

BECOMING THE CHURCH



A CROSS-SHAPED CHURCH

Mark 8:34–38 | September 13, 2026 | Pastor Dave Anderson

SERMON SUMMARY

This week Pastor Dave asks a searching question: who is forming you? Before your alarm goes off, algorithms are already learning your fears and appetites. And the message they carry — the “American gospel” — promises that your highest calling is to become the fullest, freest, truest version of yourself. It sounds close to good. It sounds close to the abundant life Jesus promised. But it isn’t. Drawing from Mark 8:34–38, Pastor Dave shows us that Jesus walks into the middle of that promise and says the exact opposite: deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. The problem isn’t that you have a self; God gave you that. The problem is what we’ve been trained to do with it. A cross-shaped disciple doesn’t curate the self — they crucify it so that a truer, freer, resurrected self can rise. And when a whole community of people lives this way together, you get Acts 2. Not a crowd, not a brand, not a church of polished self-improvement. You get a family so different from the surrounding culture that people notice and want in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Pastor Dave described the “American gospel” — the daily message that your highest calling is to become your best, most fulfilled self. Where do you most feel that message pulling at you?
- 2 Jesus gives three commands in Mark 8:34: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me. Which of the three do you find most difficult, and why?
- 3 Pastor Dave said “a life spent protecting yourself is a small life; a life spent building yourself is a lonely life.” Does that resonate with your experience? What has the pursuit of self-fulfillment actually produced in your life?
- 4 He drew a distinction between curating the self (the American gospel) and crucifying the self (Jesus’ way), saying the self on the other side of the cross is the one “worth being.” What is one thing Jesus might be asking you to lay down that you have been holding onto?
- 5 Pastor Dave said “you cannot get an Acts 2 church if it is being formed by the American gospel.” Looking at your own life honestly, which gospel has been doing the most forming this past year?
- 6 He gave a practical challenge: name specifically what Jesus is asking you to die to this week, write it down, and share it with your small group. What would you write on that card right now?

Last Week’s Challenge Update:

Last week Pastor Dave challenged us to share a meal with someone from K1 we don’t know well by the end of September and simply ask “tell me your story.” That challenge wasn’t just a nice idea — it was a practical way to begin living the Acts 2 koinōnia we talked about. And it connects directly to this week’s message: sharing a meal with someone you barely know is a small but real act of denying yourself, picking up an inconvenient cross, and choosing someone else over your own comfort and schedule. How is that going for you? Have you reached out, made a plan, or already done it? If you did, what came out of it?