worship service. Resting solidly on God's Word and on the shoulders of many Christians who have gone before us, a corporate worship service of a healthy church should endeavor to read the Bible, pray the Bible, preach the Bible, sing the Bible, and see the Bible.

One of the most helpful topics Merker covers is the purpose and goal of corporate worship. Many Christians today view the church service as a time to come, be filled up, and encounter God on a personal level. Though this certainly takes place, one of the main purposes of the church's gathering is mutual edification of the body. This is too often overlooked, but Scripture is clear. Mutual edification leads to humility and unity within the body of Christ, and through that unity, God is glorified.

I would highly recommend that every member at Mount Vernon pick up a copy of this short book, read it, discuss it, examine your heart, and think afresh about what we do as a body each and every Lord's Day.

– RECOMMENDED BY RICKY HUTCHINS



Excerpts From the Book

1

"If we hope to encounter God's presence when we come to church, we ought to expect to find him in and with one another, rather than primarily in our own personal feelings and intuitions. A church service isn't mainly the place for me to have a souped-up, private 'quiet time.' It's the place for me to meet God by meeting with his Spirit-filled people."

– Who Gathers?, p.40

2

"God is the one who gathers the church and works in our midst. Our worship is generated by his gracious initiative. He is the central actor. That means he decides what happens when the church meets. The service is his prerogative, not ours."

– What Should We Do When We Gather?, p.78–79

3

"...Singing is part of each member's ministry to the whole body. When you join a church, you join the choir. You become a steward for the spiritual vitality of the body, a stewardship you fulfill in part by opening your mouth in song."

–How Does the Whole Church Participate in Congregational Singing?, p.136

Why Should I Join a Church?

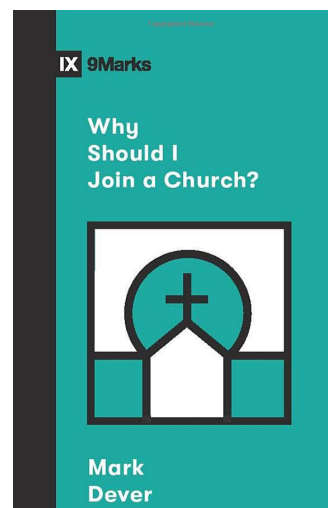
Written by Mark Dever

"If you call yourself a Christian but you are not a member of a church you attend regularly, you might be going to hell." This startling phrase by Mark Dever begins his book *Why Should I Join a Church?* While a statement like this might be shocking and uncomfortable to many in the evangelical world today, Dever is not communicating that being a member of a church makes someone a Christian, but rather that unity with the body of Christ is biblically distinctive of a Christian. In this succinct booklet, Dever points to the urgency and the need of a healthy local church in every Christian's life. He conveys a passion for the church that characterizes both Christ and his followers.

Throughout the book, Dever highlights seven primary reasons for a Christian to join a local church. He explains that joining a church displays the Gospel, is a way to love other Christians and edify the church, helps evangelize the world, offers assurance, exposes false gospels, and glorifies God. In addition, it can be difficult for many to know how to talk to friends and family who claim Christ but are not joined with a local body. This book is a phenomenal resource to help church members know how to talk to and encourage others who are not joined to a church. For any Christian who is not currently a member of a church and is not sure why some churches put such heavy emphasis on the matter, they will find in Dever an insightful look at the biblical foundation for church membership and, more fully, a push towards loving the church which Christ gave himself up for and bought with his own blood.

As part of the 9Marks "Church Questions" series, this booklet is a short and pointed analysis on the topic of joining a church. To the church member, I would heartily recommend this book to give them a greater understanding and assurance of their own participation in the body and to help spur them on to a greater love for the local church, and ultimately, a greater love for Christ.

– RECOMMENDED BY CAROLINE MCGILL



Excerpts From
the Book

1

"It's not enough to merely have Christian friends with whom we occasionally gather—friends we pick and choose according to our own tastes. What truly displays the gospel is when we commit to love and care for a group of people that includes folks utterly unlike us. We display the gospel when we gather each week to serve people who sometimes share only one thing in common with us: Jesus."

– Join a Church to Display
the Gospel, p.16

2

"If we are members of a body, aren't we meant to be attached to the body?"

– Join a Church Because the
Bible Requires It, p.25

3

"Joining a particular local church is an outward reflection of an inward love - for Christ and for his people. And, as we see so often in this life, the greatest love is rarely merely spontaneous; it is more often planned, premeditated, and characterized by commitment."

– Join a Church to Glorify God, p.44

MAY

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

May 1	Psalms 27:1-5	May 17	Ezra 3
May 2	1 Timothy 3:14-16	May 18	Ezra 4
May 3	Mark 1:1-20	May 19	Ezra 5
May 4	Mark 1:21-45	May 20	Ezra 6:1-12
May 5	Mark 2:1-17	May 21	Ezra 6:13-22
May 6	Mark 2:18-27	May 22	Ephesians 2:11-22
May 7	Matthew 16:1-12	May 23	Ezra 3-6
May 8	Jeremiah 5:18-31	May 24	Ezra 7:1-20
May 9	Mark 8:22-26	May 25	Ezra 7:21-28
May 10	Ezra 1:1-5	May 26	Ezra 8
May 11	Ezra 1:6-11	May 27	Ezra 9
May 12	Ezra 2:1-41	May 28	Ezra 10
May 13	Ezra 2:42-58	May 29	Rom. 3:1-21
May 14	Ezra 2:59-70	May 30	Ezra 7-10
May 15	Acts 16:11-15	May 31	Mark 3:1-21
May 16	Ezra 1-2		

***Sermons in bold**

TAKE UP & READ

NEW MEMBERS



**Nana
Agyekum**



**Liya
Berhane**



**Sam
Cook**



**Ansley
Cook**



**Lance
Cooper**



**Sonja
Cooper**



**Andrew
Dallas**



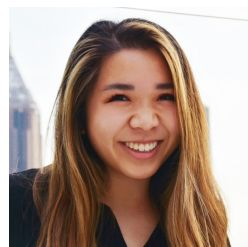
**Kerry
Danoff**



**Jacob
Davis**



**Anna
Lambert**



**Maria
Liu**



**Casey
Weaver**



**Katherine
Weaver**



Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH