

Committed to Community (The Good News That Changes Everything: Part 2)

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[0 : 00] So let's jump into it. We are doing a series, continuing in our series on our values. If you're here for the first time, we're in our third week of that, and it all starts with being transformed by the gospel. That's our first big value as a church, and it's like, man, this is who we need to be. This is who we are as a people of God and what we hold on to, because everything, when we go to the gospel and allow ourselves being transformed by it, it starts there and everything kind of trickles down from there and is informed by that. Last week, Donnie unpacked what it looked like to be living lives of worship, and that was a great sermon. If you haven't listened to that, you could check that out online. And then what we're going to look at today is because of the gospel and being transformed by the gospel, we can be committed to community, all right? And so we're going to do that by reading through portions of the book of Nehemiah.

It's not what we typically do. Our bread and butter is kind of getting a book of the Bible and going through verse by verse. What I'm doing today is I'm hopping through the Nehemiah story and pulling out this amazing community that is on about building the kingdom of God. And so I'm excited about that. So if you grew up in church or you are from the Bible Belt, you grew up in the South, you grew up in this area, we kind of feel like this whole committed to community thing. We'd be like, sweet, Jesse, I got that box checked. No worries, right? And we were thinking, of course, of course we're committed to the church, you know? I was raised in this area. I was raised in the South. It's like a part of who we are. But if we pulled the room, we might end up with a spectrum of what that means, what it looks like to be committed to the church, you know? For some of us, it might be, hey, I go to church on Christmas and I go to church on Easter, right? And that's what it looks like for me to be committed to the church. Or some of us might just be like, hey, I go enough to be considered committed to the church, right? And so can I just challenge us today, no matter where you're at, if you come all the time, if you come on Christmas and Easter, if you come whenever you can, hey, no, we're not like bagging on you or anything. We are so glad you're here. But I just want to say, man, open your heart to just be challenged and let's look at what the Bible says of what it looks like to be committed to God's community, all right? Because it is like showing up is a big part of it, but it's not the only part of it. When we talk about commitment, we're talking about putting God's kingdom, his church community first, because in essence, it comes from a living a life of worship that is putting God first. Our level of commitment to God's church has to be informed and motivated by the gospel. I mean, think about this. When Jesus taught us to pray, how did he teach us to pray? He taught us to pray, Lord, your kingdom come, you know, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It starts with him. It starts with us looking to God and looking to his kingdom and his will being done on earth. And oh yeah, give us this day our daily bread. How often when we pray, do we kind of start with like, Lord, come meet my needs, help me. Oh yeah, and by the way, may your kingdom come and all that other stuff, right? We need our hearts and we need our minds to shift from prioritizing ourself to prioritizing God, who he is and putting him first and his kingdom first. And that happens when we have this amazing love for God. We're transformed by God's love and out of his love being poured into us, we then respond in love to him and putting him first and putting his kingdom first. And that's what happens. We can be committed to community because we love God and we love what he loves. Commitment to community comes from a heart that loves God and his church above everything. So I'm going to jump in. Let's jump into Nehemiah chapter one, verses one to four. It says this, the words of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah. I may not be saying these names correctly, so it's okay. Now it happened in the month of Chisleu in the 20th year, as I was in Susa, the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from

Judah, so Nehemiah is living in a different nation right now. They're living far away from his homeland.

And let's see what happens. He asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, the remnant there in the province who have survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Now, here's the thing. You may think, wow, Nehemiah, you have a lot of time on your hands. Actually, Nehemiah was a busy guy. Nehemiah's job was like the equivalent of being a White House staffer today, right? He was in charge of the king's wine and all the vats of wine. Pretty cool job, right? But he was a busy guy. He had to answer to the king. And though he was far away from God's kingdom, though he was far away from God's people, man, he so loved God and so loved God's people above everything else that his response wasn't to just like listen to it and be like, yeah, you know what? Okay, no big deal. No, what does he do?

[5 : 15] Man, he mourns. He weeps. He is sad to hear this bad report about what's happening with the people of God. This news jacked him up. And that's the thing, guys. The closer that you and I move to God's heart, the more we feel what he feels for his people. When Paul was persecuting the church, right, in the New Testament, Jesus, who had ascended and he's in heaven, Paul's going to persecute church. He's going to put people in jail and Jesus interrupts him. He knocks him off his donkey and he says to him, Paul, why are you persecuting me? Jesus doesn't say, Paul, why are you persecuting the church? He says, Paul, why are you persecuting me? Here's the thing, man, to love the church is to love Jesus. To love God's people is to love Jesus. To hurt the church is to hurt Jesus. Jesus takes it personal. So it makes sense how Nehemiah responds. He's picking up God's heart for his people. When God's church has captured our hearts, we care about how she's doing. And this isn't always easy because the church is far from perfect. The church isn't always an easy thing to love, right? Because the church isn't buildings. It's people.

We're a people in progress. We're a people who can be a little bit cantankerous and mean and frustrating at times. And God's refining us and he's building us and he's strengthening us. Just because God's on our side doesn't mean that we don't suffer our share of trouble and shame, right? Like he gets this report and the report is to Nehemiah is like, man, God's people, they're in trouble and shame. Things are not as they should be. But like Nehemiah, that shouldn't make us give up hope. You know, it says that he wept and mourned, but it doesn't say that he just wept and mourned for a few days and kind of went back to his business and forgot everything. No, the last part of that verse for it says he continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven, right? Why was he fasting and praying? It's like, gosh, Nehemiah, why don't you just start making a plan already to try to fix this thing? And here's the thing, when you go through and you study the whole book of Nehemiah, you realize that this guy, man, what he did, he ran to prayer first, right? He wasn't like, I'm going to plan, plan, plan, make some plans, Lord, and I'm going to pray that you get behind them. No, he prayed and then out of that prayer flowed this plan. Prayer wasn't just for the plan, prayer was part of the plan. As one pastor says, prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from God. It's us saying, you know, God, I got this, we got this, no big deal. God, I don't need your help or your wisdom or your direction in this. I know how to do this. I know how to fix this. I know how to be the problem solver here. But man, when we put prayer first, when we become a people that run to prayer first, it's affirming this truth that God is committed to building and strengthening his church.

That's what we have to realize. What happened as a result of Nehemiah's prayer and fasting, so he gets to stand before the king and God puts this thing on his heart to go and be a solution to the problem. So in verse six, it says, the king said to me with the queen sitting beside him, how long will you be gone? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. And I said to the king, if it pleases the king, let letters be given to me to the governors of the province beyond the river, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah.

And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple and for the wall of the city and for the house that I shall occupy. And the king granted me what I asked for the good hand of God was upon me. Nehemiah asks some very bold things here, right? He's like, hey, give me some time off and give me some

time off and give me a ton of your resources to go build this city. Then I came to the governors of the province beyond the river and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent me with officers of the army and the horsemen. Man, I love this story. I love this story of Nehemiah because it points forward to this work that Jesus and the Holy Spirit do to advance God's kingdom. And they advance it through growing and strengthening the church. I mean, think about this. The king sends Nehemiah to do the work of renewal with all the power and authority and resources to get it done. If that sounds familiar to you, think about this. Today, how this works in the church. Jesus is our king and he sends his Holy

[9 : 50] Spirit to the church. He sent his Holy Spirit to the church, right? He has all power. He has all authority and all the resources to build and strengthen the church. It's not us. Man, it's not us that do all the work. We're not the supermen here. We're not the superheroes. It's God doing it. We have to remember that God is committed to strengthening and building his church. Now, while some of us may be guilty of doing the work without God, some of us are guilty of not doing anything. You know, we kind of sit back and say, you know, God, you're in charge. You're doing the work. I'm just going to sit back. You're the builder, not me. Now, while that sounds really humble, it's just not true, right? Because God uses his church to build and strengthen his church. God uses his people to build and strengthen his church.

He works through us. That's how the Holy Spirit works. Nehemiah 2, verses 17 says this, Then I, Nehemiah, said to them, he's with the people right now. He's in Jerusalem. He's surveyed what's going on. And then he calls them. He says to them, you see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer suffer derision. And I told them of the hand of my God that was upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, let us rise up and build.

So they strengthened their hands for the good work. Nehemiah starts with some honesty, guys. The gates are burned. Things aren't going well. Things are bad. We got to get to work. Then he tells them the good news. It comes with the king's authority, the power, the resources, right?

Let's do this. He told them about the hand that was upon him and upon the work that God had called him to and called them to. And when we hear the good news of our king, when we hear the good news that Jesus calls us into salvation, but that he calls us into his kingdom and that we get to be a part of what he's doing and what he's on about in building and strengthening his church, man, that stokes a fire in us. I can tell you I'm a pastor's kid. I didn't know a life that didn't involve church. I grew up in church. And it wasn't until I got this, it wasn't until I woke up and said, oh my goodness, my job isn't to just come on a Sunday, put some money in the bucket and go home.

I get called into this thing. I get called into what God's doing to build and strengthen his church. It changed the game for me. It was so much more exciting, right? Man, when we look to the king's power, we got eyes off our weaknesses, eyes off our own limitations, man, it changes the game.

[12 : 32] When we look and see, man, he has the resources for everything we need to get this job done of kingdom building, man, it encourages us. It emboldens us. It strengthens our hands.

We get empowered and we say, man, let's rise up. Let's build. And that's the other part of this.

Nehemiah didn't try to do this on his own, right? What are they saying? Let us. Let's do this together. Let's build. He brought everyone into the work. Man, today, it's in so many churches, we come and we think it's the pastor's job to do the work of the ministry, right? We get to sit back and we got to watch him. But actually, that's not true. Our job as pastors is to equip you guys to do the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4, 11 to 12, check this out.

It says, he, Jesus, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, the teachers, to do what? To do all the work of the ministry? To entertain the saints? No, it doesn't say that.

What does it say? All right, cool. You guys said it. Good confession. To equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Why? For the building up of the body of Christ. God builds his church through everyday people. God builds his church, not through having spiritual gurus on platforms, right?

Where you watch and you go, yay, that was so moving. That was so amazing. No, he uses us.

We're here to equip you.

We're here to help you grow up in the gospel. We do it together. We grow up in the gospel together so that we can minister to one another and love one another and build each other up in the faith.

[14 : 22] And the danger that we're in, right, is that what we like to do is we like to turn these gifts that Jesus gave to his church, the pastors and various things, we like to turn them into entertaining spiritual superstars, right? I have to ask us, man, what do we want? What do you want when you

come to church? Do you want someone to equip you or are you coming for someone to entertain you? Are you coming to be equipped so that you can do the work of the ministry or are you coming to be entertained?

And I have to be honest, me as a pastor, it is tempting because I would rather entertain you than equip you, right? There's a lot more fame and there's a lot more money in being an entertainer. Let's be honest. Equippers, though, equippers, we have to get off platforms and into the mess of people's lives. We don't get to stand back in a distance. I'm up here, you're down there, and we're just going to keep this relationship, right? Entertainers, man, they use people to build their platforms. Equippers use their platforms to build people, okay? And it doesn't have to be me and a pastor. You look and it's easy to see, oh, Jess, I get it. There's a platform right here. You're on a platform. Ha ha ha. No, what are platforms? Platforms are opportunities. Platforms are stages. I mean, you could do this as parents in your home at the dinner table. You can do this as community group leaders that open up your home, open up your lounge as you sit down. What are we doing? Are we coming to entertain people in those moments or are we coming to equip them? What's our motivation? Do you want people to be wowed at us or do we want the saints to grow up, to mature, to be confident and know that

God's called them and equipping them to do the work of the ministry together? In this church, we believe the priesthood of all believers. We believe that it's not just my job to do ministry and yes, I do ministry, but it's we all get to do ministry.

We all get to do this together. And I love their response here when they realize that let's do this together. Let's rise up and build. It's a passionate response, man. When we see what the gospel does and how God moves us and how committed he is to building his community and we get behind it and we're like, yes, this is amazing. He's given us everything we need. He has all the power, all the authority, and all the resources that we can do that we need to be successful.

[16:51] Now we should have this passionate response. Let's rise up and build. And while it's passionate, I also said I should stop and push pause and say, you know what? It should also be a realistic response. Because right after they say this, let's rise up and build, it says they strengthen their hands for the good work. They strengthen their hands for the good work. What does that mean? Well, it means that they stopped and they readied themselves and resolved themselves for what was ahead of them, right? They stopped and they said, oh, you know what? We got to do some wall building now. That ain't easy work. Building, being a part of what Jesus is doing and building and strengthening his kingdom, it's not always going to be easy, guys. Man, it is so soul satisfying, but that doesn't mean you're not going to experience some weariness and some tiredness and some difficulty and some hardship. Jesus said anyone who puts their hand to the plow and then stops isn't fit for God's kingdom. There's a real cost to discipleship. There's a real cost to following Jesus.

It's work. It's sacrifice. It's letting go of things, but it's good work. Man, it would be great if church work was just relegated to coming and eating potato salad at potlucks, right? That would be flipping awesome. Coming an hour on a Sunday, putting money in a bucket, and then going home. If that's all there was and that's what it looked like to being committed to church and that's what church work does is, then man, that doesn't sound too hard, right? Sign me up for that.

But ministry isn't eating potato salad. Maybe if it's bad enough, it could be, right? Really, really suffering for Jesus here. Every spoonful.

Ministry can be hard work, guys. Ministry can be hard work because it involves caring for people. It involves getting into each other's lives and being real and being authentic.

And it also means that we don't commit to this community so that we can be served, so that we don't come and all my needs can be met. Building and strengthening takes a humble community that serves side by side.

[19:15] We're going to jump to chapter three. This is their response when they said, rise up and build. I love this part. Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brothers, not by himself, with his brothers, the priests, and they built the sheep gate.

They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. And next to him, side by side, the men of Jericho built.

And next to them, side by side, Zachariah, the son of Imri, built. The sons of Hassaneah built the fish gate.

They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts and its bars. And next to them, side by side, Meremoth, the son of Uriah, son of Hachaz, repaired. And next to them, Meshulam, the son of Barakiah, son of Meshazabel.

Eh! Don't name your son that. That'd be a rough one. And next to them, Zadok, the son of Benah, repaired.

[20 : 23] And next to them, the Tekoites repaired. But their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord. What do we see in this passage? And we see people working side by side.

Next to, next to, next to. That is how God is building his church. It's not the famous guys, it's not the gurus, it's not spiritual superstars that are working, that God is using to advance his kingdom. It's everyday people, it's us, standing shoulder to shoulder, doing the things, and taking our part in the wall to build the wall. This is how he's doing it. We're not meant to come, and we're not meant to come to church to consume and take what's, what's in it for me, me, me.

We don't come thinking, man, what can church do for me? We come thinking, man, what can I do for God and for his church? How can I serve her? See, when we don't see that following Jesus is a life of service, we, we act like those nobles of the Tekoites, right?

We're too good to stoop to serve. It's not our thing. We become too important and too proud. Our time is too important. We can't sacrifice it. Our interests are too important.

[21 : 36] We can't give them up. Our responsibilities, our needs that we need to meet, they're just too important to put God's kingdom first. And if it's not that, man, church people, we know how to mask it in like really good spiritual speak, right?

You know, I just don't feel called to serve in that particular area. Like, like kids ministry, I don't feel called there, you know? Hospitality or, you know, cleaning toilets, I don't feel called to that.

I just feel called to be singing solos, you know, specials on Sunday, not cleaning toilets. There's certain ways, if we're honest, that man, I just want to serve that way and that's it.

And I just want to serve this much and that's it. In Nehemiah 3.15, it's, they go through all these places that they're building and one of the places was the king's palace and the pool, right?

It's like, that's a pretty cool job. Hey, I'm repairing the king's palace. I'm fixing his pool. He's going to have a sweet crib when I'm done. Maybe he'll give me a pat on the back. Maybe me and the king will have some, some special relationship.

[22 : 44] I can come in to his pool parties. But what were the people working next to them doing, right? Just before that in verse 14, what does it say?

This is a bad job, man. Working on the dung gate. He wants to work on the dung gate, right?

Nobody wants that job. There are like so many inappropriate puns in my head right now. Nobody wants to do that job, but it had to be done, right?

We want the cool work or the fun work or the work that's really noticed and gets all the accolades, but nobody wants to work on the dung gate. But guess what? If nobody fixes the dung gate, everything starts to stink like you know what really quick, right?

Right? And then we start caring about that a lot. See, sometimes serving looks like getting to fix the king's palace. But sometimes serving looks like getting your hands dirty, fixing the dung gate.

[23 : 48] Either way, it's not about us. It's not about our needs being met. It's not about where we feel called. It's serving, right?

It's serving before self. It's for God and for the good of his church. Service isn't always an easy thing. The work of building and strengthening the church isn't always smooth and simple. It's not always going to be fun.

It's not always going to be in the places that we want to be. And we don't do that because sometimes we lack humility. But, man, we don't serve also because it's hard and it's difficult and we forget something that's really important.

That there's an enemy committed to stopping the building and the strengthening of God's community. Nehemiah 4, verse 6, it says this, so we built the wall and all the wall was joined together to half its height for the people had a mind to work.

So they're seeing progress. It's great. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry.

[25 : 07] And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And from the very start of this story, right when they begin the work on the walls, we see these

characters starting to do whatever they can to be opposed and to stop the work.

How does this relate today? We have this mission statement, make disciples push back darkness. When we build and strengthen, when God's church is being built up and strengthened, that's pushing back darkness and guess what?

Darkness is going to push back. It's going to happen. Ephesians 6, 11 to 12 says this, put on the whole armor of God. This is Paul writing to church people, you and I, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Now this isn't like physical armor he's talking about. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Guys, we have a real enemy. He's not an impersonal force. Yeah, there's Satan and there's demons. Satan's a real spiritual being that stands opposed to everything Jesus.

[26 : 36] Everything related to Jesus. He hates God, he hates Jesus and he hates God's people. He knows his rule over this present darkness is coming to an end.

He knows that but he isn't going to go down without a fight. He's going to do whatever he can and Jesus calls him the ruler over this present darkness. His schemes, the way he fights isn't like how we think of natural warfare.

It's not like real physical swords, bloody swords that were like coming and clashing with him, right? But he has these schemes and these schemes have been consistent throughout history.

He tries to discourage the church. He tries to oppose the church through persecution like what we see Paul was doing. Persecuting the church, jailing them and imprisoning them and even putting them to death and that still happens today.

And then he persecutes from outside the church that way but he also tries to persecute us from inside the church. He tries to turn the church on itself and so he uses things like slander and gossip to sow disunity and discord.

[27 : 44] He tries to use the outside pressures of our society today, the mocking and the jeering saying, you know, that our faith is worthless and stupid and silly and superstitious and archaic and all these things.

He does that, he uses that, he's trying to get us to like push us to the margins of irrelevance in society and to get us to be quiet and shut up and just lay down and not fight anymore.

And if we give in to those schemes when we don't stand up and we don't stand firm and when we stop fighting for one another and we turn in on ourselves and begin devouring one another, it doesn't produce unity or strength, it doesn't produce a people or a community that is together fighting on the same side.

Too often, the church is so guilty of fighting against each other, kind of like friendly fire, you know? And man, these things, the way the enemy fights against us, his whole thing is to try to get us to tap out and give up.

Nehemiah 4.10, it talks about there was people in Judah working on the wall and it says this about them, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. In Judah, it was said, so there's rumors floating around now, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing.

[29 : 05] There is just too much rubble. By ourselves, we will not be able to rebuild the wall. So they hear, they hear this threat of this enemy coming and it causes them to lose heart.

Man, it's so easy to lose heart. And this is exactly where Satan wants us to be. Man, it's too hard, it's too much, we can't do it ourselves. And maybe you're here and that's you.

Maybe you have tapped out, you've been so weary and worn out and just can't go on anymore or maybe you're thinking about doing that. Your strength to do this community thing, to be committed to being a part of building and strengthening the kingdom of God, it's just wearing out and it's failing. You're thinking, man, I just don't know what to do. I just don't feel like there's any hope. Is there any hope? And I want to say, yes, there is. Because see what happens next in verse 12.

At that time, the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, you must return to us. So these guys that were feeling weak, they had some buddies that were coming out and saying, hey, there's these guys that are not doing so well.

[30 : 11] Come, we need reinforcements, we need help. So in the lowest parts of the space, behind the wall and open places, I stationed the people by their clans with their swords, their spears, and their bows and I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the

rest of the people, do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord.

Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes. We are a community committed to fighting for each other. That's what the church needs to be doing more of, fighting for each other. Rather than against each other, right? I mean, that is love. When we looked at what these guys did, these guys hear this rumor and they come and they say, hey, our friends over here aren't doing well, we need reinforcements.

Happened once, nothing. Happened twice, nothing. They come back and they repeat it 10 times. They are persistent. They're like, we need help over here, guys. Our buddies over here need help. Come and help. Man, that is love. Love isn't going and saying, hey, hey, help. We need help over here. And then it's done. It's like, ah, no big deal. Nobody responded. We'll just give up.

[31 : 23] Now it took 10 times. And finally, on the 10th time, they were heard. When we are feeling weak and weary and worn out, we need to let people know. And hopefully, it doesn't take us 10 times to respond, right?

Hopefully, God's people will respond quickly. We shouldn't have to hear about these things through the vagueness of the rumor mill, all right? I heard so-and-so and so-and-so wasn't doing so well, right? Man, man, if that's you, put up your hand.

Put up your hand. Go to someone and say, you know what? I'm not doing so well. I need help. I'm feeling worn out. I'm feeling weary. I'm feeling like the enemy's coming after me and I just, I just don't have any more to give.

But that takes trusting God's people. That takes vulnerability. And like, for a lot of us that have been wounded by church, that's a hard thing to do. And I pray that God's grace would be on you to get to a place where you experience like the love and being able to be transparent and know that like, hey, we're not here to say like, oh, you're weak.

Okay, cool. We're going to take advantage of that information. We're going to run you down. How dare you not be super strong? How dare you be weak? How dare you not be pulling your weight like you should? No, not at all, man.

[32 : 28] We want to be people like that shown in this picture here that are running, surrounding those who need help. Because that's what we're meant to do, protecting and helping each other and lifting each other up and having each other's back.

We're a community that fights for each other. And there's ways that we do that, right? It's taking time to pray for and with each other. What do I mean by that? Well, when I say I pray for you, I don't necessarily have to be with you to pray for you, right?

God woke me up at one in this morning with a sinus ache, but I couldn't go back to sleep, so, I mean, people just started popping in my head and I just started praying for them. And I just trust that God, that the Holy Spirit was leading me to do that.

That needed to happen today. So, I'm praying for people, but then when I see you, I'm going to pray with you, okay? I'm going to ask how you're doing and if you're not doing so well, I'm going to say, hey, let's pray together.

We pray for and we pray with each other. We encourage and admonish each other in the truth of the gospel, right? Remembering our Lord. We're saying, hey guys, remember, remember, we have this amazing, awesome, and mighty God who fights for us, right?

[33 : 36] We don't need to be afraid. Remember our Lord. Let's remember our Lord. If my wife stands up and says, Jesse, I'm not doing so well, what's she going to be more effective?

Watching a movie with her or taking a few minutes to pray for her and with her? What does she need more in that moment, right? Community is, it's more than just showing up and being a presence in a place and that's an important part of it but it's what we do as well to fight for one another.

Those things are so key because we remember when we go and we pray and we bring people to God and we help each other by informing each other, reminding each other how great God is and the truths of the gospel, what we're saying is, I'm not Clark Kent.

I'm not going to come in and rip open to me. Don't worry, I'm here, guys. Everything's going to be okay. I'm not Superman. You're not Superman. What we do is we come very humbly and we rally around people and point them to the real Superman which is our Lord Jesus Christ and our good, awesome, Heavenly Father who's Almighty.

We remember how great and awesome He is and this is what we do. We do this because we are a community built and strengthened on the victory of Jesus. I'm going to have the band come up. This is how we're going to land this.

[34 : 49] We started this whole thing off for remembering that God is the one who is committed to building and strengthening His church. We look to Him. He's the one committed to this.

He was so committed that He obtained it through the blood of His Son, His only Son, Jesus Christ and we remember that though we are still a people that are fighting that Jesus has won the war. We remember that one day the war is going to be over. He won the victory. He defeated the power of sin and death. You can come to church services, you can do all the right things but that doesn't mean you're saved and part of God's church.

It says you have to believe, you have to have faith that Jesus died on the cross for your sins in your place. You have to believe, you have to trust in that, that has to be the confession of your mouth. You have to turn from your sin and trust your Savior and it says that is the pathway. Jesus says on the way and the truth and the life no one can come to the Father except through me. It's through faith and it's by faith that we get to be a part of this kingdom, this kingdom that Jesus bought with His blood and if you're here today and you've never done that, I want to invite you.

[36 : 14] I want to invite you today, you can do this now. You can repent and you can believe in Jesus who died for your sins. You're a part of this amazing community.

We're going to take communion in a moment and for those who are followers of Jesus, this is where we remember what Jesus did for His church. We are His blood bought community and when we come today, I want us to remind us, this is a meal of victory.

victory. This is remembering Jesus' victory that He defeated the enemies we can never defeat. He's won the war and we remember that He is not dead but He is alive and He is reigning as King in heaven over us and He's in His church and working through His church and strengthening His church and building us up to continue to advance His mission and His glory on this planet Earth. One day He's going to return and then the fight's going to be over. We're no longer going to be a people at war, just a people of perfect peace and in the meantime, we have this amazing confidence that nothing is going to prevail against us.

With God on our side, who can stand against us? And as we stand firmly fixed in the gospel, standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder, fighting for one another, committed to being a part of what God is doing to build and strengthen His church, we can stand committed to community.

[37 : 46] Let's think about that as we come to community today. Pray with me. Lord God, we hear these words, we see this awesome privilege that You call us into.

You save us not to be spectators. You save us not to be entertained by spiritual gurus. You call us in to Your kingdom. We are a community that is being built up and strengthened.

We are a community that gets to, we have the privilege that You use us to do that, which is an amazing thing. By the power of Your Spirit working through us, You are doing this.

And so, Lord God, I pray for us that as we come today to Your table that we would take this seriously, that we would be recommitting ourselves in our hearts. We would be checking our hearts where our love and our desire is for You and for Your community, Lord God.

And I pray that we would respond appropriately. Thank You for every single person here, that You've gifted every single person here, that You are at work and every single person here, that they have a part to play.

[38 : 53] There's no small roles in Your kingdom. And I pray that we would take that seriously. Lord God. Amen.