

Part 2: Gathering Around the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] All right, that was a lot of fun. I hope those of you who are kind of with us for the first time, you get our vibe a little bit. We, man, we love one another. We have a lot of fun together, and we love doing this thing, this wonderful thing called Local Church, Church Community.

It is absolutely beautiful. If you are here and it's your first time, you're just kind of new, we're so glad that you're with us. It's actually a great time to be with us. We are jumping into a new series.

We've started a new series last week. We looked at what it means to follow Jesus, and that was part one, and that was getting the gospel. And, man, everything that we do comes out of that, comes out of what Jesus, who Jesus is and what he's done for us.

It's the good news that Jesus saves us from sin and shame and guilt. And this gospel, man, it restores our relationship to God, but it not only does that, it restores our relationship with one another as well, which means that we are brought into God's family.

God brings us into his family, his people, this new community that he has created and is growing. And that's who he is. He's called God our Father.

[1 : 1 2] We come into this family as sons and daughters. That's what we get to do. We come into this community where Jesus is king, where he rules and he reigns. And this community is what we call church.

And today we're going to look at what it means to follow Jesus by gathering around the gospel, how the gospel brings us together and what that looks like. More directly, what does it mean to be the church?

So some of us in the room, we may associate church kind of like a social club. You come in, you pay your dues, you come in when you want and dress a certain way, and it's cheap entertainment, great for making friends, the food's free, not bad.

Some see the church as a hospital. We come in to get our problems solved, get stuff healed, and then we leave. Some of us see church as a university.

Sunday is this classroom that we go into to learn a lot of stuff. We want to come in, we want to get equipped and downloaded into, and then we kind of go out and do our own thing, and we use the church that way.

[2 : 1 8] But I want to ask us this. What is God's vision for the church, right? How did he design it? How did he create it? What is this thing that he's calling us into?

We often think of the church as this building or a place that we go to. And that's where we need to change our language and our understanding. See, the church isn't just something you go to.

First and foremost, it's something you are. The church is something you and I are. So the question we seek to answer is, what does it mean for you and me to be the church?

First of all, let's understand what church means and where it comes from. As it's used in the Bible, it means called out ones. It's a strange idea, but Jesus' own words, he said this.

He said to his disciples, you are in this world, but you're not of this world. So that's how that looks. The church is made up of called out individuals, people saved by Jesus, people saved by him out of darkness and brought into his kingdom.

[3 : 27] And unfortunately, we don't talk much about God's kingdom these days, right? It sounds very medieval, first of all. Some of us might even think it's a slippery slope into LARPing. And hey, if you're a LARPer, that's cool, man.

We like go for it, have fun. But nevertheless, the kingdom language, that's the language of the Bible. Some of you are looking around like LARPing, what is that? Go Google it, you'll have a fun time, all right?

All right. So this idea, this kingdom language, this kingdom of God language, it's the language actually Jesus used all the time when he was here on earth. You can go and look at the gospels. He talks about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven all the time.

He preached about it. And his church is where the kingdom continues to manifest and continues the mission that Jesus started. It's spreading his gospel.

It's spreading the good news of him throughout the world. Now, it's worth unpacking what God's kingdom is. Graham Goldsworthy's great book, Gospel and Kingdom.

[4 : 29] Short little book, tiny little book, power-packed, so good to read. I can't recommend it enough. He puts it this way. God's kingdom means God's people in God's place under God's rule.

If you were to succinctly like bring it down to what that means, God's kingdom is God's people in God's place under God's rule. And that is a great definition.

We are God's people in God's place under God's authority doing God's will. That's what we are doing. We are a surrendered people. We are a submitted people. And that's what it means to be the church.

But we also have to... We need to look at how do we live this out practically? How do we do that? And the Bible gives us a great picture of this in 1 Corinthians 12. That's the text we're going to be working out of today.

If you have your Bible with you, turn to 1 Corinthians 12. And if you don't have your Bible, don't worry. We're going to throw them up on this. Verse is up on the screen behind us. You can read along with me.

[5 : 29] We're going to start in verse 12. It says this, For the body does not consist of one member, but of many.

If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? And check this out. But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. Big idea here. First and foremost, following Jesus means you belong to a community because God added you.

This is the place we have to start. It's not just a good place to start. It's the place we have to start. You can't buy your way into the church. You can't earn your way in. God saves you and brings you into his kingdom community.

[7 : 01] That is how it works. That's why we started last week with getting the gospel. If you weren't here, go back and listen to it. As it describes it here, in this text we were reading, it says he places us, the Father God places us into the body of Christ.

And it says in Ephesians 5.23 that Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its savior. Check this out. Jesus said to Paul on the road to Damascus, right?

Paul is persecuting the church at the time. Jesus knocks him off his donkey, blinds him with his marvelous light, and he says, why are you, Paul, persecuting me?

This is Jesus from heaven saying this. Think about this, guys. When something happens to the church, it is happening to Christ's body. He doesn't see it as a separate thing.

So to be a part of the church means that you and I are united with Christ. God saves us, and he knits us into the body of Christ. That's how it works.

[8 : 05] And disciples of Jesus, what we need to do is we need to learn a new kind of body language, all right? This kind of body language, the body language in the Bible. Because there's this implication here that cuts at the heart of the culture we live in today, this heralded thing of American liberty and autonomy, where we get to be our own self-sovereigns that we call the shots, that I'm the king of my castle, that I'm the king of my kingdom, and I get to do what I want, how I want, when I want.

This knitting that God does, this bringing us in, this uniting of Christ, us to Christ, that's what it means. We are united. We aren't the head.

Jesus is the head, right? He's the chief. We belong, but we don't get to call the shots. Jesus does.

Which means this, following Jesus means being all in to do his will. Means we're all in to do his will. We're all in with his body.

I have members of my body, my fingers, my arms, my hands, my eyes. If my eye wasn't all in my body, it would look pretty weird, right? If my fingers weren't all in my body, I'd look a little bit strange, right?

[9 : 24] We're called to be all in. As the church, as God's people, we are called to be a prophetic people. We are called to live prophetically.

What does that mean? It's a lot less spooky than you think. To quote our very own Phil Davis, that means asking God, Lord, where are you calling us to? Where do you want us to be?

What are we becoming in you? And then it's living toward that reality. Living toward where he's calling us. Living toward what he's doing.

Living toward where he wants us to be. See, disciples of Jesus are meant to stand out in this world like Jesus did. And that doesn't mean short hair, parted on the side, collared shirt, wearing dockers with a Bible on your hip.

That's not what we're talking about, right? We're supposed to stand apart. Following Jesus means that you're not leading, he's leading.

[10 : 26] We pray, right? Like Jesus taught us, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And our will, as we're called into church, as we're called into this community, our collective, we're all together will, our united will is to live for God's glory, not ours.

And our will is to advance God's kingdom, not ours. And doing God's will means doing it God's way. And that means we don't do it in isolation.

Following Jesus means we are all in together where God has placed us. Verse 14, for the body does not consist of one member, but of many.

If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

[11 : 26] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? If all were a single member, where would the body be? If we chose to live this thing out on our own, an isolated Christianity, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. I cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again to the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

And on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we actually bestow the greater honor. And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it. Why? That there may be no division. Division, division, two visions.

[12 : 35] No, no. There be no division in the body, that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Christian community isn't me, God, and my Bible. As we often say here, lone rangers are dead rangers. And lone rangers are dangerous rangers.

We are not called to live in isolation. That's not what God saved us into, a life of isolation by ourselves. And we also are not called to shallow connections with other believers.

Man, like Isaiah says, we are a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor. We are meant to dig in, dig down deep, get rooted and planted in the soil God's placed us in.

God knits us into a local church body at specific places and time. Now that means we need to get some good theology about how in control God is of our lives, how much He actually directs our steps.

[13 : 43] You and I are here right now at this place, at this time in history, because this is where God wants you. Acts 17.26 says, and He, God, made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

Jim Elliott was a missionary who died taking the gospel to the Aca tribe in Ecuador. Before that time, before the doors opened for him to go to the nations, before God opened those doors, he had him in the season of waiting.

And it was a time of impatient frustration for him. Man, he wanted to go. He knew God had called him, and he's like, Lord, what is taking so long? Open those doors. But it was a time God used to shape his theology as well.

See, he thought that he wasn't counting until he got on the mission field. But God pushed pause on that to bring him to this revelation. In his own memoirs, he says this, wherever you are, be all there.

Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God. Guys, wherever you are, wherever God takes you, and some of you guys in the military, God's going to take you other places.

[15 : 03] Man, you might end up in 29 Palms. Y'all know what that means, right? Man, even if you end up there, be all in.

Figure out a way to be all in. All right? There are no insignificant places. There are no meaningless people. There are no meaningless roles in the kingdom of God.

So be all in where you're at. Now, we can get whipped up into a frenzy and live this way for a little while, and you can go out here and say, yeah, that was such a call. I'm going to go.

But let's be honest. This is hard to do. Being all in is not an easy thing to do. So how do we do that? Man, following Jesus this way, being all in means we have to fight with faith.

This passage that we just read brings up a couple of thought patterns that keep us from being all in. And we have to fight against them. We either think too little of ourselves or we think too much of ourselves.

[16:05] In verse 15, if the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body. And later, and then in verse 16, if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body.

Man, that isn't humility. That is judging yourself harshly. It's thinking to yourself, I'm not good enough. I'm not righteous enough. I can't give enough.

I can't serve enough. I don't have any talents to bring to the table. It's not going to make any difference if I help out or not. And if those are the conversations you are having with yourself, I want to say that isn't God putting those thoughts into your head.

That's not in the Bible. He's already judged you worthy. He's qualified you in Christ. He's added you to his body and he's gifted and empowered you for service by his Holy Spirit.

None of this has really to do with you and what you think about yourself. All of this is God's doing from beginning to end. and too many people in Jesus' body disqualify themselves from ministry and don't dare for Christ because of that mentality.

[17:16] And it takes truth and faith to overcome those lies. I mean, think about this. Remember the 12 spies that went into Canaan to spy out the land? They come back. Ten of them said, we were like grasshoppers.

I mean, the cities were fortified. They had these thick walls. The people in there were giants. They were strong. We can't do this. They had a me vision. That was as big as their vision was.

All they could do was look at themselves and see and that was it. Then you had Joshua and Caleb who came back and they said, yeah, city walls, big. Giants of the land, yes.

But you know what? Our God is greater. Our God is greater. They had a God vision. They had faith. They fought with the truth. They realized who their God was.

I remember eight years ago in Moorhead City at our site over in Moorhead City sitting with Jan and Ruth Roller. We could see that they would be awesome community group leaders.

[18:16] Their current community group leaders could see that they would be awesome community group leaders. Everyone saw it except for themselves. They kept disqualifying themselves. No, we can't do it. No, we're not good enough.

No, we can't pull this off. But that's the power of being in community together. We get to call out what is true. And that happened to them. We were like, guys, oh my goodness. Don't discount what God is doing.

Look at all these things. And you know what? They stepped out in faith and they've been leading community groups for years upon years upon years. Man, just making a difference. Opening up their home and helping people getting knitted into this body of Christ.

Doing an awesome job. Man, we need to hear the truth from one another sometimes. We need our faith bolstered from one another sometimes.

Actually, a lot. I was on the phone with a lady in our church who was being pummeled with all kinds of lies and slander. And I had to speak truth over her and call out those lies.

[19 : 14] No, no, no. I know what they're saying about you but that is not true. You're not this. You are this. That is how we fight, guys. We fight with faith and we fight with truth.

And what is the truth? Where is the truth? Man, we go to our true source. The truth source. The Bible. God's word. It never changes. Never, ever, ever changes like the opinions and knowledge of man.

There are no small people. There is no small roles in God's kingdom. God made every single one of us in his image. And that means something. If you're here and not following Jesus, you are still made in God's image.

And this is how Christians look at other people when we realize this. There is intrinsic value and dignity that all humanity has regardless of race or color or creed or gender or income or whatever it may be.

And because of salvation through Jesus, that image that we have, that likeness of God, it gets restored even more clearly and it's being perfected in God by the Holy Spirit.

[20 : 21] Which means this, that we shouldn't think too highly of ourselves. Verse 21, it says this, that I cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again to the head, to the feet.

I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor.

And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty. That there may be no division in the body. That the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Two things happening in this particular mindset, right? This arrogance, this I'm better than you, is we stand back and we say, you know what?

I'm going to judge you. I'm going to judge who you are. And that can happen in significant ways. It's a lot easier to fall in that than we realize, right? Because we are in a body together, guess what?

[21 : 24] We're going to sin against one another. And what is our response to that? Do we hold a grudge? Or do we offer, do we work towards forgiveness and repentance and reconciliation?

That's what we do, man. We are a people who are quick to repent. We are a people who are quick to forgive so that restoration and reconciliation can happen and there's no division within the body.

And when we are arrogant, what it does, it blocks the intrinsic honor that God bestows in other people. And we put ourselves in the place of God and say, you know what, God?

I know better than you. I am a better judge than you are. And Christianity doesn't live that way, man. Christianity says, you know what, God? You are the judge. Christianity is always flipping the value systems of society.

Society always tends toward two extremes. It swings the pendulum from one side to the other. It places the honor and value on celebrity and fame and wealth and success, right?

[22 : 21] We celebrate those things or it swings the pendulum far the other way and says, if you're the weak or the minority or the victim, you are more important than everyone else. But the gospel doesn't say that, man.

It doesn't matter if you're a Jew or you're a Greek or a barbarian. Man, one body. We are all of equal value. No one is better than the other one because of their lot in life or their place in life or their position in life or who they are.

It doesn't matter. We don't think that way. The gospel teaches us not to think that way. We don't bestow honor on ourselves or take honor for ourselves. Rather, what we do is we give honor.

We give in grace to one another. It doesn't matter, again, what race or gender or income level. It doesn't matter any of those things. We are not a divided body.

We are one body in Christ. We are all in Christ together. It's an amazing, beautiful thing and we fight for each other with our faith and it is worth the fight because when we are all in, it has a multiplying effect.

[23 : 27] In his book, *The Glorious Cause*, Robert Middlecoff writes about the USA's improbable triumph over Britain in the Revolutionary War. Britain had more money.

They had a bigger war chest. They had a bigger and better trained army. They had a bigger and more powerful navy but they didn't have what the American revolutionaries had and that's what his book's about.

They were united around a glorious cause. Their glorious cause was liberty. That's our glorious cause. I'm going to read you a passage from Isaiah that Jesus said he fulfilled but it's a passage that his church is carrying on and will carry on until the day he comes and returns with the fullness of his kingdom.

This, guys, is our glorious cause. This is our glorious cause. Nothing else, nothing greater. So I've changed the pronouns for me to us because we're talking about the church here.

Isaiah 61 verse 1. The spirit of the Lord God is upon us because the Lord has anointed us to bring good news, the gospel, to the poor.

[24 : 44] He has sent us to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

However, following Jesus means we are a kingdom who fights. We are a kingdom at war. All right?

We have to understand we, there's wartime Christianity. Until the day Jesus comes back, we are fighting to make disciples and push back darkness all for the sake of the gospel, right?

That is what we do. We fight for the poor, the brokenhearted, the captive, the sin, those bound, chained by guilt and shame. We fight to see them liberated and restored into God's grace and love.

Man, guys, God is calling us to be all in for that mission. God is calling us to be all in to fight that war. And the more of us that are all in together, united for the same glorious cause, the greater the impact, right?

[25 : 51] It's like fingers, right? Boom. I can make, you know, I could do a little bit of damage hitting someone like this, but man, when we're united and the fingers come together as a fist, all of a sudden, man, the impact gets multiplied.

The impact becomes more powerful when we are all in. Check it out. The all in of Acts 2.42, the church, when it first launched out and it started, it came together, it says this, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

All in to the apostles' teaching. All in to the fellowship. All in to the breaking of bread. We really love that part, right? And the prayers. And awe came upon every soul.

Look what happened because they were all into those things. Awe came upon every soul. Many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles and all believed, and all who believed were together and had all things in common all in together.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with gladness and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[27 : 08] And then what happens? The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Man, we see a church all in together and we see what God's doing through that.

How he's taking their faithfulness, how he's taking that and he is multiplying that. This early church was all in together for God's glory. Today, we still need the same thing.

Guys, man, we get to be called to this thing called the church and it's an amazing thing. The church needs you all in. All in with your life, all in with your serving, all in with your giving.

Two weeks ago, we announced that God was leading us to the Tourist and Events Center. It's the next season for this fun journey that's called One Harbor Church Havelock that God has us on.

This is an opportunity for me and you. We can stand back and watch. We can even leave. Or, we can say, this is the body, this is the church God has knitted me into and I'm all in.

[28 : 12] Two weeks ago, we called everyone to pray about where to serve and how much to give towards the new equipment we need. and today is the day we are putting our all in on the table. And this is more than just a moment, guys.

This can be the start of something God might use for kingdom multiplication. It can be the start of seeing ourselves as more than just a ragtag group of people hoping that things don't fall apart, hoping that we can keep this thing going.

Man, we need a bigger vision of who God is and what he can do with us and through us. Man, guys, I want to say there's so much happening that I can't like disclose all the information but man, there's stirrings of people in this church feeling called to plant churches in cities and towns in various parts of eastern North Carolina.

We just sent out John and Odessa Lewis from our Beaufort site and their four-year-old son Gideon to plant a church in Goose Creek, South Carolina. In his first week there, it just happened, he's become the coach for his son Little League team and they've already had three of their neighbors over for dinner, right?

But how do you and I see this church? Too small to send out church plants? Too small, too insignificant to dare for Jesus or, and God, we want to step into all that you are calling us to.

[29 : 35] I love the book of Nehemiah, one of my favorite books. I've been studying it a lot the past couple of years. It shows us what God's unimpressive people can accomplish when they answer the call and are all in.

Nehemiah 2 verse 17 says this, Then I said to them, You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Jerusalem represented the kingdom of God in the Old Testament.

You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its 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 had been upon me for good and also of the words that the kingdom had spoken to me.

And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work. And they did. They got to it. Chapter 3 verse 3, Then Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brothers, the priests, and they built the sheep gate.

They consecrated it and set it stourwards. They consecrated it as far as the tower of the hundred, as far as the tower of Hananel. And next to him, the men of Jericho built.

[30 : 43] And next to him, Zachar, the son of Emri, built. And next to him, Merimoth, the son of Uriah, the son of Hechaz, repaired. And next to him, Meshulam, the son of Berechiah, son of Meshazabel, repaired.

And next to them, Zadok, the son of Baena, repaired. And next to them, the Tekoaites, repaired. But their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord. And I love the unity in this chapter, right?

They rose up with their brothers. We are a family. We are a body. We are members knitted together. We are all in. We're standing and working and serving the Lord shoulder to shoulder.

Man, let's count ourselves worthy, guys, of the work God is setting before us. Those nobles, they missed out. They were either too proud or didn't have faith in what God could do when people go all in.

Tell you one final story here. A wealthy businessman told me a story when he was in a church, a church he's been a part of and still is a part of. And that church, they bought a property and started a campaign to raise money.

[31 : 52] And he sat back very, very well. I'm talking like really, really like he's a very wealthy guy. And he just, he just knew it was going to fail. He's like, here we go.

I don't know. I'm going to watch them fail at this. And he didn't stoop to give or serve or help. They're in that whole thing. A year later, the building was built, totally paid for. And as he walked into that new building on its first Sunday, he just felt God say to him, son, I love you, but I want you to know I can do this with you or without you.

See, he missed out on the joy of being a part of what God did in the church during that season. And you know what? Since that moment, he's changed. He's leveraged his wealth and his wisdom and his time and his talents for God's kingdom.

He learned the lesson. You know what? It's better to be all in. I'm going to have the band come up.