A Healthy Body of Christ

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

! And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.! 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, 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. One of the things that I do not like to do is go to the doctor.
In fact, I will try to avoid going to the doctor at all costs. The only time I will go to the doctor is if I absolutely have to go to the doctor. And I can't even tell you the last time I've been to the doctor.
[1:15] It's been probably a couple years, at least. But I just don't like going to the doctors. It's not that I don't like doctors. I do like doctors. I'm thankful for doctors.

And I'm thankful for what they do. And what they do is important. But it's just that I don't like to be poked. And I don't like to be prodded. And I don't like to, you know, wear those gowns and have them weigh me and do all that stuff.
And plus, on top of that, there's so much waiting. When you go to the doctor, you wait. When you get there, it's like, why do we have appointments, you know, because I wait. And then they take me back to that room. And then you wait some more.
So I try to avoid the doctor. But I'm getting to the point now where I'm realizing that I can't avoid the doctor anymore, that I'm going to have to start going on at least a yearly basis and just having things checked out.
So doctors are important. And so I bring that all up because, as we remember, Luke is the author of Acts. And Luke is a physician by trade. He was a doctor.
[2:16] And so in this passage of Scripture, though he was a medical doctor, here Luke describes the spiritual health of this church.

And so in this passage of Scripture, he tells us about that first early church and the things about them that made them so spiritually healthy.
And so that's what we're going to be going over tonight, these marks that a healthy church will possess. But if you remember, it's been a little while since we've been in Acts, as Lee and I are trading off a couple weeks at a time, that Pentecost had happened.
The Holy Spirit had come. And as a result of the Holy Spirit's coming, remember, they were in Jerusalem, and a large crowd gathered around. And Peter came out, and he preached a message. And as a result of his preaching, the gospel, right, 3,000 people came to salvation. So the birth of the church had begun.
[3:17] And so now we are getting a glimpse of what that first church was like. And we, as the church, need to look back on the things that made them healthy as a church, as a community of believers, and seek to do the same, to be the same.

And then at the end of this study, we'll ask some questions to kind of give ourselves a little checkup to see if we're doing okay. So these are the vital signs of a healthy church body.
And the first comes from the beginning of verse 42 and in verse 43. It says there, And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.
And then in verse 43, it said, An awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. So here Luke tells us that the church was devoted to certain activities.

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And at the very top of his list was that they were devoted to the teachings of the apostle. That was the number one thing that he lists. If you remember, the apostles used scripture to point people to the truth of Jesus Christ, that he was the Messiah.
[4:33] And then they used that to share the good news that as a result of Jesus' death and his resurrection, that we can be saved from our sins, that we can be made righteous, that we can have eternal life.

And so this is what they were teaching. This is the core of what they were teaching, this gospel message. And then we'll see throughout this book that the apostles did this, that we saw, again, earlier in Acts chapter 2, that Peter was preaching this message in Acts chapter 17, verses 1 through 3.
It says, Now when they, referring to Paul and Silas, had passed through Amphipolis, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom. On the third Sabbath day, he reasons with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, This Jesus, who you proclaim, who we proclaim to you, is the Christ.
So you see, this was their method that they taught. And so this was a priority in the church, the devotion to the teaching of the apostles of Christ.
[5:40] Paul instructed and urged Timothy and Titus to teach sound doctrine to churches because there's no substitute for it, right? We've got to make sure that we're devoted to the teaching, but that we're not just devoted to the teaching, but we're devoted to the right kind of teaching.

And so healthy congregations are fed and feed themselves regularly with the Word of God. And they have a hunger for Scripture and the right teaching of it.
And I had a conversation a while ago, a few years ago, with a lady, and we were talking about doctrine, and she didn't like that word. And she was a Christian.
She went to our church, and she just said, You know, I believe what I believe, but I just don't like all this doctrine stuff. And I, you know, was like, Well, do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? You know, and she did. And I said, Well, do you believe that He was born of a virgin? And she did. And I said, Well, do you believe that He is... Do you believe in the Trinity? And she did. And I said, Well, all of these things are doctrines. You know, you may not like that word, but the doctrines are kind of the compartments that we put these teachings in, and they provide us the guide rail so that we don't start saying funky things that aren't true.
[6:55] So doctrine is important. And I think she came to understand that. So it's important that we are teaching what is right and what is true about God's Word, and that we're not making things up or we're not going with our opinion and allowing that to trump what the Bible actually says.

And we're not using Scripture out of context, which happens a lot, especially if you watch some of these televangelists on TV. They'll put up a Scripture, but they are not using that Scripture in the proper context.
One of the Scriptures that is commonly misused is Philippians 4.13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And you see, you know, as an athlete, this was one that we memorized a lot, and you would see when they used to let them put the Scripture verses on their eye black, that was one that you would see.
And they'd often use it out of the appropriate context, because there, and we'll see on Sunday morning, we'll eventually get there, that Paul is talking about he was able to do all things through Christ, even when he was having to live humbly with not getting by with very much, or when he was prospering.
He knew how to live. He knew how to keep his focus on Christ. And so we've got to understand and make sure that we are properly teaching the Word of God, and a strong church, a healthy church, is devoted to that.
[8:21] There is also a great temptation to please the audience, especially now, to don't offend anybody. Make sure that you're being careful, because we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, because what if they don't come back to church?

Well, what do we care more about, offending men or offending God? And so we've got to be certain that we are making sure that what we say is true, that we're speaking the truth in love, but we don't dumb it down, or take the edge off of it for anybody, especially even ourselves when we are reading the Bible.

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And I would, if you're not already doing it, do this. Before you even start reading in your daily devotions, pray and ask God to convict your heart before you start reading, so that whatever is maybe going on in your life, or wherever you may be falling short, that God would bring that to your attention, because again, we're all wanting to become like Christ, right?
And so we need God's Word in order to do that for us. And Peter didn't do that, right? He wasn't worried about offending people there in that very first sermon, in Acts chapter 2, verses 22 and 23. If you want to read along with me, this is Peter's words. He's preaching, right? He's filled with the Holy Spirit. These are God's Word to these people. He says, That sounds pretty offensive, right? [10:02] If you were there hearing it, but what happened? We see that God was able to use this message to convict their hearts of sin. And God still does that today when He draws people to Himself and saves them.

So we can't be afraid of offending people and be more concerned of the fact that we offend God by not teaching His Word correctly and accurately. The second mark of a healthy church body is that they are devoted to one another.
They are devoted to one another. In the rest of verse 42, it says, And they devoted themselves to the fellowship. And then in verse 44, And all who believed were together, and they had all things in common.
So a healthy church is fed from a diet consisting of God's Word, and then its exercise is fellowship with one another. We have been brought into this fellowship by the Father through His Son, and as a result of that, we enjoy fellowship with others, whom He has also brought into fellowship with us as a result of them having heard and believed the gospel as well.
The one another passages in the New Testament underscore the significance of being devoted to a community of believers. And there are many of those scriptures. I just want to read a handful to you. [11:20] John 13, 34 says, I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. Romans 12, 5.

We who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. Romans 12, 10. Outdo one another in showing honor.
Romans 15, 14. Instruct one another. Galatians 6, 3. Carry one another's burdens. Ephesians 4, 32. Be kind and compassionate to one another.
James 5, 16. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another. And so we see that it's very clear from Scripture that God has an expectation of us, His followers, that we experience this kind of a close-knit community where we love one another, where we share with one another, where we bear one another's burdens.
And that is very important. But it can be very hard to cultivate that kind of fellowship in the church, can't it? And so I came up quickly with four things that hinder this kind of fellowship within the church.
[12:30] And the first is busyness. That nowadays we just feel like we don't have enough time for church. And it used to be the day, I mean, I'm young, but I'm not that young to remember that.

Even on Sundays, being an athlete, we didn't often have games. Especially on Sunday morning, if we had Sunday games, it was usually in the evening. And I know there was a time where you didn't have anything on Sunday, but now there are just so many activities.
And of course, also working with teens in the past, it would break my heart that a lot of times the parents would have their kids so busy with different extracurricular activities, and so they didn't have enough time to come to youth group.
They didn't have enough time to come to Sunday school. And you think, well, what ultimately is going to be most important for them in their life? That they are being trained? That they are being taught God's Word? Because not many of them are going to end up having a career as professional athletes or any of those things.
You know, it's fun, but it starts to take control over your life. My nephew is a sophomore year now, and he's at Bethany, and he plays, he's a starting quarterback there.
[13:40] And we had this conversation, his dad texted me and said, hey, Sam has a weekend off from practice, and the youth group has a retreat, but he doesn't want to go because he wants to have a break.

And so, you know, I was able to encourage him that, you know, you really should go because if your relationship with God isn't right, then everything else is going to fall apart. And so thankfully he

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went, but we've got to make that a priority, not just for our families, but for ourselves as well, that we are making sure that we are making time for God.
So busyness gets in the way of our fellowship. Selfishness is another thing because we often like to think, well, what's in it for me? Or we like to think someone else will do whatever the church needs done.
And so our selfishness will often keep us from fellowship, or maybe we just feel uncomfortable with talking to people or being in with a group of people, you know, and we just, in our selfishness, we don't want to sacrifice our comfort.
And so that also affects our fellowship. Pridefulness is another thing. We don't want to admit at times that we need prayer or that we need support.
[14:50] And let's face it, a lot of times we come to church and we feel like we've got to already be perfect, and we can't let on or don't want to let on to anybody that we have anything that we're struggling with.

And sometimes we don't feel like we can confess in our brothers and sisters in Christ because of fearfulness, which is the next one. Fearfulness that maybe they'll use that information against us later on.
And so we've got to understand, too, as a church, part of our fellowship is that we trust one another and that we're able to be confided in and that when you say you're going to pray for somebody, you really will be praying for them.
If you can get past these things, you will experience, we will experience the blessing and enjoyment of being part of Christian fellowship. Yesterday we had an association meeting down the road here, and I got to meet a lot of the other pastors in town.
It was just, you know, we had a little get-together. There was not a lesson but some information, and then we had lunch. And it was just really nice. You know, I got to meet these guys, and you got to be reminded that, you know, we aren't the only church in town, that there's a lot of other good churches in town, and that we collectively work together for the common good.
[16:06] And so it's nice to have that fellowship and that association. In fact, even when it's another Christian outside of your church, last night I got somebody ring the doorbell, and Danny was with Jack at soccer practice, and so it was me and Hazel at home, and she's been ordering a lot of stuff for our house.

So, you know, I'm just kind of, well, it's probably just the UPS guy dropping another thing off. And so I decided, well, I'm going to get up and check. And you got to understand I have my casual clothes on at home.
So I open the door, and it's pitch black, and I hear Mike, Pastor Mike, and I can't see who it is. I was like, yeah? And it was a couple who Pat Berry knows from Voice of the Martyrs.
I guess it's a co-worker who lives down the street from us. So they had come to give us some cinnamon rolls, so they got to see me in my Captain America sweatpants song. But even that kind of fellowship is nice, too, you know.
It's like, all right, I've got some other Christians on my block, you know, and some people that I hope to develop a relationship with as well. So community for Christians is important. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, It's grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brothers and sisters.
[17:24] And so may we never forget that, and may we always seek to have that kind of fellowship with one another. Thirdly, a healthy church body is devoted to the breaking of bread.

In verse 42, the third part of that, and they devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. And then in verse 46, it says, And day by day they were attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes.
So the breaking of bread, many of you are probably familiar with what that is referring to, primarily to the Lord's Supper. And this was something that they would observe together in the context of a community meal, that they would get together to eat, and as a part of that, they would have the Lord's Supper together.
The church in Jerusalem reflected on the body and the blood of Christ on a daily basis. And as the church faced persecution and then spread as a result of that geographically, it seemed that they began to take the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a meal that they would share together on Sunday evenings.

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So they were devoted to the breaking of bread, to the remembrance of Christ's body and blood that was broken and shed for our sins. Acts 20, verse 7 says, On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread.
[18:40] So this was a part of their custom. This was a part of what made them a healthy and strong church. The point is to emphasize the Christ-centered nature of this Christian community, and their coming together being a result of their belonging to the body of Christ.

So Christ is our center. The gospel is our focus. And when we come together, even when it's to have some kind of any time of fellowship, that that's the purpose for our coming together, correct? And so even if you had a stranger coming into our church, what they would see hopefully is people of all different ages, all different races, all different economic backgrounds, and we have this one thing in common, which is the gospel.
And that's what is the tie that binds us all together. Okay, fourth. A healthy church body is devoted to prayer, and they devoted themselves to prayers.
The fourth part of verse 42. Throughout the book of Acts, we find illustrations of the church's vibrant prayer life. The apostles were always devoting themselves to prayer.
[19:48] Acts demonstrates that the believers would pray together corporately, and it also shows that they prayed privately, individually, or personally to God. So they prayed together.

They prayed by themselves. They prayed in the temple. They prayed in their houses. They prayed as they walked together. They prayed as they encountered sick people, as they encountered people who were afflicted with all different kinds of ailments.
Acts, before they preached sermons, they would pray. Before they heard sermons, they would pray. While they were being persecuted, they would pray. In planned times of intense intercession or particular situations, they would pray.
And as they offered thanks for their food, they would pray. As they gave thanks to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and they praised God in worship, they would pray. And they prayed for God to meet their daily needs.
And so we see that this church, this first church, prayer was a very important thing and a vital part about their coming together. They needed to be praying.
[20:52] And all of this reminds us, again, that a healthy church is a church that prays. I think it's great that this church, I've learned, has an intercessor during our time of worship on Sunday morning.

And last Sunday it was Luana. And I don't know, I felt like last Sunday went pretty well. So I told Luana, you know, maybe you need to be our permanent intercessor down here. But I think that's great. You know, a lot of churches don't do that.
Prayer has lost its power, I think, in a lot of churches because they've failed to see just how important and critical it is to the life of a church. So prayer is very important to a healthy church.
Fifth, a healthy church body is generous. Verse 45 says, And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.
So the early church community was marked by their extreme generousness towards one another. These people were very generous towards each other. Some people, though, see this picture and they perceive communism through this.
[22:02] And they think that that's what maybe this is advocating, but that's not accurate. That's not true. And let's look at why that isn't. Well, first, the church didn't abandon the idea of owning private property.

They didn't give up that thought that they owned private property. Right again, we see that they did still meet in different houses that belonged to different people. Also, stealing is a sin.
And that demonstrates that some things belong to individuals and not to the collective group. Luke points out that no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.
But the Bible doesn't teach communism. It doesn't teach communism. It teaches radical generosity.
And so we see that these early Christians, they cared more.
And this is what was happening. They cared more about the people in the church than they cared about the stuff that they had. And so if they had stuff that they could go without or do without, they would sell it or they would give it to the church so that their brothers and sisters in Christ who were struggling would be able to have enough so that everybody could go to sleep at night full and that nobody went without.

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[23:13] And we do the same kind of thing in the church today. We have benevolence funds and we have different things that we do in order to try to meet the needs of our congregation.

But this isn't advocating any kind of communism or anything like that. The federal government, try as they may, cannot enforce this kind of logic upon us.
They can't. This results from us being born again and receiving a new nature that we are able to live this way. And so the church gives freely.
The church gives voluntarily. The church gives sacrificially and generously so that the work of God's kingdom can be done. And because we've been changed by Jesus Christ, we've been giving a new nature, a new heart.
And we want to invest in the work that the Lord has called us to do and that he's called us to be a part of. Luke also highlights the fact that the church was very sensitive to the needs of those in their community, that these people knew what was going on in the lives of each other.
[24:17] And so they were able to, you know, come together and do what needed to be done so that nobody, again, was going without. They were aware of what was happening in each other's lives.

And so that's important for us as well. Sixth, a healthy church body interacts with one another on a regular basis. Yes. In verse 46 there at the beginning, it says, And day by day they were attending temple together.
So the church lived out this shared life every day. And again, they were involved in each other's lives. They were active in each other's life. The church is called to love those also who are outside of its fellowship so that, again, we can fulfill our mission that we've been given by the Lord.
We are called to love, but I think we are called even more so by God's word to love those whom God has put us into family with, who he has placed in the body of Christ.
We are to be especially loving of one another so that we can better do the work that he's called us to do. Hebrews 10, 24 through 25 says, And so this is very vital to the church that we be a part of each other's lives.
[25:47] And in order to be a part of the lives of the people in your church, you've got to go to church. You've got to show up. You've got to be a part of what's going on.

And the more you do that, the more you will be a blessing to everybody else, and the more everybody else will be a blessing to you. But you've got to be here in order to experience that, as Hebrews 10 tells us.
And so it says, Not only did they meet in church, but they met in each other's houses. And so we see what's part of belonging to a healthy church or having a healthy church is that we have a large gathering, like we do on Sunday morning.
That's our large gathering where everybody in the church is to come in. But then we also see some small groups here. They have 3,000 people in their church. And I don't imagine that any of them had houses large enough to fit all 3,000 people in their church.
And so they were going to their houses day by day in these small groups. And how do we have that? Well, we have Sunday school classes. We have things like tonight. We have Awana. There are a lot of churches do small group ministry now.
[26:56] Or I think you guys have another thing where you do meals together, don't you? Some kind of a group where you meet in groups and you have meals once a month or so. And we play poker. Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised about that.

We might have to do some. That's funny. But so you see, it's important that we have the small groups because we're able to have more of these interactions.
You know, we're able to, you know, cut back a little bit more and relax and allow each other to, you know, let our walls down and get to know each other. And that's what those small groups enable that it's harder to experience in a larger church gathering.
But those are also important. So also with that, if you're not already, I know some of you do go to eat with each other after church. You know, that would fall in line right here, too. They went to each other's houses. What were they doing there?
Well, I'm sure a lot of it had to deal with just gathering together around, you know, a meal. And so we need to do that as well if we're not already. Seventhly, a healthy church body experiences a spirit of awe, gladness, and praise to God.

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[28:15] Verse 43, the beginning, an awe came upon every soul. Verse 46, they received their food with glad and humorous hearts. Verse 47, and they were praising God. The church should not be a boring place.

Amen. The church should not be a gloomy place. It's okay to smile in church. And sometimes I've got to remember or be reminded from my wife that, you know, when I'm standing up there, to smile. You know, because I am having a good time. And sometimes even at the church I came to before, and this will give Lee an idea, if they thought I looked particularly gloomy for that morning or something, they would write a message on the back wall that I could see, and they would say, smile.

And so you have the freedom to do that, Lee. I don't know if I'll see it because the spotlight blinds me, but I'll do my best. But, you know, when people come in, they need to see that we're enjoying our time together, that we're happy to be in church, that we're not gloomy, we're not down.

And, in fact, isn't that what we're seeing in Philippians is that Paul's reminding us of the importance of being joyful. And people need to see that we're joyful because we have a reason to be joyful, and that's because of Jesus Christ and what he's done for us.

[29:24] Eighth, a healthy church body displays a faith that is attractive. And I don't want you to understand me here. We're not talking about some of the things that churches do.

The seeker-friendly churches, they call themselves, they are just trying to draw a crowd. We're not trying to draw a crowd. But when the church acts like the church is supposed to act, it will attract some people.

Not everyone, again, loved this church. In fact, many of them hated this church. And we'll see that throughout the book of Acts, that there are many who wanted to put an end to the Christian faith. In fact, Paul himself was one of those people, Saul, before he became Paul. But what was it that attracted these outsiders? Well, they saw the way that the Christians were treating one another. They saw something that was real. They saw something that was authentic. They saw something that was missing in their own lives. And they had a desire to be a part of that community. There was a man named Aristides.

[30:28] And he lived in the time of 8125. And we have a document that survived from him. And he provides an explanation for why Christianity was spreading.

And he wrote that explanation to the Emperor Hadrian, again, in 8125. And I wanted to read that for you. He writes, And one or the other of them, if one or the other of them, excuse me, have bondmen or bondwomen or children, through love towards them, they persuade them to become Christians. And when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another.

And from widows they do not turn away their esteem. And they deliver the orphan from him who treats harshly. And he who gives to him who has not, without boasting.

And when they see a stranger, they take him in their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother. For they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the Spirit and in God.

[31:33] And whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each of them, according to his ability, gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity.

And if it is possible to redeem him, they set him free. And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast for two or three days in order to supply for their need for the lack of food.

Now that one's going to be hard for Baptists to do, right? They would go without for two or three days, and they would give that food to somebody else. That's pretty awesome. Another ancient document describes the compelling nature of Christians.

And that comes from the mid-300s from the Emperor Julian, who angrily tried the spread of Christianity. He said that the reason for its growth was due to Christians being charitable to the poor.

And this is what he said. The impious Galileans, referring to the Christians, not only feed their own poor, but ours as well, he complained. Welcoming them to their agape, they attract them as children, are attracted with cakes.

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[32:46] So here he's angry, you know, that not only are the Christians taking care of their own poor, but they're taking care of the other poor. And you'd think, you know, as a ruler that that would be a blessing.

But, you know, somebody was experiencing conviction back in 300 A.D. So we need to be aware also of our reputation in our community. That's important.
You know, what do people, when they hear Highland Park Baptist Church, what do they associate with us? And there are going to be some people that are just not going to like us because they don't like Christians. And we understand from Scripture that that's to be expected.
But with everybody else, hopefully when they think of Highland Park, they are reminded of Christ. And so we've got to be shooting for that goal together as well.
And how do we do that? Well, we get outside of this building and we start doing things for people without wanting anything back, just because we want to share the love of Christ with them.
[33:41] We hope to be able to share the gospel with them. And we hope that they see that we truly believe what we say that we believe, that we are followers of Christ and we're going to live that out before their very eyes.

And hopefully that will draw them to the gospel and maybe even to our church. Ninthly, a healthy church body regularly evangelizes.
Verse 47. And the third part of that, it says, How are they being added?
How are the unbelievers being added to the church? Well, yeah, it was God. God had predestined them. God had foreordained them for salvation. But He uses us to reach them, to locate them, and to draw them to Him.
And so they were sharing the gospel. And as a result of that, people were hearing it and people were believing it. And their numbers were growing as a result of that.
[34:45] A healthy church will have a burden, will feel burdened for the outsider, for the unbeliever, for those who don't have a place where they're currently going on Sunday morning for worship.

We should, a healthy church, should feel a burden for them and a desire for them to know Christ as we have come to know Him. And so we will seek to be used by the Lord to do whatever we can in our community so that will happen.
So here's the checkup. Here's the things that, in conclusion, real quickly, we can ask ourselves individually and about our church as well.
Is this a place where people are nourished with Scripture? Is this a place where people are nourished with Scripture? And I'm not just saying this because I'm your pastor, but I would check the box for that one.
I think we're doing really well in that regard. Is there loving fellowship? Is there vibrant worship? And are we reaching out to people, not just with our words, but with our deeds?
[35:51] And if we're doing all those things well, we'll continue to have a healthy church. Our church will not only be healthy, but we'll be like the big muscle-bound bodybuilder, right, who can do laps around everybody else.

And again, not for our own pride or for our own egos, but because the Lord desires for all of His churches to be healthy. Because a healthy church is a blessing to those who belong to it.
It's a blessing to the community. And ultimately, it's a blessing to the Lord Himself. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank You for the church, and we thank You for this church, God.
And we thank You for the privilege that we have to be gathered together tonight and to read Your Word and to be reminded of what a healthy church is like or what it should be like.
And God, we thank You for the good things that You have done through Highland Park Baptist Church in the past and the present. And Lord, we believe that You're going to do great things in our future.
[36:52] God, we pray that we would not forsake our coming together, that we would not forsake any of these elements that are critical to experiencing health as a church, that we would continue to promote the gospel by our words and by our deeds, that we would be making sure that the teachings that we teach, that we share, that come from Your Word, that they would be accurate, that they would be truthful, and that we would subject ourselves and our opinions to what You have to say to us through Your Word.

God, we pray that this church would continue to be a blessing to those who belong to it. Lord, we pray that this church would be a blessing to the community that You've placed us in.

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And God, we pray that as a result of that, You would be glorified and blessed by what You see happening here. And we thank You for the opportunity You've given us to do that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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