I want to talk for a few minutes about this idea about being planted, about being planted in God's house and the big life that happens when you decide to be planted in God's family. I want you to turn to the person next to you and say, "I'm glad you made it today to church!"

I want to read you four consecutive Scriptures I believe point us to the big idea and the big life of being planted in God's house and the benefits of being planted in God and planted with others.

**Romans 12:3-5** For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

**Galatians 6:9-10** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**Psalm 68:5-6** (NIV) [Our God is a] Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. 6 God sets the lonely in families …

Now, this is a key verse as we talk about being planted and living the life God intends as we connect ourselves to a spiritual family, become planted, and are set that family. The last verse I want to read is our text from Psalm 92;

**Psalm 92:12-14** (NKJV) The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those who are planted in the house of the Lord Shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing,

The Bible teaches us the value of being planted, the value of being a spiritual family. Because of the convenience of technology, we now think ourselves to be connected, up to date, and on the cutting edge. But in reality, people are finding themselves more isolated, alone, and more disconnected every day. Because many have chosen to live in the online, social media, virtual reality they begin to feel uprooted from anything is solid, substantive or real.

But, God’s Word tells us there has been placed within each of us a “longing for belonging.” We were created for community, fellowship and relationships, were not made to do life by ourselves. I remember an old friend from South Louisiana used to express it like this. He said God didn't make us to live on “bayou self!” In other words, you were never meant to do life “by-you-self.” When you look into God’s word, and consider the mystery of the Godhead, how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in unity and continual fellowship, it makes sense that we were designed for community as well.

Think about this; if there was ever anyone who could have gone solo, it was Jesus. He didn't need any help or advice; he didn't need a support group or therapist to work His issues or life's situations. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh; all God and all Man. Paul tells us it pleased the Father to allow all the fullness of the Godhead, everything God was, to dwell bodily in Him.

It’s amazing; “God so loved the world.” He decided to share His life with us, through the person of His Son, our Savior Jesus. He decided to enter in to our world, to connect with us in the context of relationship. Jesus brought His disciples into His life, He created a sense of family, a place which
allowed others to grow in Him, and learn how to be connected one with another. Aren’t you glad and with all mankind?

When I look at my life, I have to be honest and admit I haven’t always made great decisions and I haven’t always made the right decision, but I can think of three really good decisions that have impacted everything about my life.

The first one was when I decided to surrender my life and say, “yes” to Jesus Christ. It was August 28, 1980 when I was 26 years old. I became convicted, repented of my sins and said yes to Jesus Christ, receiving His forgiveness, mercy and grace. That was, by far, the best decision I have ever made. Everything in my life from then until now has been impacted by that decision.

Now, the second best decision was when I said yes to Miriam when she proposed to me and she asked me to marry her! Okay, okay, you and I know that’s not true! The best second decision I ever made was asking her to marry me. So much of life is determined by who you decide to do life with, especially within the of covenant and marriage.

Third best decision; the first was Christ, the second one was who I married, the third one is when I decided to be connected, committed and planted in God’s family in the context of the local church.

Luckily I made a decision about two weeks after I came to Christ and I found a church called the Baton Rouge Christian Center. I didn’t know what to look for so I just picked one close to my house where a few friends were attending and as I look back now I know, it was definitely the Lord leading me. It was a great church, filled with people who were loving, accepting, and they actually took an interest in me, so I stuck. You have to understand that I came into that church “fresh out of crazy,” but those people were so patient and so loving, I began to put down roots and got planted.

My first pastor, Brother Mulford was a true man of God and an outstanding preacher. I loved him, and loved the way he brought spiritual food to us every Sunday. You know what’s weird, He preached over an hour every service and I never knew I wasn’t supposed to be happy about that! I drank in every word! Our associate pastors, (Mike and Judy) took a personal interest in me and discipled me. It was the most impactful, formative time of my new spiritual life.

Best decision I had ever made, second only to salvation and marrying Miriam, was the day I got connected to the local church. It was very different from the church I was raised in, there were not a lot of people my age, but the Spirit of God was moving there. Somehow I knew if I didn’t commit myself, and plant myself in the house of God, I wasn’t going to make it.

I look back over my life and all the things I have experienced these 35 years of being in God’s family, I can see the benefit that decision. All of the dominoes have fallen into place because of saying yes to Christ, connecting myself to God’s people and being planted in God’s house. So much of my life today has been defined because of saying yes to become involved in a spiritual family.

Life is radically different, when you’re planted. Maybe you are here today and thinking about church and you have been visiting, just kind of checking it out; kind of church dating, not ready for a commitment, just of checking it out. I want to encourage you today, there are benefits and blessings, and amazing opportunities to be realized when you get planted in the house of God. I want to break it down for you, and make it simple for us. I want to give you four; not ten, not fifteen, but four great results of being connected to a spiritual family, planted in the local church. It is not without challenges,
and just like any family, there may be awkward moments, disagreements and misunderstandings, but the benefits greatly outweigh the difficulties when we decide to plant ourselves in God’s family.

Here’s the first thing that happens as a result of being planted in the local church. Being planted in God’s house provides a place where we:

1) Learn to Believe

2 Timothy 1:12b (NKJV) … for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Being planted in the house of God, in a community of believers gives us a safe place to learn and build our belief system. We live in a world that is confused. A world where people don’t know what they believe. They are influenced and swayed by the every changing current of pop culture. Many have fallen for the lie of moral relativism; believing there are no absolutes and truth is what ever the individual decides it is. As a result we have millions of souls adrift in the sea of moral confusion and despair.

Sadly it is not only the world where we are experiencing a belief problem. We have more access and less knowledge of the Bible that any past generation. I was reminded of a conversation with a friend who began his first day as a coach and Bible teacher at a Christian school. He wanted to see how familiar his students were with the Bible so he did a little survey, which produced some interesting answers. Many of them who had been in church all their lives and professed to be Christians but, were basically, clueless. When asked to name the fourth gospel one kid said, “Rufus” and another, “I know, John, yeah he was on the Ark with Moses and some animals!” When he asked for the name of the mountain Moses received the Ten Commandments on, best answer, “Mt. St. Helens.” When asked to name a few translations of the Bible one student responded, “KJV, NASV and HIV!” (Sounds more like a Madea’s version than the Bible!)

With so many voices in the world, so many conflicting opinions about what is right and true, where are we going to learn what to believe? I believe God’s design of the family is the perfect template to provide a place to begin to build the foundation of learning and belief.

Deuteronomy 6:4–7 (NKJV) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Our homes are the first and most important place where the foundation of belief is established between parents and children, but it must also be lived out within the relational context of a spiritual community, the family of the local church.

This happens here every time you show up. Every time we gather together in the house of God and there's a sermon, a teaching, or a move of God’s Spirit, these things are shaping us, laying a foundation of belief upon which we can build our lives.

As we grow in the knowledge of the Word and our experience of God’s presence, we are learning what to believe and what we are to pass down to the next generation. As we remain planted in the house the foundation of belief is being strengthened within our hearts as we come to know the Lord in reality and truth.
Our belief systems are built by continual exposure to two things; hearing the Word of God,

**Romans 10:17 (NKJV)** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

…and through experiencing the reality of His presence and power.

**Matthew 18:20** For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Why should we be planted? Because in the house of God the foundations of faith and belief are laid. And because it provides us with:

2) **A Place to Belong**.

Belong: to be attached or bound by birth, by allegiance or dependency

Every person alive has a need to belong, a need to be accepted and loved. Remember, we were created with a “longing for belonging.” There are so many who just don't know where they belong and that’s why people are desperately trying everything they can to fit in, be accepted. Trying to fill the need we were all created with, the need to be a part of a family.

We see this lived out everywhere we go in our modern society. People are drawn to clubs, organizations, sports leagues and even gangs, all in an attempt to feel a part of something. My experience at Cowboys stadium really made me see this. No matter who you are, where you live, how much money you make or what you do for a living, when you put that Cowboys jersey on you are part of something, you belong.

That is precisely why becoming planted in the house of God, joined to the family of God is so vital. We’ve talked a lot lately about the missing piece of the puzzle within our hearts can only be filled by Jesus. He completes us but He also desires to place us within the bigger picture of His kingdom purpose. Once we come to faith and believe, then we must be planted in the house so we can discover our full potential in God’s kingdom.

I know I started this morning with “believing before belonging,” but can I share my heart with you. I also believe this should be a place where people are warmly welcomed to “belong,” even before they “believe.” Most people come to faith through a relationship with a family member or close personal friend. That is why being planted is so important.

Relationship releases ministry. There is nothing more empowering than being joined in meaningful relationship with the body of Christ. Belonging also provides a place of purpose, safety and support. In the course of life we will all face storms. They rage and challenge us. Being planted in fellowship affords us a place of security, accountability and protection. The truth is, we are better together.

Now here's a third thing. We build our foundation for belief when are planted. There is a comfort and strength that comes with belonging. And then as we are planted, the house of the Lord is:

3) **A Place to Become**.
1 John 3:1–2 (NKJV) Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

When we are planted in God’s house we begin to put down roots and build a foundation of belief. As we find security in the love and acceptance of belonging, it releases us to become all the Lord wants us to be.

When I look at my spiritual journey, there were no sensei’s or no jedi knights teaching me all of the mystical secrets I needed to know to live as a successful Christian. As I became planted in God’s house, I started realizing how much I needed to learn and how much I needed to unlearn.

As I mentioned before, when I came to Christ and into the church; I came “fresh out of crazy.” I had learn how manage my life from the context of a believer and under the authority of the Scriptures. I had to relearn how to conduct myself, how to respect others and show honor to those in authority.

Because of the loving patience of a mature spiritual family, I began to grow and learn how to worship, how to be a servant, and a how to be a generous giver. After thirty-five years of being planted in the house of God, I am still learning how to follow Christ and I am still becoming who Jesus wants me to be. Now, I just get a chance to build up, encourage and release others into the destiny God has planned for their lives.

Right here at Church on the Hill, you can learn to believe, find a place to belong and become all God wants you to be. You will learn it by being connected, by being accountable, being in a small group and being faithful. When we are planted our roots grow deep and strong and we are influenced to grow and stretch our faith by being around other believers.

I learned so much from the leadership in our church after I came to Christ. I didn’t know what to say, how to dress or how to act (and I didn’t have Google) so they helped me. They mentored me by accepting me, loving and correcting me, and sharing great books with me. They saw God was up to something in my life and encouraged me to become a man of faith, to be accountable and to become a man of the Word.

I was learning how to become a believer. There are certain things you just can’t learn in a Bible Study. You need to be around other people and do life with them. You have to follow those who have walked with Jesus for a while. In the atmosphere of love, acceptance and belonging you learn how to become who God wants you to be.

I want to be sure to emphasize I am not just talking about an external conformity. I am talking about an inward transformation. It was in the presence of God, through experiencing the power of God’s Holy Spirit, and the preaching of God’s Word I began to learn the conduct befitting a child of God. The community of believers were praying for me and helping become who God has destined me to be.

We learn to be who God has called us to become as we are planted in the house of God. Committing ourselves to live by God’s Word, and being often in His presence through Spirit-led worship and praise. Here the Holy Spirit will get a hold of our hearts and change us. By being planted in God’s house, we will become like the one we behold.
And then the last thing, which I think is so important. Especially as it relates to being in this amazing church, is this right here.

4) We Get to Live a Bigger Life

Ephesians 4:11–16 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Our lives become so much bigger by being planted in God’s house. By being set in family. How else will we reach the people we are called to reach and serve the people we are called to serve? As we invest in the kingdom of God, locally in our community, we can do more together than we could ever do by ourselves.

We can never make the impact living on bayou-self that we could when we are planted in God's house, where corporately we come together to share the love and grace of our Savior.

In the context of family, our lives are bigger because we are better together. As we do life together as the Body of Christ, our influence and power increase exponentially. (1 can put 1,000 to flight; 2 - 10,000)

I want to encourage you today, don't do life alone, in isolation. Don't do life separated, do life together with us. Plant yourself in God’s family.

And yes, there is a risky side. Somebody might hurt you. But the risk of living in isolation is so much greater and more dangerous than the risk of relationships within community. There is a saying down in the South; “Just ‘cause Mama burns the biscuits doesn’t mean you never go back to the kitchen.”

Sometimes life will leave a bad taste in your mouth. Sometimes bad things happen in life, in family, and in church, but it doesn’t mean you forsake your trust and relationships. It doesn't mean you withdraw into a life of isolation. The Bible says, “God sets the lonely in families…” (Psalm 68:6) There is nothing greater, nothing more needful in the hour we are now living than being set, being planted in a spiritual family and I believe God can do that today.

Why don't we pray together, I want to pray for you right now, I want to pray for you. And I want to pray for every person and give you an opportunity to say yes to Jesus because that's where family begins, saying yes to Christ.