

Separation, Reconciliation, Building

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[0 : 00] Okay, and if you've had a chance to meet at least two people, please be seated. So I thought about starting off today by saying who went to Cyberport instead of here, but I didn't want to embarrass my wife, and so we won't talk about that whatsoever, okay?

So we're working on our communication in our household, so it will be good. If you're here for the first time, my name is Tobin. I'm one of the pastors here at Watermark Community Church. We're almost two years old in October, and it's been an amazing journey that God has had us on as a church and as a community. You know, when we prayed about, it felt like God was calling us to start this family, this church.

We wanted to start a community, a family, a fellowship. We didn't want to be a club like we talked about last week, but we didn't want to be a sporting event either.

Often when you come to church, what you see is like 12 people running around, 24 people running around, and 500 people or 40,000 people watching them.

[1 : 17] And that's kind of what church is like sometimes. But we felt like if we're going to be the type of family that God wants us to be, if we're going to be the type of community that God has called us to be to reach out to this part of Hong Kong Island and beyond as we plant churches, that we needed things from people.

We needed the family members to have certain ideals, like we wanted people to pray. But if you're here and you're part of the Watermark family, and I'm talking to you about this because next week we're going to talk about a new member.

We'll have a new member class right after the church service for about 30 minutes. So ice cream will be provided. Child care will be provided. Bring your kids and hang out. But we're going to talk about that.

But we wanted people who would pray because we feel like prayer is the great work. That God moves and the reason you're here today isn't because we've advertised or all these things.

We believe the reason you're here today is because God's working in your heart. And we believe God works in people's hearts because we as his people pray. Another thing that we were hoping that the family would do would be that the family would serve.

[2 : 23] We realize that there's a huge need as we go out, and God has gifted each one of us very uniquely and differently. And so one of the things within this family is we want everybody serving.

What we usually do is we serve within community groups. So if you're in a community group, your community group serves and does outreaches and different things like that. But we felt like for us to be the family that God has called us to be and to equip people and encourage people, we need to serve.

Another thing that we felt like the church needed to do, the family needed to do, is we needed to tithe or give. And we feel like giving of your financial resources is probably the greatest response to worship that we can do.

It's probably the hardest thing in Hong Kong because money is so important to us. It's one of our biggest idols. But the Scripture is really clear that it's all a gift from God. And so for all of this to work, for all the outreach, we need you to tithe back to God what is already His.

And then the fourth thing that we realized we had to get people to do was to invest. We need you to invest your time. We don't do a lot of programs to keep you really busy because we want you to be busy reaching out to your friends.

[3 : 31] We want you to be busy reaching out to the people in your community. We want you to be doing things within your community group that you reach out and invite people to your community group or invite them to church.

Because 94%, 94% of the people in Hong Kong don't know Christ. And we want to keep you busy reaching out to your friends because you're going to be the best message they will ever hear. And as you share your story with them, you're going to impact them. So pray, serve, give, and invest.

And those are the four things we feel like that this family needs to keep growing and to keep doing and keep reaching out to the people in Hong Kong. Another thing we prayed about a lot was that for this community to work, God was going to have to bring the right people to do things.

And so very early in the beginning, I had no idea what a children's ministry looked like. And God brought five women and they said, okay, we'll dream up the children's ministry. And so these five women got together and their first action or response when they came together was, why are we here?

[4 : 41] And they said, well, Tobin wants us to come and dream about the children's ministry. Okay, so let's start dreaming about that. And these five women dreamed up the children's ministry that we have today, Watermark Kids, which I think is an amazing place where your kids have fun, but they hear the gospel message, they're in community, and they understand why God has them here.

From that time, then we started to pray about, well, who would oversee this? And God brought Melanie Case to us. The Case is Jason and Melanie. And so the hard thing or the fun thing about Hong Kong is we get to meet new people.

The hard thing about Hong Kong is that people often leave. And if you've never experienced that, then you're a very special person because people are leaving a lot. And so today is Melanie and Jason and all their kiddos last Sunday with Watermark Kids.

And so again, as we prayed, God answered our prayers, and he brought Natalie Mann to us. So Natalie's been with Melanie for about a year working together.

And so today is Natalie's first day to be the director of the Watermark Kids. And it's Melanie's last day to be the director of the Watermark Kids. So I wanted to bring the cases up just so you guys can see them.

[5 : 57] We're having a gathering right after this from 2 to 5 at Natalie's house. Everybody is welcome. Come and go as you like. And so I just want you guys have been for two years.

And we don't have a mic, but for two years, you have been amazing servants to the church. And you've just given everything. And so we really appreciate that.

And we're excited where you're leaving and moving to go plant another church. But we are incredibly sad to see all of you leave us.

And so I know you've never seen Javi because he runs around everywhere. So everyone knows Javi and Esri and George and Jason and Melanie. And so what I'd like to do is I want to bring Natalie up.

Can you come up too? And we're going to pray for you guys. And this is a statue that has meant a lot for me through my life. And it's something that I think you guys exemplify in amazing ways.

[7 : 02] And it's Christ washing Peter's feet and just the servants that you guys are. And so we as a family wanted to give this to you guys. And thank you for everything you've done. It's been amazing.

And what I want to do is this is unscripted, so we're all going to cry. But what I would like to do, and this is Natalie. So if you haven't met Natalie, you could be praying for her.

You could be helping her, encouraging her because she has our kids ministry just exploding, which again is a great problem to have, right? God's doing some amazing things. So Natalie will take over this time.

So what I would like to do is I want all the kids to come up here. All the kids. Come on, guys. And I want you to stand up. Can you stand up?

All the kids. Come on, guys. All kiddos. And this is what we're going to try, okay? This is what you got, guys. So you all know Melanie, and you know Jason, and you know Natalie.

[8 : 02] And so this is their last Sunday with us for a little while. We're praying they'll come back and help with everything. So what I want you guys to do is this. Will you help me pray for them?

Okay. No pushing. Will you guys help me pray for them? Okay. This is what I want you to do. I want all the kids to hold hands. Hold hands.

Okay. Can I have your hand, writer? Thank you. Okay. Okay, guys. You ready? We're going to pray for them, okay? I know this is unscripted.

So will you pray after me, Phoebe? Will you pray after me? Okay. Okay. Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for Melanie.

Thank you for the Case family. Thank you for bringing them to our family. Watch out for them. We will miss them.

[9 : 04] And we pray for Natalie. Thank you for bringing her to our family. Help us to obey her.

Help us to obey our teachers. We love you. Amen. Thank you so much, guys.

And just please get a chance to thank them. Thank you. Okay. One of our kids are dismissed. The youth are with Sidney. Because Eric is going to bring us God's word today.

Let's continue. Today's reading is found in Ephesians 2. Please follow along in your bulletin. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

[10 : 05] Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, Because of the great love with which he loved us.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses. Made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him. And is seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So that in the coming ages, He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace In kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Not a result of works. So that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works. Which God prepared beforehand.

That we should walk in them. Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh. Called the uncircumcision. By what is called the circumcision. Which is made in the flesh by hands.

[11 : 05] Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. And strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope.

And without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus. You who once were far off. Have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace.

Who has made us both one. And has broken down in his flesh. The dividing wall of hostility. By abolishing the law of commandments. Expressed in ordinances. That he might create in himself. One new man in place of two. So making peace. And might reconcile us both to God. In one body through the cross. Thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace.

To you who were far off. And peace to those who were near. For through him. We both have access. In one spirit. To the father. So then. You are no longer strangers and aliens.

[12 : 05] But you are fellow citizens with the saints. And members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself. Being the cornerstone.

In whom the whole structure. Being joined together. Grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him. You also are being built together. Into a dwelling place for God.

By the spirit. And this is the reading of God's word. Good morning. My name is Eric. For those of you who don't know me.

I get ridiculed when I describe my position as anything other than youth dude. So I am the youth dude here at Watermark Community Church. I've been here at Watermark for about a year.

And I'm really excited to come get to speak to you guys today. Okay. So. It was a nice lighthearted scripture reading this morning. You know. Children of wrath. And dead in trespasses and sins.

[13 : 01] But in this reading. You can sort of see. The same story. This progression. That happens twice. Once with God. And once with our fellow man.

And basically. This progression follows this pattern of separation. There's a break in the relationship. There's a separation going on. There's a reconciliation that happens.

Through what Jesus has done. And then. The effects of that reconciliation. That restoration of that proper relationship. Get to be played out in everyday life. And there's something broken.

There's something that fixes it. And then you get to see. How that plays out. In everyday life. And. Specifically. Paul in this passage. Is writing to a group of.

Gentiles. Gentiles. Being Gentiles. Being Gentiles. Means that they were not Jews. And. Back. In. The Bible times. Jews. Had this place of privilege. They.

[13:58] Had. Been. Chosen as God's special people. They. Had. Been. Given. The law. By God. They had been given this promise. That there would be a hope. That would come. Through them.

And they had all this. And the Gentiles. Did not. And so. As Paul. Writes. This message. To the Gentiles. He. He. Specifically.

Addresses. Five areas. Of separation. That these Gentiles. He's writing to. Are experiencing.

Number one. They're separated from Christ. Number two. They're separated from Israel.

God's chosen people. Number three. They're separated from God's covenants. From God's promises. Of the good things. That he would do. Number four. They're separated from hope. And number five.

They're separated from God. Basically. They're in a very. Very. Bleak. Dark. Situation. And the thing is. As.

[14:53] As we come into this passage. The first thing we need to realize. Is that apart from Christ. This is the situation. That all of us. Find ourselves in. That apart from Christ.

We are unable to do good. On our own. That apart from Christ. We are separated from God. We are separated from hope. And there's. Basically. Nothing good. Waiting for us. I mean.

Paul doesn't mess around with words. He says that we are dead. In our trespasses and sins. That there is nothing good. That we can do. To fix ourselves. He even uses the word. Children of wrath. Which sort of makes me cringe.

A little bit. When I hear it. Because I don't like to think of myself. In those terms. But that's the term. That Paul uses. It's dark. There's separation.

It's not good. Basically. An illustration. To sort of show. This separation. Is that. Is that. It wasn't meant to be this way. It was meant to be. That God creates the world.

[15:48] And God is at the center of it. And everything else in the world. Focuses around him. And. And is built around him. And functions properly. When it's in this right relationship with him. You can imagine the solar system.

God is the sun. He's at the center. Everything else. Is the planets. They go around. God. We are supposed to be like the planets. Rotating around.

Rotating around. And then sin happens. When we say. I don't want to be a planet. I want to be the sun. Get out of the way God. I'm taking your spot. And.

And with. The gravitational force. Of the solar system. There's actually. A very delicate balance. So it's not just the sun. That holds all the planets in place. But the planets are big enough. They help hold each other in place too. So when one planet says.

Forget this. I'm out of my spot. The other planets are thrown out of orbit too. And with us. Each of us. The Bible says. Is sinners. Each of us. Is trying to get to that spot.

[16:45] In the center of the solar system. Where God is. And say. The world. The universe. Existence. Is about me. And me alone. And so all of us. Are in this. Collision course.

With each other. Trying to get to the middle. Constantly. Hitting each other. Bumping against each other. Boom. Boom. Boom. We're separated. We've stopped functioning.

As we were supposed to be functioning. Because we all. Wanted to get in. And be God. And anytime. Someone else. Goes in there. And tries to take that spot from us.

There's a collision between the two of us. There's a separation. That's happening. And this. Apart from God. Is our state. That we are constantly in this war. Against each other. Against God. Trying to make the universe.

About us. And so in this way. There's. There's a. Break in our relationship with God. Because we are trying to get to him. But this break in our relationship with God.

[17:42] Leads to a break in relationship with each other as well. Because when we're not in that right relationship with God. Focusing around him. Centering around him. We're colliding with each other as well.

And so there's this state of separation. A separation from God. A separation from each other. But. There's good news. The story doesn't end there. Paul starts off verse 13.

He says. But now. In Christ Jesus. He says. Apart from Christ. This is our past. Apart from Christ. There's this separation. There's this brokenness. But now.

Things are different. But now. Christ. Has come. There's a brokenness. There's something. That's wrong.

There's a punishment. That we owe. Because we are responsible. For this brokenness. And Paul says. That Jesus has come. And Jesus has borne. This punishment. Himself.

[18 : 41] He didn't deserve the punishment. He wasn't broken. But he stepped down. He took what we owed. And died the death that we deserve.

For us. The Bible goes so far as to say. That he became sin. Even though he didn't know any sin. So that in him. We might become.

The righteousness of God. That we could have this right relationship with God. Restored to us. That he traded us. Places. And through him.

We are brought back to a right relationship with God. But we're not brought just back to this right relationship with God. We're also brought back to a right relationship with each other.

Going back to this analogy of the solar system. When you have the sun at the center. And when all the planets are in orbit around the sun. Like they are supposed to be. They are not colliding with each other.

[19 : 40] When earth is orbiting around the sun. And Jupiter is orbiting around the sun. And Mars. And Mercury. They are all going around the sun. Earth and Jupiter are not colliding.

And when we are focused on God. And when we are focused on glorifying him in our lives. And we are focused on obeying him in our lives. We are not colliding with each other.

Because we are not trying to get into his spot. We are working together. Holding each other in orbit. Having relationships with God. That help hold each other in this right relationship with God as well. And so we've got the past. This separation. The present. There is this objective reality. There is something that has happened in us.

If we are Christians. That this broken relationship. Between God and others. Has been restored. But then. Comes the hard part. Living out that objective reality.

[20 : 38] In our day to day lives. Because it's easy to sit back and say. Oh. Yeah. I've got this new relationship with God and others. Let me still live my life. The way that I want to.

But when we go in. And we try to actually start. Living out the implications of this. In our day to day lives. It can get really messy. And Paul knew this.

Paul didn't write this. This passage. That we just read. In a vacuum. And say. Oh look. The life is butterflies and rainbows. And everything is perfect. Because of what Jesus has done.

Paul knows. The brokenness. That comes from sin. In fact. Paul. As he writes this. Is writing. To address. Reconciliation.

In a relationship. That has been rooted. In racial. Strife. And hatred. For millennia. For those of you who don't know. The Jews and the Gentiles.

[21 : 41] The Jews. Were the descendants of Abraham. Through Isaac and Jacob. In the Old Testament. They were God's chosen. Special people. And the Gentiles. Were anyone. Who was not Jews.

And so the Jews. Had this. This feeling. That they were better. Than the rest. Of the world. We're God's chosen people. God's given us the law.

And so they had this sort of. Elitist feeling. That they were better. Than the Gentiles. But the situation. Gets worse than that. Because. The Jews. Had also suffered.

Hundreds. And hundreds. And thousands. Of years. Of oppression. At the hands. Of Gentile nations. Not long after. The nation of Israel. Was founded. Israelites. Spent 400 years.

As slaves. In Egypt. A Gentile nation. Once they. Finally. Got freed from that. And got settled. As their own nation. They had constant wars. With other Gentile nations.

[22 : 39] Around them. They suffered. Captivity. At the hands of Gentile nations. Numerous times. Including. Being captive. To a country called. Assyria. Called Babylon.

Once to a country. Called Persia. Once to a country. Called Greece. Again. And again. And again. The history of Israel. Is just a history. Of them suffering. Again.

And again. And again. At the hands of these. Gentile nations. At one point. While they were suffering. Under the Greeks. One of the Greek generals. Came in. And completely desecrated.

The Israelite temple. He came in. And did all that he could. To destroy it. And make it. Unusable. For worship of God. And so.

Not just were they. Captives. To these Gentile nations. But these Gentile nations. Aggressively fought. To stop Israel. From. Worshiping their God. And.

[23 : 36] To make matters worse. At this time. As this was written. The Romans. Another Gentile nation. Were. Occupying. The nation of Israel. And so. The Israelites. Had a constant daily reminder.

Of this oppression. From the Gentiles. There was brokenness. And the Gentiles. Weren't necessarily. The biggest fans. Of the Israelites. Either.

I mean. When you're. When you're dealing with people. Who think they're better than you. It's. It's hard to have this. Right relationship. And just. Love them back. You know. It was so.

Extreme. This hostility. That. That the Israelites. Were not allowed. To help. A Gentile woman. If she was. Pregnant. And about to give birth.

And needed help. They weren't allowed to help her. Because by helping her. They would be helping. Bring another Gentile. Into the world. That was not a good thing. This hostility.

[24 : 31] Was so intense. That if an Israelite. Boy or girl. A Jewish boy or girl. Married. A Gentile. A Gentile. The Jewish boy or girl's family.

Held that boy or girl's funeral. Because such close contact. With a Gentile. Was equivalent. To death. In their society. There were signs up.

Around the temple. In Jerusalem. That said. If any Gentile. Enters in here. He's responsible. For his own death. One scholar.

Summarized it. By saying. The Jews believed. That the Gentiles. Were created. To fuel. The fires of hell. Can't get much more. Concise than that.

In summarizing. This racial tension. That was existing. In this place. And at this time. But Paul steps in.

[25 : 27] And he says that through Christ. Through what he has done. This break. That is happening here. Is overcome. That yes.

For thousands of years. You have been defined. By your race. By thousands of years. You have been defined. By this hostility. This oppression. But now. That is broken.

Because in Christ. There is a new race. That has been created. One called Christian. And that unites us. So it doesn't matter anymore. If you're Jew. If you're Gentile. The fact is.

If you have Christ in common. That's bigger. Than your cultural heritage. And so I tried to think through. This week. What does that look like. In our world today.

I was reminded of this. Japanese preacher. That I heard once. This man had a son. Who was a. Good Christian boy. He was.

[26 : 24] Probably in his 20s. Met this. Good Korean. Christian girl. And they fell in love. The Korean girl. Went home to her parents. And she was really excited.

About her new boyfriend. She started telling her parents. About him. He's this great guy. He's amazing. His dad's a pastor. He's Japanese. And the dad was like. Whoa. Do you realize.

What his people did. To our people. They oppressed us. They were cruel. They were harsh. There is no way. Any daughter of mine. Is ever.

Marrying a Japanese boy. The daughter didn't give up. She kept. Staying in this relationship.

With the boy. And the family. Started thinking. About the implications. Of the gospel. In their lives. Because they as well. Were Christians. As they got to know this boy.

[27 : 18] As they got to see him. His heart for Christ. And they realized. That ultimately. The thing that defined. This boy. And the thing that defined them. Was not ultimately. Japanese or Korean. But Christian.

And so in the end. These parents. Gave permission. For their daughter. To marry this Japanese boy. Because they realized. That ultimately.

They were defined in life. By Christ. And not. By their cultural heritage. And the past. That that carried with it. Yeah. That's an extreme case.

Probably. But in terms of getting involved. In community. In everyday life. I think there are definitely. Things that all of us struggle with.

Things that all of us. Have to get past. In order to get involved. In community. And some of these things. Are so. Deeply rooted. In our culture.

[28 : 12] That we don't even realize. It's a cultural thing. For us. So for example. To get involved. In community. It probably means. That we need to. Break the cultural norm.

Of being expected to work. Past 10 p.m. Every night. Because it's hard. To spend time with people. If you're just always. In front of your desk. At your office. Hong Kong.

Has this expectation. That we will be busy. All the time. It's almost this message. That if you are not busy. You are not worth. Anything. You are not successful. Because if you were successful. More people would want you. You'd be a hotter commodity. And then you'd be busy. But if we're constantly busy. It's hard to spend time. In genuine community. Genuine. Unhurried.

Intentional. Time. With others. And so these things. That are so deeply. Built. Into our culture. That we don't even realize them. Separate us. From community. In community.

[29 : 09] I'm not saying. That getting plugged into community. Is going to be an easy thing. I. I mean. Even if we have. The time to do it. There are still things. Within us. That make it very hard.

I sat down this week. And talked to a number. Of different friends. About what keeps us. From getting plugged in. And deeply involved. In community. And they gave a wide range. Of answers. And I think. A sampling of these. Will speak for a lot of us. In this room. One said. The Christians that I know. Don't really have. Many similar interests to me.

It's hard to get connected with them. Because. There's nothing in common. Between us. One said. I've been really hurt. By the people in my community. I'm afraid to go back.

And get plugged in again. Because. What if it happens again? I've been there before. It wasn't fun. I don't want to be back. One said. I just don't like to deal with. Annoying people. And so when people annoy me.

[30 : 06] I'm like. Forget about you. And that keeps me. From getting plugged in. Because when you get to know people. They annoy you. At some point. One said. I work so much.

That I miss out on. Chances to meet up. With my community. When they're together. And then when I finally. Have the free time. To come and hang out with them. I just feel like. It's been so long. Since I've seen them.

That I hardly know them anymore. And so I find. Other reasons. To miss out. Because I don't want to create. This uncomfortable situation. By showing up. One said.

I forget. Who I am in Christ. I forget. What he has given me. I forget that I'm loved. By him. And accepted by him. And affirmed by him. And when I go. To spend time in community. I seek that love.

And affirmation. And acceptance. From those people. Rather than going to love them. Actually. That wasn't a friend. That was me. One said. I don't trust the people.

[30 : 59] In my community. I don't feel that I can truly. Share with them. About what's going on in my life. And be open with them. And another said. I find it hard to take the initiative.

And reach out to others. If they come to me. And they say. Okay. Let's spend time together. Let's grab lunch. I'm like. All right. But if it's me. Stepping out. And actually welcoming them. That's tough. That's uncomfortable. And I'm not good with that. I think this sampling. Speaks for a lot of us. And I think that the things listed here.

Are definitely very real. Problems. That keep us from community. But I also know that the gospel. Has a solution. For every single one. Of these very real problems.

For the person who has nothing in common. With any of the other Christians. That they've met. If you're truly a Christian. You have both lived out this story. Of separation. And reconciliation.

[31 : 57] You've both come to this point. Where you've realized. This brokenness in your lives. And realized that Christ. Is the thing. That fixes that brokenness. And you have that in common. And you have this pursuit.

Of Christ in common. That unites you. That draws you together. And that gives you something. In common. That. I mean. We're never going to get there. So it's something. That we'll always be going towards. As long as we're alive.

For the person. Who. You know. Like me. Forgets who they are in Christ. And seeks to try. And get things from people around them. They're supposed to be getting from Christ.

Look back at the gospel. Remember. It wasn't me. That was great. And went out. And said. Hey Jesus. You just have to love me. Because I'm so amazing. I was broken. The Bible said I was dead. I couldn't do anything. To fix myself. And Christ reached out. Christ loved me. Christ welcomed me. For the person.

[32 : 53] Who's been hurt. In community. First. I'm sorry. You know. That shouldn't be happening. In gospel community.

We should. Be being shaped. Into Christ's image. Orbiting around Christ. Focusing on him. But the reality is. That we are still sinners. And sometimes. That sinfulness. Breaks through.

And we end up hurting each other. Rather than building on each other. But ultimately. In the gospel. We find Christ. Out of anyone.

Who ever existed. He was the ultimate one. Who had. The right to say. I'm not getting plugged into community. Because it. Will get me hurt. Think about it.

This man. This man. Came to the earth. With. The primary goal. Of getting. Violently murdered. To pay a punishment. For something. That someone else had done.

[33 : 54] He came. And he was sold. To the authorities. To be murdered. By one of his best friends. After he was arrested. Another one of his best friends. Said. I've never met this guy.

So that he didn't get into trouble. And all of his best friends. Ran away from him. And then. He was beaten. He had a crown of thorns.

Shoved into his head. He was spit on. His beard was ripped out of his face. He was nailed up. Onto a cross. Where he was hung to die. As his lungs filled with blood. Because of us. The ultimate example.

Of someone being hurt. In community. Was Christ. And. The Bible says. That as soon as Christ. Had come back from the dead. As soon as he was raised. Back to life.

[34 : 50] There were people. Who took. What he had done. Who took this gift. That he had given us. And used it as an excuse. To continue in life of sin. Because they said. Oh Jesus will just forgive me. That's the exact life.

That he had died. To free us from. And people used. His death. As an excuse. To remain in that life. His pain. Was taken advantage of. By people who claimed.

To follow him. And yet the Bible says. That he still did it. For the joy. That was set before him. Because of it. And so yes.

The possibility. The possibility. Of getting hurt. In community. Is very real. I'm not. Downplaying that. I'm not. Discounting that. But. As Christians. We have the ultimate.

Example in Christ. We have the ultimate one. Who had. The right. To say no. I'm not going. I'm not getting involved. In that mess. Because it will result. In pain for me. He knew it from the start.

[35 : 51] It. Yet he still did it. And he calls us. To do it as well. I think there's one other.

Very real. Reason that people. Avoid. Getting plugged into community. None of my friends. Mentioned it this week. But I think that it's one. That sometimes stops people. From getting plugged into community. And that one is.

I'm sort of afraid. What if I try out. This community thing. And I just fail. What if it's not me. That gets hurt. But what if I'm the one. That hurts someone else. What if I make a commitment.

To be a part of this group. And then just life. Gets so overwhelming. That I can't do it. Here at church. We say that being involved. In community. Is such an important thing.

An important part of life. If I fail. Does that mean. That I'm unworthy. To be a part of the church. And the answer is yes. It does. But the good news is.

[36 : 50] That even for the people. Who are best at being involved. In community. They're unworthy as well. And that's the amazing thing. That we're all unworthy. That's what the gospel is all about. That none of us. Is good enough. That all of us.

Are sinful and broken. And that all of us. Need Jesus. And so yes. This. This fear of. Failure in community.

It's also. A real fear. Fear. But it's also one. That the gospel addresses. Because when we fail. At community. We have Christ.

We all know. That we're broken people. It's what brings us together. We all know. That we need Christ. He's the one. That gives us the strength. To live through the hard times.

In community. And he's the one. Who gives us the forgiveness. To get back up. When we fail. At living in community. And in my life. I fail at that.

[37 : 46] Repeatedly. Sometimes I'm joking. With someone. I'm trying to be funny. And then I take it too far. And they're hurt. Sometimes I say something.

To try and call someone out. On what they're doing wrong. Or maybe what I perceive. They're doing wrong. And I say something. That I intend to be sarcasm. That helps them realize.

What they're doing. And bring them to a place. Where they can grow. From this comment. And underestimate. The severity of my words. And just leave them. Totally crushed. By what I said. Sometimes people just.

Frustrate me. And I say something. Because I know that it will hurt them. And I feel like they deserve it. At that point. And in those times. The easy. Natural response for me. Is to avoid those people. To run away. Hide. Maybe hang out. With other friends. Maybe find stuff. That will distract me. And make me not have to think about. How bad I just messed up. [38 : 47] Or. I can go off. And just like. Sit there. And wallow in despair. And. I just messed up so bad. The gospel says.

That Christ. Is our peace. The gospel says. That Christ. Has broken down. The walls of hostility. The gospel says. That when we fail. The response is not. Avoid community. But get plugged back in. Because the people. That God has placed around us. In our lives. Are one of the most amazing tools. That God uses. To help point us. Back to him. And the gospel says.

That as we live out. Life in community. We. As a community. Get to model. To the world. A real life. Example. Of what Christ. Has accomplished. On the cross. As we live life. With other Christians. Forgiving one another. Loving one another. Fighting through the tough times.

[39 : 45] With each other. And coming out stronger. On the other side. We show the world. That yes. There is brokenness. But we have a savior. Who overcomes. That brokenness. We show the world.

The greatness of Christ. By successfully. Living out life. In Christian community. On the flip side of that. If we say that we're Christians.

But we avoid. This community. And we don't live life in community. We say. I want to live in isolation. The message that we send. To the world. Is that Christ. On the cross.

Was a failure. And that God is a liar. Because the Bible says. That Christ came. To achieve this reconciliation.

The Bible says. That Christ came. To bring us back together. Who were separated. And if we stand up. And we say. Yes. I believe in Jesus. I believe that he comes to save me.

[40 : 44] I believe that he accomplished. All that he says he accomplished. Let me live. My life. As I want. On my own. We're saying. That what the Bible says. Says about what Jesus accomplished.

Is not true. That the death of Christ. Was not truly. Strong enough. To overcome. The things. That separate us. And that God.

Speaking to us. Through the Bible. Has lied to us. So the question. I want to leave us with. Today. As we finish. Is what is. Is what is.

Your involvement. Or lack of involvement. In community. Telling the world around you. About Jesus. And what he accomplished. On the cross. Is it proclaiming to them.

The greatness. Of what he has done. And telling them that. He has overcome. All the barriers. All the obstacles. That he has torn down. The walls of hostility.

[41 : 39] Given us a new relationship. With God. And with each other. Or is it telling the world. That God is a liar. And Christ failed. Let's pray.

Father. We thank you for today. For this chance. To get together. As your people. To study your word together. To be together. We thank you for.

Your love for us. In Christ. And that when we were. Separated from you. That when we had. Gone off. And tried to. Take your place. When we had said. We wanted. Worship.

Rather than. To worship you. That you came. That you bore. The punishment. That we. Deserved. And that you. Not only restored. Our relationship. With you.

But with each other. As well. We pray. That as we go. Throughout. Our weeks. That we would. Constantly find. In the gospel. The strength. To continue. Living out.

[42 : 35] Lives. And community. That we would. Fight through. The hard times. Together. That we would. Forgive. That we would. Hope. Together. That we would. Love you. Together. And that we would. Love each other. We pray all these things.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Don't hear. Amen. Thank you. Eric. One of the things we prayed about. When God was called. Start this church. Is that I wouldn't have to be.

The only preacher. Because you get tired of me. Really quickly. And God has been faithful. To bring men. And we've had. Ten other guys. Preach. In this last two years. And bring God's word. And that's so encouraging.

To see. This is the future of the church. As we plant churches. And move out. God's bringing the right people. To lead his people. In the community. Right? This week.

Next week. We have a new member class. Immediately following the service. We'll be back over at Cyberport. So don't come here. I don't know what's going on here. But we'll be back at Cyberport. So please join us there.

[43 : 32] And then right after the service. We'll have a new member class. We could ask questions about the church. And what it means to be involved. And if you want to get involved. In the community group. Or ask questions about that. There's a table straight ahead.

In the back. A little brochure here. It talks about when the groups meet. And we want to encourage you. To do that. As we go on this journey together. Let me pray for us. Father. We just thank you for this day. We thank you that you. That you came. To bring us back to you. And your mission was set. Your focus was true.

And you knew at the end. That it would be the cross. And still you willingly. And joyfully did it.

Because you loved your Lord so much. You loved the Father.

And you loved us so much. And so we come before you. And we ask the questions. That were asked of us today. Of how does our life reflect. Your image. What do people see.

[44 : 27] As we walk out. How do we treat them. And how do they see. Community lived out. In our lives. Do we take you at your word.

Or do we doubt you. Lord we pray that we be a church. That would always walk with you. Gaze at your son. Fall in love with him. And point people to him.

Father we love you. And we pray all these things. In your son Jesus holy name. Amen. God bless you. Thanks for joining us today. As we worship our Lord. And we'll see you back. At Cyberport next week. These things we hold on to people.

Let's go to hell. Everybody In mean? God bless you. We wait for it. Which is why. God bless you.

They're here. But you believe in only September. They will below. You know. That they will bemaya.

And we'll have a placebo.ized by research. To work from that.

To the point people. To the point people really are afraid. The end. Whether we ought to help you.

To the point people. To the point people realize. In my life. It's an immediate journey. That you say it's just yet vision. And we hope in the path. They're on the path.

[45 : 22] God bless you. And in your heart. It's you guys too.