

Discussion of "The Purpose of the Church: Community"

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[0 : 00] Acts 2-42-47 was the text for this morning's sermon.

The fellowship of the believers.! What were they devoted to?

And then we see the results. The results were that day by day the Lord was adding to their number those who were being saved. Obviously we have that same purpose today as a church. We are called to go and make disciples.

We should want to see the Lord using us in the same ways. To be used by Him. To share the Gospel. That people would be saved. And that we would continue to be able to disciple them. So let's read that text together. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. And the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all came upon every soul. And many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

[1 : 11] And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 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 glad and generous hearts. Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

So the first application question is, Why does each individual's devotion to the church determine its impact? And so if you remember the main idea from this morning's sermon was that your devotion determines our impact.

And so with this question we're really looking at, Why is it so important that it's not just some individuals within the church, But really that we encourage every individual in the church to be devoted to what we've been called by the Lord to do.

Our purpose. So why does each individual's devotion to the church determine its impact? I have a microphone up here if I have a volunteer. Thank you sir, Josiah. Why does each individual's devotion to the church determine its impact?

[2 : 31] Mike. I'll use the easiest example before somebody else does. But a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

I have oftentimes talked to people and when they find out, you know, I think most of them already know that I go to church. I'm a Christian. I'm a believer. And I'll oftentimes ask them, Where do you go to church?

And sometimes I'm expecting, Oh, we don't go. But they will say, Oh, I go to such and such church. And immediately there's a thought in my mind, If that's what that church is like.

If this is a representative of that church, I'm not sure what that church is doing. And I don't want us to be seen that way. Because we are all representatives of not just the Lord, but also of this church. Good. And yeah, we have as part of being a part of a church is mutual accountability. We have a responsibility to confront sin and to do so in a loving way.

[3 : 39] But yeah, so again, that speaks to the importance. And we make sure that every individual within this church is following Christ like we've been called to do. Anyone else want to add their answer to this question?

Why does each individual's devotion to the church determine its impact? Wes? I was going to say sustainability. So we were talking this morning about how long this church has been here.

If people aren't devoted to the church, it's just going to fade out and die. Things aren't going to get done. People aren't going to want to come and it'll just eventually die out. And to Mike's point, I've had people ask them, what church do you go to?

Oh, I go to Highland Park Baptist Church. Like, no, you don't. So it's kind of sad when people, they think, you know, they're members of a church or something, but you never even show up. It's like, and that's the church you call your home church.

Like, it's kind of interesting. Hmm. Okay. Good. Good. So we read this this morning, Ephesians 4. [4 : 40] Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped. When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

And so just with that, it's the reality that we're not, this isn't just a club. This isn't just an organization. This is the body. And each part of the body has a role to play as it's playing, as it's working together. That's when the body is able to fulfill its purpose. Yeah. Exactly. So, yeah, using the illustration in scripture, the church is a body.

And every individual has a part, has a specific function that God has for them to fulfill. And if any of you have had an issue with a part of your body not working like it should before, you know that it affects every other part of your body, doesn't it?

You guys remember when I had my gallbladder removed? And I remember that first attack, whatever they call it, at three in the morning. And it just felt like it was a heart attack.

[5 : 55] And every day, I had a couple of episodes before it got taken out, maybe a few. But when it was acting up, I wasn't thinking about anything else besides that small little thing that isn't really necessary.

But it had a huge impact on the rest of my body. And if you've had anything like that, you know that that's the case too. I mean, even a little tiny part of your body that you may not view as being that significant has a way of hurting the rest of the body, affecting the rest of the body's functions. And so, again, that's why it's so important that we, that you, we as individuals within the church, that we are devoted to the role that the Lord has for us to play.

Because it causes the body to be healthy. It causes the body to grow. And that's really important. And we can't just look at, you know, a few people in the church and be like, well, such and such is gifted in this way, so we'll just let them do everything with that.

You know, that's not good either. We don't want to throw too much responsibility on any one person. We all have been called to participate in the Great Commission.

[7 : 11] We've all been called to make disciples. And the more we collectively are devoted to that, the stronger and the healthier we will be as a church.

And so, you know, I think that we see this sometimes with, you know, the bandwagon fan who jumps on board with a team that's doing really well, kind of like the chiefs are doing right now. And there's those of us who've been there all along. But, you know, we want to be a part of something we feel successful. And so I think sometimes that can happen in the church too, where people think, well, that's a successful church.

I want to be a part of something successful. Therefore, I'm going to start going to church there. But they don't really get involved. They're not really devoted. And that's not healthy. That's not good. The Lord wants you to be active in His church.

I think that's very clear in Scripture. And it's very important. Cameron? And I think sometimes we don't realize it can be almost the opposite of what you're talking about.

[8 : 14] If I'm out there, I'll just use myself an example. You know, if I'm out there like in a basketball league, cussing up a storm, getting in guys' faces and not being very Christian about it, then they find out I go to Highland Park Baptist Church.

Whether I like it or not, that's a reflection on this church. And so I think sometimes we, part of the devotion of the church is how we act 24-7.

It's not that we're showing up here. It's not that we're volunteering our time here. It's the 24-7 stuff. Because sooner or later, you know, people find out, oh, they go to church there.

And, you know, that dude was just cussing up a guy in our business meeting. You know, it can be, you know, whatever. It can be the smallest stuff. And, you know, it will give the wrong reflection and can hurt the impact of our church just by some of those little everyday things.

Yeah. And worse than that, you know, ultimately we're representing Christ. That's what we're supposed to be representing. I mean, even worse. But I think you made a great point too, Cameron, with the fact that, you know, it's not just showing up here and being devoted here for a couple of

hours on a Sunday.

[9 : 25] It's a way of life. You know, our Lord said that we were to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. That's a life of self-denial.

That's a life of being Christ-centered. And that's a call that He's given for everyone who follows Him. And it's not easy. And that's why we need the church too, to receive that encouragement from one another as well.

To be prayed for at times. Have you ever had a member of your church just pray for you? That's a really, it's helpful, isn't it? It's helpful to know that people in your church, when they say that I am praying for you, that they really, you know that they really are praying for you.

And I'm sure that every one of you, we can share stories about how someone in your church was in their devotion to being the kind of church member that the Lord called them to be.

You benefited from it greatly. The Lord used that person to bless you. And hopefully you can say the same way, the Lord has used you to be a blessing to someone else within His body because of your devotion to being like Christ, to praying for that person, to being a source of encouragement for that person, to share the Word of God with that person, to teach or instruct with the Word that person.

[10 : 46] Danny, back here. Josiah. Just to go off what you were just saying, my brother was here today and he's in the Navy.

And I forget that many of you have not met him yet because many of you constantly ask me how he is doing and that you're praying for him. You know, Linda Moeller is one of them.

And I was just in shock today that Linda had not met Cain because it seems as if she had because they mean it. Those prayers mean so much. When Canaan is off lonely on a submarine ship, he remembers that people are praying for him, people that he doesn't even know.

But it doesn't matter because he knows that they're praying for him. Good. Thought of a story I know I've shared before in my home church when Danny and I were dating, engaged, but we were helping out with the youth group.

And there was a guy there named Paul who had helped out with the youth group a lot. His grandmother went to the church. And Paul was not a believer for much of his life.

[11 : 55] He was probably about 25. So, you know, the majority of his life was not a believer. But his grandmother and other women within our church had been praying for him for years.

Never meeting him, just been praying for him for years. And he said that, you know, he shared his testimony about when he was saved and the first time he came to church, how he was instantly surrounded by a bunch of grandmothers, hugging him and smiling and so happy that he was there. And he's like, these people who I didn't know who they were, they were devoted to praying for him. And even though they didn't know him personally, they knew him in a way. And, you know, those are the kinds of things that I think it's great for us to be devoted to as well in prayer.

Let's move on to the next question. What area of devotion do you think you and the church is excelling at? And maybe you don't want to say you because, you know, we're to be humble, right? I don't want to say, I'm a great evangelist. But let's talk about our church. What areas do you think that as a church, from what you've seen, where do you think that we're doing pretty well?

[13 : 07] Where you feel like, you know, we're strong. And again, it's not that we're boasting in ourselves. We're giving the Lord the praise. But what areas do you think as a church, we excel at?

Areas of devotion. Again, going back to those, you know, prayer, the Word, Christ-centered, being a Christian community. What areas do you feel like our devotion is pretty good?

I feel like we're pretty devoted as a church to this or that. Stan and then Brandy.

Hopefully you don't have the same one. All right, Brandy, we'll go ladies first. We'll go Brandy up first. I'm not sure if this is the right answer, but I would say making a point to be sure to greet new members.

Whenever I went to BCO for the first time, that's one of the things that really stood out was how the members, you know, came. Hey, who are you? What's your, you know, all that. And I feel like this church does that very well.

[14 : 08] Making a point to make us feel, new members feel welcome. Good. That's important. It's important that we be a welcoming church.

That we're not only welcoming of one another, but we're welcoming of visitors, and we're welcoming of unbelievers. Very good. Because, you know, we have something really important that we want to

share with them, and they're more likely to listen to it if they know that we actually care about them before we speak that to them.

Good. Stan? Preaching the Word. I mean, we don't excel at that. We're not a church, really. So, preaching the Word. Good.

Yeah, I think we've got a strong commitment to the Word of God here as a church. That's one thing that I know that encourages me every week in preparing the sermons, is that I know that there's a congregation who will be hearing it, who knows the Bible well, and they expect to hear the Word of God.

They don't want it to be watered down or the edges to be softened. They want to hear what God's Word says. That's an expectation. That's a great thing, I agree too, that we have as a church, is that we view the Word of God as we should, highly.

[15 : 23] It's an authority over us. And so not just with our teaching, but in how we do everything. The decisions that we make and how we are structured as a congregation.

The Word of God is our source that we go to to get all that. And uncompromising as well.

Uncompromising with it too. We're not going to change to try to gain popularity.

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. And it's what we need. It's ultimately what God uses to make us more like Christ. Okay.

Cameron. Okay. And then Ted. So I always... You used the example this morning of the parable of the talents. And I've always kind of loved that it's just called talents because of what we think of as talents nowadays.

And so I feel like I've got to give Shirley a little credit. She saw me one day helping tell her off. She was like, is there anything in this church you don't do?

[16 : 29] No. And so being in this church and being so deeply connected, I see a lot of stuff, I feel like. And I'm always amazed at how many people just step up with different talents around this church, whether it's singing and praise team, whether it's drums, guitar, whether it's getting a boom lift in here to change out some lights, whether it's plumbing issues, electrical issues, just our time, our effort, our seeing people step up with money when we've needed some of the new equipment for the Facebook Live stuff being in the teller's office.

I got to see how much people were willing to give to that kind of stuff. And so just seeing all of that and kind of being... I'm not trying to do this really humbly.

It's hard. But just seeing so much, it gives me the opportunity to see how much all of you do. And it consistently amazes me.

Good. I agree. Being a steward of the talents that the Lord has given you and being willing to use them to serve the church.

And I'll tell you, I wasn't able to be here yesterday, but that was a tremendous blessing to me. And I'll tell you why. Because I didn't have to be here.

[17 : 50] Amen? But you know, so many times that's not the case. And I hope that you understand what I'm saying by that. Jack had a basketball game in Wagner, so he couldn't be here anyways. But just that...

A problem was identified. People within this church gathered together to solve that problem.

Worked together to fix it on their own.

And that is so helpful for me. That's so encouraging to me. I remember Danny and I just in the car. I was like, isn't it awesome that they've just taken it upon themselves?

The church has just taken it upon themselves to do this? And that's just one of many instances. And that is a tremendous blessing to me.

And I love it when things like that happen. I love it. Like Cameron said, when somebody sees a need and they say, I want to be used of the Lord to meet that need.

[18 : 49] That's great. Ted? Well, it's kind of on the same line but a little bit different. Reaching out to each other. When we have, like a year a while back, Elsa had to move.

And we had several of us come over and help move her things even though it wasn't very far. And then when we first moved here and I had my little accident and I couldn't even mow my yard, how 10 people from the church that really know that well came over and took care of our yard for us.

And of course, another one, I don't know who he is, but mowed it every week for us. You know, we're talking about Mike over here. I want to keep him humble. But I've seen that not just there.

We've reached out to others when we've had flood areas and gone in and helped them move their things. That is a key part of our family is reaching out to others.

And even to some who weren't even members. We went and mowed the yard. So. Good. Yeah, I agree. Devotion to serving one another.

[19 : 59] And it does feel good to belong to a community of believers where you know if I have a need and I express that need, that it's very likely that the church is going to rally around me with people from within my family, my church family, to help me through that need, whatever the case may be.

Okay. Willard and then Wes. Back to the idea of being friendly. You know, she mentioned the fact that we greet and new members well and help them feel at home.

people that fall off ladders who do the same thing. But also visitors. This morning, something interesting happened.

There was a couple sitting right about where James is sitting right now that was here this morning. First time visitors. And so, my mind went blank.

Diane, Diane Holland. I was greeting them and I walked up there as well to greet them and I heard the lady say, and she said it out loud. She said, she said, this is no doubt the friendliest church I've ever been in.

[21 : 20] She said, from the time we came in the door, everybody had a smile on their face and greeted us and were so friendly to us.

So, we've never had that before. And, the more I think about that, whether it be to new members, to people that have needs, whatever the case may be, that's simply the church manifesting the person of Christ within them.

And, I think our church does that well. Now, we haven't arrived yet, but I think we do well in that aspect when it comes to the matter of dealing with people, no matter who they are and how they relate to our church, that we're manifesting the person of Christ through our lives to them.

Amen. I agree with that too. It always, blesses me whenever I'm in here and I see before church a new person and already see a church member over there talking to them.

because again, when you think about coming into a church for the very first time, that's really intimidating. Chances are you don't know anybody and, and I think Willard is absolutely right how that reflects Christ.

[22 : 35] Making them feel like not only are you welcome here, but we desire to know who you are and, and we're glad that you're here. Okay, Wes? I want, I think it's a lot about our dedication to the word and people in this church wanting to learn more and grow.

You think of Monday night fat boys, the women's stuff that they do on Mondays. You look at how many people are in here tonight, I can guarantee you there's not very many churches that have anything going on Sunday night.

Everybody's home and watching TV right now. And then also when you think about when we have these sessions, we come in here, people are, well, while I was home during my, you know, between church, I read this thing and I'm looking up this thing and, I mean, they're really digging in and so many people that they just, they know what's in the word that they can just quote it out but not just, you know, reading it out of books someplace real quick to come in here like I do.

So, well, Cameron had his confession about swearing playing basketball so that's my confession.

But anyway, I really think that every, you think of everybody that's in here right now really wanting to learn and grow in Christ and understanding God and all that stuff.

So, great teaching but Brother Willard, you know, he's here. Monty, we got some people that are outstanding pastors in their own right and where are they coming on, you know, to get their, their church, they come here.

[23 : 57] So, I think it's really great and I think that's what we're doing really well. Amen. Oh, and Shirley? Also, I would like to say how much we pray for each other and I appreciate so much that y'all have been praying for Austin through all his difficulties but I know that we have a wonderful prayer request for, I know that Doyleene keeps up with which is so wonderful and it's just so wonderful to know that people are praying for you and your problems and your family members and I just so appreciate that.

It's wonderful. Amen. Yeah, so, it's good that we think about what we're doing well. I think, you know, in someone who's been an athlete and been coached, coaches that got the most out of me

were the ones that first encouraged me before they offered their criticism.

A constructive criticism, you know, to make you better at what you're doing. Hey, you're doing this really well but, you know, here's some things you can work on. I think we see that with the seven churches in Revelation, you know, the Lord has some encouragement and He follows it up with some things that, hey, this is falling behind.

Be careful or your lampstand will be removed. So, it's good that we talk about some of the things that we feel like we're doing pretty well but now, let's, and again, this is, this is constructive things, you know, and whatever we're saying here, we love this church, we're all wanting to have the Lord strengthen our church and use our church more effectively.

I think we can all agree that there's always room to grow. So, when we're talking about this second question, you know, keep that in mind. What are some things that it's not that we're not doing them at all but maybe there's, maybe there's more that we could do.

[25 : 55] What area do you think the church needs to be more devoted to? Caitlin, over here. I think something that I know I want to be growing in and just continually leading into in like daily life is reaching out to unbelievers and being aware of the global need and the health of the global church and like, I think a practical read on that just inside our church is how often are we mentioning the names of believers in other countries?

You know, like, I don't think we get to talk about those countries a lot of times. So, it's something that's been on my heart that I know I want to be more faithful to and I think it's something that our church could grow in as well.

Yeah, I agree. More devoted to our missions emphasis. not just reaching Bartlesville but the world. You know, and going back to that first Sunday too, we've got to remember that we're part of the church universal as well as local and I think that's a good thing for us to consider as well. What more can we do to be involved in sharing the gospel not just here but around the world?

We have a partnership with Aganskons Baptist Church and I think that's something that we've got to look at too. You know, what are we, what's actually being accomplished there? We've got a good relationship but I think that it's, it's good for us to think about too.

[27 : 26] What, what more does that partnership need to be? And what other, what other ministries, you know, we talk about what VOM does or what other places in the world can the Lord, does the Lord want to use us to have a bigger impact for the kingdom?

And, and I know we, this church is used to taking overseas missions trips, correct? That's been something that we've always been a part of and I think that's another thing that we've got to look at too, you know, is it's important that not only are we sending our prayers and funds if necessary but that we're going as well and, and to keep that missional mindset as believers here in Bartlesville, Oklahoma that we are to make disciples of the nations.

Good. Nick? I think on the note we just mentioned about reaching Bartlesville. I've lived in Bartlesville now for I think five months and I haven't witnessed anybody since I got here and I think that's the longest continuous time in my adult life that I haven't evangelized anybody.

so is that an area that I think that the church needs to grow into, grow in? I don't know but I do know that I think being in the Bible Belt can make it kind of difficult and also, you know, it's COVID and all of these other things but I want to get better.

I want to grow in evangelism and I hope that we all do because it's, it is easy to spend time with each other but are we intentionally putting ourselves in places where we know unbelievers are?

[29 : 18] And I think that's a good question for all of us. Good. Yeah, and I know with the engaged things that we've done and that's kind of a question that we've already, well, we've brought up here.

Is it, is it achieving the objective that we've had for it to actually share the gospel with unbelievers? And it needs to be tweaked.

It needs to be adjusted. And not only just, and again, we can't look at evangelism as just, you know, an event that we do. Well, I'll share the gospel during an engage event.

Well, we should be sharing the gospel all the time. And so, that's something that I think we can be committed to praying as a church. Lord, you know, help us collectively as a church to be evangelistic, as you've called us to be, to be sharing the gospel, to be looking outside of these four walls.

And that's one thing with the community groups too, that, you know, you hope it's great when we meet together in our community to be around other people and have that opportunity for them to see us talking about the word of God, praying with one another, and inviting them to be a part of

that too.

[30 : 42] It's just thinking like, you know, we're supposed to. I want to share the gospel. I'm looking for those opportunities. Mike? One thing that comes to my mind real quickly, I even mentioned it in Sunday school this morning, was, what was it, two years ago maybe, we talked in elders meeting and you had mentioned one thing is, when's the last time we had somebody from our church surrender to the ministry as a pastor, missionary, or whatever?

What can we do to be better at bringing up our kids and our young adults and those old folks to get us more ready and accustomed to actually going out and being that type of person like Nick says, maybe just as simple, as simple as a witness.

And we started praying for that. And within a year or so, the Lord started bringing people to our congregation that have been on the mission field that have had experience.

I use Kendra as an example. When she surrendered to the mission field, her pastor went to the parents and said, before he announced to the church, he says, I want you to know what your daughter did.

She surrendered, wants to surrender her life as a missionary. And both mom and dad said, we're not surprised. I think in our prayers, we need to get a little better at expecting God to answer that.

[32 : 19] And when we see him working, then we need to get after it. So there are going to be some things that's going to be happening. And I'm excited to see who our first people are that God moves in.

Amen. Yeah, that will be exciting. Because what great encouragement that someone from our church has been trained.

The Lord has used us to train them, to equip them, and they've surrendered their life to the ministry. And thinking and tying that back to some of the other things that we've talked about with missions. Including our young people on those mission trips so that they get that first-hand experience of what it's like to be on mission to reach the nations.

And thinking too, what more can we do to encourage our young people in teaching opportunities here? One thing I'd love to do eventually is to have one of our young people lead a Bible study, preach a sermon, and just to encourage them in that way because we have a responsibility to do that.

and too often we can look at them and think, well, they don't have anything to teach us or to share with us or just forget how important of a role that we have in doing that.

[33 : 42] So I'm totally with you on that. I would pray for the day to see that as well. Any other answers to this question? So I'm going to circle back to the first part real quickly.

I can't think of any time in my life I've ever seen a church or a camp ask this sort of question openly. You know, what can we improve on? So I think the fact is that we're being self-aware and self-honest I think is something we can excel at and we're getting better at, I think. But I want to touch on a couple, probably two of the things that were mentioned in the excelling is prayer and being in the Word.

Because even though we excel we can't get comfortable. There is always going to be room for improvement and those are two areas I know in my life I've been trying to hammer into myself about getting better at is my time of prayer and being more focused and intentional in it and then my time in the Word making sure I'm not just reading it just to read it make sure I'm studying it I'm in it I'm getting in depth in it not just reading it to check the box.

Good. Any other answers? Do you all feel like on Sunday morning that we are as devoted to prayer?

[35 : 21] Do you feel so I guess the question I'm in if you're coming into our church and you're visiting and you're part of the worship service would you feel like this is a church that's devoted to prayer by the amount of time that we give towards prayer in our time of worship?

Who said no? Amy? Okay I heard Wes yeah I think that's something that we need to think about too because you know I think it goes to the thought that well we have a certain amount of time when we're here and you know we want service to start and end at about the same time and so make sure that we get in enough songs make sure that you know the long winded pastor has enough time to say whatever he wants to say and a lot of times prayer gets trimmed down and cut and maybe that and maybe well not maybe but should that be the case?

We need to spend more time as a church in prayer and if so then what do we need to remove so that more time can be given to prayer? What about even sharing prayer requests? I know we do that very well on Wednesday night and we do that very well like Shirley said with the email that we send out but for the most part you know do we feel like we're pretty aware of the prayer requests that each person has on a Sunday morning?

Are we devoting any of our time during the worship service to that? I remember my first church okay we'll go Evan and Doylene and Leavenworth you'd get prayer requests on cards and as the associate pastor when I was the first year that was my job was to do the pastoral prayer and then and then you would open it up to the congregation are there any other prayer requests and people would stand up and sometimes it would be really great what they had to share and other times they would just it would be like another sermon or it would just be some kind of announcement and so you know we had to really think about what we were doing with that but you know there's something sweet about coming together sharing the requests and needs of the congregation and then going right to the Lord in prayer right after doing so Doylene or sorry Evan something we've seen in other churches when we were in Stillwater is they would start off the service with an intentional time of prayer and you're talking about time really I mean two three minutes isn't a ton at the beginning I'm not saying that's the answer here that's just something we've seen before where it was an intentional time of prayer that also incorporated things we see in scripture or called to pray for authorities for example incorporated there like a guided time good so specific prayer emphasis each Sunday from scripture alright Doylene up here Josiah please thank you sir a lot of people don't see it and it's in the bulletin that we have a person designated as a prayer intercessor during our worship service and we don't announce it we don't so and so is going to be praying for us today but we only have a handful of people who are willing to do that and that has always bothered me in this church yeah I don't know if they're intimidated they think oh I've got to pray for how long but we've had a few that has had to drop out and there's about four or five of us doing it now and you know [39:01] Miss Scott Amy's mother she's so sweet we just put her back in the choir room and so she can still hear up the stairway so she can hear what you're doing you know but she's wanting to go back there and pray as much as she can I'm part of that but of course I'm in the service and so I've gotten in the habit of every Sunday morning I'm back in the choir during the Sunday school hour and I've been doing that every Sunday for several months and interceding for the Sunday school hour so we've got more spots where people can do it you'd be surprised if when you just sit still and start thinking about people who are in the pew and start praying for them during the service but mainly just praying for God to touch everybody's heart and you find yourself you know God will lead you and it doesn't have to be to the minute and how long you can take a break you know and go back read scripture I don't know why it comes across as being I don't know

I'm just I'm I would wish God would call more people to be willing to be an intercessor during that particular hour with what Evan was saying and I just whispered to Paul since we're live streaming on Facebook I don't know how you do two to five minutes of silence yeah with it being streamed and so I don't know if that's something we do at the end after we've cut off from Facebook or before we start Facebook but you might need to consider that but anyway there is ample opportunities for people to be prayer intercessors during the Sunday school hour and during the worship hour come see me I was just going to ask you who should they ask that's that's a great point one to talk about who is the intercessor and to make that known to our congregation who is interceding for us in prayer why that is important because I agree I think people what?

why? yeah we're praying for the service that is happening right now that God would you know move in his people right now this very moment and I think like Doyleen said you know too maybe the intimidating thought is I'm going to pray for an hour and longer but you know what a sweet time it can be yeah to thinking about but you know it's in reading the word and thinking about your church and praying for that service praying for the overall direction of the congregation as well that the Lord his will would be done okay Paul the other thing I thought of too was we're so much more comfortable sharing physical needs and earthly needs rather than spiritual needs and I think we it is harder for us to feel vulnerable spiritually with one another and ask for prayer along those lines and I think that's something that as a church we could be better at it would help hold one another accountable it would help in so many other ways but it is a very hard thing to do yeah being willing to confess our sins to one another so with the prayer and this is kind of what I'm thinking this is something that we'll pray about when we think about our worship service but you know there's

always that time for that the pastoral prayer where prayer requests are shared and then you know one person is praying but really the whole church is praying too so you know something to think about we're we only have five minutes and I want to move on to this last question why do you think it is essential to God that we be involved in the church corporately and in smaller fellowship groups why do you think that both is important so we see that this was taking place in the church in Acts and we see it in other places in scripture they would meet together for worship but they would often meet in smaller groups in their homes or wherever the case may be so why is both important to be involved in both

Wes for a sense of unity and it's needed to encourage and provide accountability so that's essentially why God is wanting us to stay corporately involved I think more corporate prayer would be good too but out of this what just came to me was Ecclesiastes 4.12 where it says a strand of three cords is not easily broken well then I was reading in my Bible and it's saying yeah but it's in contrast to verse 7 through 11 can I read that real quick sure it's the opposite of being the unity it says again I saw vanity under the sun one person who was no other either son or brother there was still no end to all his toil in his eyes never satisfied with his riches that he never passed for whom I am toiling and depriving myself of pleasure this also is vanity and unhappy business and here's where it says two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil and then think about what happened this weekend

[44 : 23] Friday and Saturday getting these lights up for if they fall one will lift up his fellow but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up again if two lie together they keep warm but how can one keep warm alone and then it says and though a man might prevail against one who is alone two will withstand him a threat three-hole cord is not easily broken so there is so much unity and power and even synergy that happens it's like we're in here talking and people say something Cameron says something oh hey what about this and I'll tell you Katie when she's talking about praying for the church around the world I would love to see the BOM has a prayer request that they come in on they used to do on their Tuesday morning chapel service and there's three three people on three situations on there where they just pray about this pastor in China and they name his name and stuff like that we wouldn't have to do that but we could get their prayer list and we know what's going on around the world and be a little more connected and just it only takes a few minutes to pray and just read the story and then just pray for that that situation the pastor has been killed or their house has been burnt down and just all kinds of stuff we didn't believe what's going on that'd be one way we can connect with what's going on around the world and get some prayer corporately here and not commit a whole lot of time to it good so on those smaller and then over here to Nick, Josiah those smaller groups that's where a lot of sharpening takes place you can ask your questions you can be more vulnerable and real with one another because you feel more comfortable to share those struggles that you have and to be surrounded by people who care about you and who will be an encourager to you you think about our Lord right he had twelve disciples a small group but then even in that twelve he had three if you recall two right and then he'd send them out two by two as well so we see that the Lord works through these small groups to achieve great purposes

Nick when we look at churches globally usually they're not very large oftentimes they're less than twenty people and throughout Christian tradition that has often been the case so what we get to experience in the United States is really unusual and we just think it's normal like well of course you get to bed and get together in a big group and you sing songs and stuff and it's like most places you don't do that because if you do the police are coming and it's just a fact so I'm kind of a strange guy but one of the things I think about is we take for granted that we have the freedom to meet we take for granted that we can have a pastor that we can have a piano things like that what happens when our country changes are we going to be prepared for that are we preparing for that day now so if we're not able to meet in smaller groups in houses when that day comes when for instance churches have to pay property taxes and thousands of churches are shuttered overnight because that can happen that conversation has been going in society for several years are we going to be ready for that and I think an essential step for us is getting comfortable meeting in smaller groups because when you look globally what does the church do in places that are hostile does the church not meet no the church meets it meets every Lord's Day maybe they meet in the evening maybe they meet in the morning maybe they don't meet on Sunday maybe they meet another time but they get used to meeting together in smaller groups and it's often more led by just lay members so if you

think about us we are we had 165 in worship

I think last week so let's say pressure was put on us as a group if we all meet together with 165 super easy to pressure us but let's say we break up into 10 groups of 16 good luck trying to control that but let's say they can okay so let's say we break up yet further now we're in 20 groups of 8 you can't control 20 groups and that's why the global church often needs in smaller groups so again I know I'm kind of a weirdo but these what are we doing now in 2021 to prepare ourselves for 2041 and 2051 because if we wait until that day it will be too late and we're going to be absolutely shocked and I don't want that to happen to us yeah great observation and the only thing I would add to that is that we need to prepare this generation for that reality yeah I agree great observations so okay did somebody else have their hand up

Leandra Leandra will be the last one Leandra is right back there in the red sweatshirt I think with the smaller fellowship groups and touching on what Ben just said is like involving that multi-generational thing that you were talking about this morning in worship and I'm sure not everybody is aware of this but we had a youth ministry meeting on Tuesday of this week which consists of the ones that dare to go down to the gym on a Wednesday night and we talked about how on Sunday mornings when we're up here we see the disconnect between our youth and our elders in our congregation and I think that it's dangerous if there's a disconnect and I know the youth can be very full of energy and they exhaust me sometimes I understand that but I also come in the generation that I have so many friends that left the church and are so far beyond what we grew up in and I think that's part of it

I think it's not they weren't equipped enough or they weren't connecting with enough people and you know I've been blessed enough you know like I connect a lot with a lot of the older generation like I come and play dominoes on their dominoes nights and they invest in me and you know that may seem so small to them but it's just such a joy to me and I think that's something with the smaller groups that you know bring your teens bring your kids and let them participate don't you know don't just like put them in the other room but like invest in them and I think our youth like it's very exciting down on Wednesday nights because we are growing and there's people that come Wednesday nights that don't come on Sunday mornings and I know a lot of you guys don't see them but it's exciting down there it's crazy sometimes and noisy but like if you have a few spare minutes come down to the gym talk to some of our youth I think it would be very beneficial especially with the way the world is going it's a scary place and we need that and we need to equip them more and more so good this goes to the point of wanting to see the Lord call missionaries and pastors from our congregation to develop those relationships now and encourage that work together as a church and you know see what the

[52 : 01] Lord will do Kayla and sometimes like as we get older sometimes we forget the purity that kids see the gospel and God's word and just being involved with the Juana's and for the last two three years I get probably just as much if not more out of it than what the kids do and some of it they're not going to understand all of it until they get older and they study it more but it's not just that we can teach the kids something but sometimes they remind us or teach us something as well amen absolutely it goes both ways I'll share one last thing before we wrap up in prayer I'm going to reference a study that was done recently if you really want to know what it is I can get that information for you I know it was done by the SBC and ultimately we know the Lord is sovereign in salvation the Lord preserves us in salvation right but the church has a responsibility as well and what this study found out is that if a teenager had made a connection with someone within their church who was older than them and had established that relationship they were 80% more likely when they went to college to come back to the church it's important it makes a difference whereas the other ones who didn't develop those connections went to college and fell away or maybe they went to a non SBC church but it the statistics show experiences that we have observed that you know I know I have personally when you develop a strong relationship with someone in your congregation who is of an older generation than you in most cases significantly older who is not a relative of yours that that connection

God has a way of using that connection in a very mighty way it means a lot to these young people even though you might try to talk to them and it seems like you're talking to a brick wall I promise you that they are listening they are absorbing and they are aware that you care and it means a lot more to them than you may realize at first but you will realize it so let's let's close the prayer Lord God we thank you for the church we thank you that you have given us the privilege to be a part of

your church Lord we know that we have been called by you to to something great to to go and to make disciples and we know God that you've brought us in community with one another so that we can better achieve collectively what you've called us to do and so Father we pray that in our church that we would experience even greater community as we encourage and challenge one another to be increasingly devoted to what you've called us to be and do as a church so that Lord ultimately what we end up doing is not wasting our time not wasting our lives but doing exactly what you've called us to do and knowing that in doing that Lord we will find a purpose and a satisfaction that this world cannot provide knowing that when we do this Lord we do it to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ who has saved us and so Father we thank you for the things in our church how you've already been working in the past and the present the areas where we feel like you know we're strong always could improve but we're pretty strong but Lord we acknowledge that there are areas that were not very strong but I think what we've seen tonight is the desire to get better and to do more and to strengthen those weaknesses and Lord we know that we need you to provide that strength that instruction we ask that you would and we pray Lord that the results would be that you use Highland Park to accomplish much good in the name of Jesus Christ that you'd be pleased by it and with it and that ultimately Lord again the praise and glory would go to you be with us now Lord as we depart help us as we go throughout this week Father to let our light shine to share the good news of Jesus Christ wherever you'd have us to go and we pray this in Jesus name Amen Thank you.