

Committed to Community

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Bear. I appreciate that. Good morning, everybody. How are you? Good, good. That sounded semi-joyful, I guess. It's all good. It is all good. Hey, just before I jump into the sermon, really want to just touch on and do a quick plug for Thursday Night Prayer.

So our first Thursday Night Prayer meeting is coming up this Thursday right here, 6 to 7 p.m. And I'm really excited for this. I'm excited to see what God does. So prayer is this act of us as people and as a church of coming together and saying, man, God, we realize that we need you.

Prayer, it's a confession of dependence. It's a confession of we need you, God. We need you to come through in ways that only you can do. And you know what? In these times, it's easy to get our eyes off of God. We can be distracted by so many things. And it's also a very divisive time. And so we just felt, man, again, it's great to come together as a church, united, praying and all that.

And I want you to guys get excited because the opportunity and have some expectation when you come, right? I'm hoping that we come already kind of prayed up, that we come through our week having heard God in so many ways. You know, sometimes in our own times with God, He speaks to us in significant ways, and that's for you, right? But also sometimes those you things become us things, which means that the church can benefit from hearing those things as well. Sometimes it's just maybe a scripture that you read that jumps off the page and you're just like, wow, God, I really needed this. And then while you're at the prayer meeting, God taps on you and says, you know what? It would be good for the church to hear this as well for some edification.

Or as you're praying, you just get this picture that really benefits you and encourages you in your walk with Jesus. And same thing can happen. So you things can become us things. And the Bible says that's when we come together. Those things can be used for the edification of the church. So come ready and actually prepare through the week to be ready for God to speak to you in those ways, and then come ready to share if that's you. And just so that we can do this in an orderly fashion, this isn't like scream from your seat, your thing. You just come and we'll explain this.

[2 : 1 6] When we do it during prayer time, we'll be up here as pastors and leading the meeting and say, hey, I really feel God putting this on my heart and feel like it's something maybe the whole church gets to know. And then we can kind of vet that out, really feel God and say, yeah, this feels like a good thing to share. And so it's done in an orderly, good fashion. Those are the possibilities, guys. And so what's awesome is we're going to come with a game plan for prayer.

We're going to pray into this thing. But when we pray this way, sometimes God goes, Holy Spirit says, actually, let's pray this way. And that's an awesome thing to happen. So we plan in pencil. We're open for the Holy Spirit to work in and change that at any given time. So come ready, come excited. I get if you're nervous about praying, you're thinking like, gosh, I don't know if I can come and pray publicly. That's okay. We've all been there. I've been there.

And so you can come. Guess what? You can pray really silently like this so nobody can hear you. So bring, if that's you, that's okay. Try that. Come and bring a pen and paper. Pray through a pen.

Put it on a pad of paper as God's showing you through. That's an okay way to pray too, right? And here's the other thing. Maybe I'm not praying the right thing. Guess what? It doesn't matter. You know what the Bible says a successful prayer is? Praying. Right? And even if you and I don't pray the right thing, which probably happens more than we realize, it says the Holy Spirit is batting clean up behind us. And you know what? He always bats a thousand and hits grand slams each time.

So pressure off. Just come and pray. All right? Those of you with little kids that are worried about, oh, do I bring little Johnny, little Janie with me? They might be a distraction. We grew up in a church where me and Hales did for a season where kids were in the prayer meeting and you just give them some little space, maybe something like an iPad with earphones. They're watching something, coloring book, crayons. You would be amazed what a kid can do for 30, 40 minutes of prayer and not be distracted and running around all over the place. And so, and you know what? It's good for them to see mom and dad and the people of God praying together. All right? Good exposure. All right. Cool.

[4 : 22] Family time over. Prayer plug done. Let's go for it. All right. Those of you who have forgotten my name already, again, I am Jesse Kintzer. I am one of the pastors here. Those of you who are listening online, thank you for that. We are continuing our series on who are we, looking at our values, which is basically a way of saying who are we, who should we be as disciples of Jesus? What are those things at our core that define who we are? We're going to be working out of Romans 12 today on this particular subject. So if you have a Bible with you, go ahead and turn to Romans 12, right at the beginning, starting in verse one. If you don't have the Bible, we got verses on the screen you can follow along with. Okay. So if you're here and you wouldn't consider yourself a Christian, hey, we're glad you're here as well. Man, we think actually as we dive into this stuff, looking at what it means to be a Christian, it's going to be helpful for you as well as you're coming to learn and see what it means to be a follower of Jesus. You might have a lot of your questions answered, right? And we hope like

Jesus does something in your heart and you say, you know what? I'm going to cross that line of faith. We hope that happens for you today. And if it doesn't, hey, you're welcome back. It doesn't matter. So today what we're going to be doing, we're going to be looking at being committed to community.

value that we're looking at, being committed to community. The idea of community, it's like one of those things that sounds great, right? Everybody wants to be with someone, be in a group, have friends. We long for community and community is great until you've tried it. When I was 20, me and my buddy, we went on this vacation to Cabo San Lucas. We stepped off the plane and Cabo San Lucas' motto is no bad days here. Unfortunately, we cannot hang up that sign outside of a church, right?

We got some bad days in a church sometimes, right? We're not perfect. Things are difficult sometimes. Church community is tough at moments because we are messy people. We are imperfect. We are in progress.

You and I are messy. But here's the thing. There really isn't another option that's given to us unless you want to go it alone, which is a bad idea. It's like putting a bullseye on your back. It's like that Farside comic where two deers are standing together and one has this big old bullseye on its stomach and guy saying, wow, bummer of a birthmark, Hal. You don't want to be that deer going it alone, right? And going it alone puts a big bullseye on you. The Bible tells us that Satan is this roaring lion, right? He is this like apex predator. And I'm sure all of us have watched enough Discovery Channel to see how a lion hunts, right? They try to isolate the parts of the pack away and isolate individual animals away from their herd. And in their isolation, they lose the strength of the herd and that's when they get pounced on. And that's what Satan tries to do. One of his best tricks and tactics for us is to isolate us and get us away from community and outside of community. But isolation doesn't just put us in danger from Satan. See, without community, we also become a danger to ourselves and to others.

[7 : 37] When I'm all alone, who is there to challenge me? Who is there to hold me accountable? Who is there to pick me up when I fall? You know, AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, they get community, right? They realize that, man, as an addict, you have no chance of recovery. You have no chance of getting over your addiction, of fighting that sin outside of community. And it's also proven that people in isolation, what happens to them is they get dangerous because they decrease in empathy and compassion and tolerance towards others. You know, the world has some colorful words for those kind of people, which we don't get to use in the church, right? We tend to use the words mean or abusive or unkind. But without community, we become dangerous to ourselves and others. But there's another side of that as well. We can also be a danger to our community. If we are filled with bitterness and prejudice and anger and gossip and lust and pride and self-righteousness and legalism, we are a danger to the community that we're connected to. And those are bad things that you and I can carry into our community. And they do have a negative influence. Your community is affected by who you are becoming.

The Bible says that a little leaven, a little yeast, works itself through the whole loaf. So what leaven are you and I bringing to our loaf, our local church? And there is only one way we can bring good instead of evil. And we have to take this seriously and own it for ourselves. And that's why we're starting in Romans verse 1. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, the writer says, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. This is not an optional extra. The writer here is saying, man, I appeal to you guys. He is like, man, I ain't too proud to beg when it comes to asking you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This is a passionate plea he is making to them individually, and the Bible is holding out, the Holy Spirit is holding out to us individually as well. For the sake of community, for the sake of the church that you belong to, the people that you belong to, spend time with God, or present your bodies as a living sacrifice. How do we do that? In Christianese, we call that a quiet time, right? Space that we put on our calendars to focus on God, to behold him, and that can be prayer in Bible reading and worship or all of the above. Before you stop and say, whoa, whoa, Jess, that is super, that is just like old school legalism that you're bringing back in, that is totally unnecessary.

Here's my thing. The gospels say that Jesus did this all the time. It said he often went to a solitary, quiet, solitary, deserted place to do what? To pray, to connect with his Father in heaven.

So Jesus, the perfect man, he needed quiet time with God. Jesus, the God man, needed quiet time with his Father. He went and he presented himself, his body, as a living sacrifice in those moments. That is what he was doing. And so because Jesus did it, we should take it seriously, right? We're his disciples.

And Jesus said that, you know what? A disciple isn't greater than his master. He's not greater than his teacher. So we look at that and we say, well, okay, if it's good enough for Jesus, then surely it's good enough for us. But here's what's at stake. The more you and I do that, the more we are being transformed because we turn into what we give most of our time to. I know I sound like a broken record about this for the last few Sundays, but it's too important. I'm going to be saying this over and over and over again. We turn into what we give most of our time to. That is just a law of the universe. You can't go against the grain on that. You'll end up getting splinters. So to use the language of Roman 2, what happens to what we give most of our time to? We get conformed. We get conformed to that thing.

[12 : 08] Another Bible word there is likeness. That's the likeness that we become. The likeness we will reflect is the one that dominates our time. So whose likeness are we reflecting in our words, in our actions, in our social media posts, right? Whose likeness are we reflecting? And you know what? All those things are coming out of our hearts. Before you do anything, all that stuff started in your heart. And the invitation here is to push into God. The more we do that, the more we push into the heart of the Father and journey into the heart of the Father by seeking Him and beholding Him and enjoying Him, the more His heart shapes ours. The more His will shapes ours. He doesn't conform to us. He doesn't conform to our desires, our wants, our ways, our preferences. We start to love what He loves. We start to desire His will and conform to His will more and more and more, thereby transforming into His likeness. And you know what? We are not going to do that if we stand back and convince you that, you know what? I'm all good here. I have arrived, Lord.

You don't need to work on me anymore. Pushing into God requires, actually, requires us to have some self-awareness that we don't have it all together. But you know who does? God does. It requires our submission and surrender to His will. And that is the best gift we can give to our church community.

Because the more surrendered we are to God's will, the more humble we become. And you know what? Community thrives in humility. Now, when we talk about humility, we need to define this really well because we can misunderstand humility. We could swing the pendulum too far in our idea of humility, thinking about it the wrong way. You know, often what we do is we equate humility as thinking lowly of ourselves, which often looks more like self-loathing than anyone else. You know, the Puritans, they did a lot of amazing things. But one of the things that, man, the Puritans did, it's like you're kind of walking away just feeling like you're this utter worm and useless thing. So there is this sense of humility looking at ourselves very lowly and kind of in a self-loathing manner. Or there's kind of this false humility where we can't recognize anything good in ourselves and reject any kind of encouragement and praise from others. But the humility that God holds out to us is totally different. And it's actually very healthy. Look at verse 3. It says,

So humility comes with self-awareness. It comes with a sober judgment, a sober assessment of who you actually are. And that means humility allows you to recognize both your strengths and your weaknesses.

If God is the one who formed you, right? Grace given to me. God formed you, created you exactly in a wonderful, perfect way, knitted you in the womb, knew you in that way. Then you realize he made, he put some good things into you. And you know what? Some of the things he left out.

[15 : 37] I remember sitting with a group of pastors and the guy kind of leading this discussion. It was kind of a spiritual formation moment for us. He was counseling us as pastors. And he started out by asking the group this question, what characteristic do you like most about yourself? We're going to go around and share that.

My first thought was, this is heresy. We're not supposed to be thinking and bragging about ourselves. See what? I've been conditioning into this type of Christianity that said the only thing you're allowed to confess and lament about yourself is your weaknesses. Talking about your strengths, that is totally taboo. There wasn't any room to thank God for the things he made you good at.

Now, of course, the other side of that is the modern kind of approach to self-esteem. And you can't, how can we get you to think more highly of yourself, right? That idea of like, man, your belief in yourself is your only limitation. But neither of those things, neither of those approaches is actual humility because neither of these allow for sober judgment. But when we push into God's grace, it sets us up to be free from self-loathing and it sets us up to be free from this kind of false idea of self-esteem. You know, a dark moment in my life, to kind of explain this better, a dark moment in my life as a pastor happened when I overheard somebody talking about my weaknesses. I wasn't supposed to be a part of that conversation, but I did hear that conversation accidentally. And you know what? It was pretty honest. So typically, Jesse would have responded to that moment in one of two ways. Either suppress that in pride and say, no, I'm going to refuse that critique. That's not true. And then hold, get some bitterness and hold a grudge against that person.

Or I would have let those words define me and destroy me. But at that time, I was learning to embrace the truth that God made me with strengths and weaknesses, right? He made me with abilities, but he also put some limitations on me. So while that comment stung for a moment, I was able to bring it to God and offer that assessment to him. And I could genuinely at that point find peace and thankfulness that he made me just how he wanted me to be. See, realizing you don't have it all, but also that you got something to offer prepares you for a deeper expression of community. It prepares you for proper commitment to community because that's where we realize we need each other and we are better together. See, I don't know what picture you often get in your mind when you think about community. The Bible really likes the body metaphor, right? We've got to learn some body language when it comes to the body of Christ. Romans 12, 4 says this, for as in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

So the body isn't much of a body without its body parts, right? Like how many of us saw, you know, Monty Python and the Holy Grail and that one guy, that one knight protecting that bridge and he got his arms cut off and his legs cut off, but he's still kind of wiggling and like saying, I can still fight you. Not very impressive. Not much of a body without its body parts. But a body part isn't much of anything if it's not connected to the body either. I was recently reading a novel where the main character was shot in the arm and leg and they had to be amputated. Nobody kept those detached potty parts around. They were useless apart from the body. But also that guy's body, his ability was severely affected by the loss of his arm and limb. It's the same with the church, right? The church is Jesus's body. She is better when everyone is attached and playing their part. Verse 6 says this, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

[20 : 03] Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. You and I, we are better together because we all have different gifts that we bring to the table.

Your sweet old granny was right about you. You are special and unique, right? Be happy, be glad. You are gifted. You know that word gift in the Greek is the word charisma. It's the word where we get charisma or charismatic. You know, we say that person has a special gift. They have a charisma.

There's something unique about them, special about them. And that idea of charisma in the Bible is this divine gift, this spiritual endowment, which is part of, a big part of, the Holy Spirit's role in our life as we follow Jesus, right? He gives us, he endows us with unique gifts. He is the active presence of God in us and with us, distributing these gifts among the believers. And that means God, that means God, if you're sitting here and you're a believer in Jesus, God has put a gift of divine power into each one of you, right? And guess what, guys? He's also an all-wise God. And because his wisdom is perfect, he knows what gifts we need. He knows what gift you need and how much of it that you need. Because you know why? He sees the bigger picture. We are meant to be connected to a body of believers. So the Holy Spirit, when he distributes, he distributes based on what the church needs, right? He's given each of you gifts. And you know what? You're here. You're in this, you're living in this moment of time throughout all history in this little geographical place called Havelock, in this church connected to a body for a reason. And the Holy Spirit has given you unique gifts to use them for the building up of the body of Christ, the strengthening of the church and ministry to each other. So here's the thing, get into the church, attach yourself into it and use that gift.

So I have a bit of a teaching gift, I think, but I'm not a Tim Keller or a John Piper or a Billy Graham. And you know what? That is totally okay with me. God has gifted me with a measure of teaching ability according to his wisdom. And you know what? That gives me confidence to use that gift and it gives me freedom to not compare myself to others. I don't need to be the next Billy Graham.

Just Jesse and One Harbor Havelock using the gifts God gave me for the sake of the body of Christ. Comparison, guys, can be a dangerous thing. It leads to pride or despair. Despair, what it does, it tends to make us detach from the body. I'm not needed, not important. Or pride, it makes us try to dominate with our gift. You know what? This gift is so important to the body, we should build the whole thing around me. Not healthy. That doesn't create unity. What it does, it creates an unhealthy dependence on a person. And that person ain't Jesus. Jesus is the only one we are meant to be built around. It's his body. He leads it. Ephesians says he's the head of the church. He's at the top. We are just all members of it. And that's how unity in the church works. Jesus is the one thing that brings us together. See, you and I, we're different in so many ways, right? We have different gifts. We look a little bit different. We're different ages, different economic strata, different gender, whatever, all those things. We are the most diverse group of people. But yet, we can get along, and we can get along so well. We should get along so well. Not always, but you know. But we look, and we see this opportunity. We see this in the church. We're called to unity. But man, in that unity, we have so much diversity. We have so much uniqueness. And it's a beautiful thing. That's God.

[24 : 16] You know, when we look at the United States, right? The United States has been trying to crack this code of unity and diversity, right? We saw us making, like, significant strides in this since the civil rights era of the 60s. Man, we love diversity. We love ethnic diversity. We love economic diversity.

We love each other. Those things are good things. We're a country that has been built on immigrants from everywhere, all over the place, right? How many of us grew up with, like, this idea, America is this beautiful melting pot, right? I remember hearing that all the time and reading that all the time and thinking, like, man, that is so cool. We're like this, like, cool pot of gumbo.

Everything's just getting thrown in, and it smells good, and we mix together. But even there, man, we, we, America's struggled. It hasn't always worked out that well. And you know what? Even in places where diversity thrives, people tend to often just self-segregate into their own camps. A PBS documentary was looking at Berkeley High School, the Berkeley in California high school there, because it was this, like, rainbow coalition of diversity, right? 38% of the student body was white, 35% African American, 11% Asian and Pacific Islander, 9% Hispanic, 7% of mixed racial parentage. They're looking at that, and they're like, wow, look at all this. All these kids are coming together, cobbled together. Let's go and see how they're doing. But the documentary discovered, and what it discovered was that in the classrooms, in extracurricular activities, and in social life, Berkeley High School was quite segregated. Many students at Berkeley High had chosen segregation, and the administration facilitated that choice. Class after class segregated along predictable lines. African American studies classes were exclusively black, Latino studies were almost exclusively Latino, and advanced placement classes were almost exclusively white and Asian. And so you see that in the classroom. You saw that at the lunch table, this choosing of self-segregation.

Now, before we get all judgy and start throwing stones out there, let's be honest. The church has done this too. This also self-segregation can happen in the church just as easily. The whole letter of Galatians is Paul writing into a scenario where that is happening, right? The Jews were self-segregating at the dinner table from the Gentiles. That's what they were doing. They were creating divided camps.

And you know what? That wasn't the last time the church was going to fall prey to divisions and segregation within itself. You know what's interesting is thinking about that. Why do we do that? What's at the heart of it all? Can I humbly throw out a possible answer? What people value most, what you and I value most, is what brings us together. Let me put it another way. Your main identity, what you love the most, will be the leading factor in who you associate with.

[27 : 24] So if your main identity is gun rights, right? You won't care what people are like. You won't care how they live their life as long as they are a card-carrying member of the NRA. I'm not picking on NRA people at all. I'm just trying to prove a point here. If your main identity is around a certain political party or ideology, that is who your community is going to be. That is who you will gravitate to. Birds of a feather flock together, right? But the church is meant to be different.

The church is the one thing that...the church is different because Jesus, for you and I, is the one thing that brings us together. So actually, in a lot of ways, we're the same. Birds of a feather do flock together. Jesus is the thing that brings us together. Everything else is a distant second. That isn't meant to degrade all the other ways we are unique and special. It just means that everything else lives subordinate to our identity in Christ. We are saved. We are redeemed.

We are sons and daughters. We are family. New bloodline. Jesus' bloodline. We are part of God's family. And here's the thing, guys. When God reigns supreme in our lives above everything else, we love and value Him above everything else, we will gravitate to a community that has that in common.

We're going to gravitate towards people that have that same thing in common. And that's what holds us together more than anything. It's not the style of worship that we have, how loud the music is, what the paint of the walls are. It's Jesus. We come together. We come around the person of Jesus.

And that is it. And that is the only way diversity and unity will happen. And guess what, guys? Putting God first produces a thriving, diverse community. Because when we love God, we become more like Him. And what is God? He's a diverse community. He's a diverse community that has perfect unity. Think about this. From eternity. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Three in one. Community.

[29 : 47] And they've been thriving for, oh, let's say roughly forever and ever. Maybe we can learn something from them. How do we figure out how to be a thriving community?

We should look at Him. We should look at His character. We should look how they relate to you and love one another. In John 17, Jesus is praying for His church. And at some point, He starts praying for the church that was to come, disciples that were to come later on in life, you and me. And He says, man, Lord, Father, I pray that they would be one just as you and I are one.

Jesus is praying, Lord, I pray that they would experience and have the same oneness, the same love and unity that we have experienced. So I'd say it's kind of important for us to consider that that community to understand how this community works best. Thankfully, Jesus came and walked among us. We have the gospels that tell us exactly like how He did this. Considered some of these selections from Jesus' life. It came from His own mouth. He says, I must be about my Father's business. I and the Father are one. Father, He's praying. He's praying to His Father in heaven. The hour has come, speaking of His crucifixion, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. And He goes on to say in the garden when He's praying, not my will but yours be done. So what do we hear in these glimpses of divine community? Well, we hear what genuine love is. We get a glimpse into what genuine love, genuine unity looks like. And Romans 12, 9 echoes this with a hearty amen. It says, let love be genuine. Genuine love produces a healthy community culture. Because when you have genuine love, a whole bunch of good stuff flows out of our lives towards each other. When you and I have genuine love, good stuff comes out of us. Let's read what flows out of genuine love for Romans 12, starting at verse 9. It says, abhor evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Be encouraging. Don't tear each other down. Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Don't be lazy. Don't sit on the sidelines. Serve each other. Use your gift.

Do it with spirit-fueled passion. It says, rejoice in hope. Remember that the best is yet to come. Be patient in tribulation. Pandemics won't last forever. Be constant in prayer, right? Throughout your day, act community group. Thursday nights, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints. You give your tithes and your offerings and benevolence and, you know, there's other further led spirit generosity. I remember one of our good friends way back in the day, her husband was deployed out in Afghanistan and, you know what? She was like all by herself, young bride, and her tires were going bad on her car. She didn't have family in the area. We stepped in and we got her tires. We took her car to the thing and said, you know what? We're going to help her out. There was another time a guy, older, older man in our church and just, he was poor and couldn't afford it. But you know what?

He just threw this out in a comment, a little comment out one time and it was just, man, it would be nice to have like a lazy boy. I don't have anywhere to sit, you know? And so we clubbed together and we got him a lazy boy. It's just little things like that. Spirit-led generosity.

[33 : 40] How does the Lord lead us into caring and listening and loving one another in good practical ways? Contributing to the needs of the saints. We seek to show hospitality, hospitality, open homes, dining, open dining room tables. Like we say, what's in my fridge is yours and what's in your fridge is mine. Gospel hospitality. See, genuine love isn't like this good warm feeling that just stays bottled up in our hearts. It leaks out of us. When we look at the life of Jesus, that's what he did, right?

His love, he was a compassionate man. It led him to action. That love always moved him outward. Word. It's proactive. It's not reactive. When we look at God's love, you know what it does? It initiates.

God's love initiates. You don't have to wait for a sign from God to start living this out. You just need to stop procrastinating. This kind of genuine love isn't always easy though. And actually, at times, it is very hard. Just doing those things we talked about can be very hard. Sometimes, it's a lot easier to tear someone down than to build them up, right? It's not always easy to have an open home and an open dining room table. To share your food in your fridge. But that's what we're called to do. And honestly, guys, when we look at those things, all those things we read, that's like the entry point of genuine love. Loving those who love you is easier because we're going to get to the hard part of genuine love, which is the next part, starting at verse 14. Bless those who persecute you.

Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Be slow to speak. Don't be so encouraged about your own opinions that you can never stop sharing them. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought. Don't react. When somebody pays you evil, don't react.

[36 : 12] Give pause. Give thought. Do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. That's a tough one. God, I'm going to have to trust you with that, right? Someone punches me, I want to punch him back. Leaving it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, and I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. After you read that list, I'm sure you realize with me how much we have to grow in genuine love. I look at that and I say, oof, I got a long ways to go here,

Lord. You're going to have to teach me and grow me in genuine love. That passage, when we look at that passage, and then when we look at how the world says love works, we see something totally different, right? We see it being very opposite to today's values and behaviors, and too often, it's not the church's modus operandi, which it should be. We want genuine love to be more like a rom-com, if we're honest, right? But genuine love is all about sacrifice and surrender.

Genuine love compels you to lay down your life. That's what it does. In an age where what we do is we elevate our rights, we elevate what we feel entitled to, genuine love calls us to something greater. It calls us to a higher vision of what the fullness of life is, true life in Jesus Christ, and ultimately true community, what true community is built on. It's a love that leads with sacrifice and surrender, not selfishness. We look at ourselves last. When we look at God's love, we recognize that's exactly what he did. We were his enemies, right? We were the ones who cursed him, rejected him, despised him, yet what did he do? He came and sacrificed himself. And that's what genuine love does. Genuine love pours itself out for the sake of others, even if that other is not on your side. Jesus calls us.

He's calling you and me. He's calling his church to follow him in his way. This way of genuine love, pick up your cross, die to yourself. And to follow Jesus in this way, in this life of sacrifice, requires us to surrender. We have to surrender the modern dogma that happiness comes by experiencing, holding onto, and fighting for my rights, my wants, my preferences. I'm not saying that God doesn't care about your happiness. I'm just saying he cares about your holiness first. But he knows that your holiness will lead to true happiness. Our gut instinct says to us, man, if we live this way of genuine love, there is no way we're going to be happy that we could be at peace or have a joyful life.

But you know what? Our guts are wrong because the Bible says that's exactly how we find it. It may be counterintuitive, but the Bible's right. God is right. You will experience lasting joy. You will experience permanent peace because the way of genuine love is the deepest kind of fellowship with God.

[39 : 58] As the band comes up, some invitations to respond. If you are here and not a Christian, man, thank you. Thank you for being here. I hope this was helpful. I hope this was eye-opening to see this is what the church is meant to look like. And I'm sure you're realizing that, you know what? Oftentimes, what's what the church has been is not like this at all. And I just want to say, hey, we are not perfect.

And God is working on us. You know? The invitation for you is to come join us. To recognize that, you know what? Jesus, he came for you. He came and he died for you.

He gave up everything to give you everything. And today, he's offering salvation, salvation in him that came through his death on the cross to die for your sins, to free you from that captivity.

And I want to offer you today, man, that's your response. And I hope that's you today. And all it says is, man, it says, you pray, you simply say, Jesus, I repent of my sins, be my Lord and Savior.

And it says, you will be saved. For those of you in the room who are Christians, we're going to take communion. That's our response. That's what you and I do. You know what communion is? Communion is a confession of commitment to community, to Jesus's community. And as we take communion, we are reminded what it costs Jesus to make this community. In Acts, in Acts chapter 20, Paul is meeting with this church, these church leaders on this beach in Miletus. And he's saying this gospel goodbye.

[41 : 36] And he just reminds them that man care for the church, this church that Jesus obtained with his blood. We are a we because he died for us.

And we gather around him. And this is a reminder of why we come back to community again and again and again, regardless of how messy it may be at times. Right? Because we gather for this. We gather for him.

He's the one that brings us together. He's the one that unites us, who we have in common. He's the one we exalt and glorify. He is our main identity. We are his. So as we take the body today, his body broken for us.

His brokenness is our unity, our oneness. His blood shed for us His way that we get to be a part of the body of Christ. Let's eat and drink together.