

# Bearing Fruit

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome again. It's just, isn't it great just to be able to worship God together? Isn't that great? Isn't it just a privilege to be together with God's people and serving and praising Him?

And I just even this morning feel the weight of bringing God's Word to us because we're going to start off a series coming up in looking at what it means to be a disciple. And today I want to tell us a little bit about some of where we want to go as a church even over this coming year. And I don't know if you have ever prayed in your life for your life to be impactful.

I don't know if you've prayed for your marriage, for your family, for your kids, to live a life that bears significant fruit for God's kingdom. I don't know if you pray that. But today that's what we want to talk about and where we want to go as a church.

We're going to talk about fruitfulness. And deep down I think all of us in some way long to have deep, meaningful, significant life which has purpose. And Jesus is going to tell us a little bit about what that looks like for us individually and us as a church today.

So I want to just, I'm just going to go and dive straight into the passage today. And I want to look at three particular things about this passage. I want to look at the call to fruitfulness, the nature of fruitfulness, and the power for fruitfulness.

[ 1 : 41 ] Okay? The call, the nature, and the power of fruitfulness. So please just have your bulletin with you. And we're just going to follow along and go through some of the passage together.

So the call to fruitfulness. This passage is set against the context. Jesus is approaching his death. And he's just told his disciples that he's going to go to the cross.

And he's walking this path of love, out of love for the Father, and that the world might know his love. And Judas, the betraying disciple, has just left the room.

And Jesus uses this moment, one of the last times that he's with them, to tell them who he is. To remind them of who he is and what he's going to call them as his followers to do.

And Jesus says one of the seven I am sayings in John. They're very significant. I don't have time to unpack it. But here is what he says.

[ 2 : 44 ] He says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. This isn't a kind of image we naturally go to in Hong Kong.

It doesn't really resonate with us. But any Jew in the first century knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. Because the image in the Old Testament of a vine was used to describe Israel, God's people.

And here's Isaiah 5. My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around. He planted it with a choice vine.

And expected it to produce good grapes. But it only produced worthless ones. And you see, that's typical of every time this image is used to describe God's people.

It's always in the context of Israel's failure to be who they should be and God's judgment coming upon them. Because they're producing rotten fruit.

[ 3 : 54 ] And so when you get to this passage in John 15, it's revolutionary. Because it's the only time in the whole Bible where this vine image is used positively to describe somebody.

And Jesus here is saying, I am the genuine vine. Everything that kind of religious Israel should have been but weren't, that's what I am.

They were faithless, I am faithful. They were selfish, I am selfless. They were fruitless, I am fruitful. Everything that you and I should be but aren't, he says, I am now that for you.

And that's actually the gospel message. You cannot obey God by yourself. But Jesus has obeyed for you. And so now he says, come to me.

Run to me. Trust me. And as my life, my sap courses through your veins, you will produce fruit.

[ 5 : 03 ] And so Jesus goes on to say, there are two types of branches in this vine. Verse 2, he says this. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it may bear more fruit. So there are fruitless branches and fruitful branches.

Fruitless branches get cut off and thrown away. Fruitful ones get pruned. So what's a fruitless branch, you may be thinking?

Now if you remember, Jesus is talking to his disciples and Judas has just betrayed him. And Jesus, who had hung around with the disciples, he looked like a disciple.

Everybody thought that he was in there, in the in crowd. But actually the fruit of his life showed that he had never truly followed Jesus. And there's a warning here that Jesus is giving.

[ 6 : 08 ] He's saying, some of us here today are religious. You can be religious. You can go to church regularly. You can pray. But if you've never come to that point where you say, I need Jesus as my savior.

Not I need Jesus because I've got a job interview. But I need Jesus. I want to follow him with all of my life. But I see the fact that I stand before a holy God.

And the hurricane of his anger at my sinfulness is towards me. And I have no shelter in the storm. I have nothing to stop me being thrown away by myself.

But Jesus on the cross says, I have taken the hurricane of God's anger on me. And he calls us. He says, my death means you can run to me and you can find a shelter in the storm.

So run to me today. And if that's you, and you know, my life is not totally wanting Jesus. I haven't made that commitment. Then he says, run to me for forgiveness today.

[ 7 : 21 ] Run to me. Because I can give you the power to obey and not be a fruitless branch which gets thrown away. But if you have trusted in Jesus, the question is not whether you're going to get thrown away or not.

You know, and if you doubt it, if you look at your performance and think, man, I'm not a great performer. Well, just look at the disciples. I mean, they're a complete bunch of prunes. They're complete losers. Like they deny him.

They're cowards. They've got anger issues. I mean, why he would choose them, I don't know. But that's precisely who Jesus is talking to right at this moment. People like you and me. And he doesn't say the question is whether you're in or out or not.

He says, you're already clean. And you think, what? Already clean? Don't you know what these guys are like? And he says, because you've heard and responded to the gospel word that I've spoken, the issue isn't in or out.

The issue is now how much fruit are you going to bear in your life? That's the issue. Because, you know, any farmer doesn't plant trees just to kind of make them look nice on the outside.

[ 8 : 31 ] Every farmer comes looking at you, looking at the church, looking at our lives, and he wants to see fruit. And so, what he says is this.

And this is interesting. He says, if you're fruitful, what does he do? If you're fruitful in your life, what does he do?

Does he make your life kind of smooth sailing, have great kids, holidays in the Maldives every week? No. He says, he prunes you. He prunes you.

The word literally means he cleanses you. Now, I don't know a lot about pruning vines. Okay? That's not my field. So, I looked up on a website.

And so, here's what the website said. Okay? I've never been on a vine-growing website before, but this is it. It said, light pruning doesn't promote adequate fruiting.

[ 9 : 30 ] Whereas heavy pruning provides the greatest quality of grapes. Knowing how to prune grapes can make the difference between a good crop and a bad one. Interesting. Jesus knew what he was talking about.

Now, frankly, I don't sign up for pruning. Okay? I'm not going like, hey, would you like some pruning in your life? And I say, yeah, please, I'd love some of that. I'm not doing that.

Because pruning is painful and uncomfortable. It's not pleasant. But it's necessary. And it says, how does he prune?

It says, through his word and conviction of sin. Absolutely. But I think the most significant way that God prunes us in our life is through trials.

Through difficulties. He prunes us through bringing complete morons into our lives. That we just want to run away from. He prunes us by bringing change into our lives.

[10:29] By pushing us out of our comfort. He prunes us in all these things. And we say, Jesus, why do you have to do that? And it's not because I need to make you suffer so you'll learn a lesson.

That's not what he's saying. He's saying, I want to prune you. Because I've got this vision of the fruitfulness I'm going to make in your life. And as you become fruitful, it says, by this my Father is glorified as you bear much fruit.

It's so that God will get glory in your life. That's why he wants to prune us. This last year in Watermark, I really feel like, particularly as elders, we've really sensed that sense of God pruning us.

You know, there's been a real season of fruitfulness as a church. And then we've had a season of just upheaval and change. And God's pruning us.

And I'm not saying to Jesus, hey, Jesus, I'd love another round of that. I'm not saying that. But God lovingly brings his pruning shears onto us so that he is preparing us to bear more fruit as a church.

[11:46] He's bringing us into a new season where he wants us to be fruit bearers. You know, writer A.W. Tozer, he said this. And this is challenging.

He says, before God uses a man or a woman greatly, he must bruise them first deeply. I don't like that. That's not kind of sexy gospel.

But if you think about it, that's all the way through the Bible. He says, how could Joseph cope with his success at becoming the second in command in Egypt without letting it go to his head unless he'd gone through the pruning of being in prison?

How could Peter, who was the rock, whose sermons launched the church out, and still, how could he still stay humble without the pruning of his denial and seeing his restoration in that?

Moses, 40 years in the desert. We could go on and on. And it's true that as an individual, as a church, if we want to glorify God, if we want to be fruitful, then we've got to be willing for God to prune us out of our comfort, out of our securities, to let him help us to grow.

[12:59] So here's the thing. The call to fruitfulness is basically this. The mark of a true Christian is somebody who is bearing fruit. But the fruit is always the expression of the root, of where our hearts are in Christ.

If we're in him, we're secure, but he wants to cleanse us to bear more fruit. So that's the call of fruitfulness. So let's think about the nature of fruitfulness.

What is fruit? We're not talking apples and oranges here. Jesus isn't saying, become a greengrocer. Well, what's the fruit?

Verses 9 to 17 tell us. Jesus says, my command is this. Love one another. Love one another. And love is relational and outgoing.

Galatians 5 develops this and says, basically, the fruit of the Spirit is, anyone know it?

[14:01] Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That's what Jesus is looking for.

But I don't know if you've noticed, he doesn't say the fruits of the Spirit. He doesn't say plural.

Okay? It's singular. So it's not as if there's kind of an apple of patience over here and a kind of orange of joy over here.

And you could have an orange of joy but not an apple of patience. That's not the way it works. You see, they actually work together. However, if you have, if you're not patient, you're not going to be loving.

Right? If you're kind, you're going to be gentle. If you don't have self-control, you won't be faithful. And Jesus says, even in this passage in John, he says, if you love others with my love, my joy is going to be in you.

You see, they're all connected. They grow together. As you look at this list, who here has nailed everyone? Okay? Who's?

[15:10] Vijay. Okay, Vijay's great. Just look at Vijay and you see the perfection there. Patience.

Who's got that one down? Anyone? Joy. Who's always filled with joy when you go to work? If, like Vijay, you have got them all, then you can just kind of leave now.

Okay? But the point is, we have to be pruned because, precisely because we haven't nailed these things.

And precisely because Jesus wants us to grow increasingly in every one of these, in every part of our lives. And the purpose of our church, the purpose of being here, is to enable you and me to increasingly grow and bear this fruit in our lives, in our relationships.

So bearing fruit is about an ongoing, outgoing love. But Jesus also says this fruit is not just about the character. He also says in verse 16, he says this, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you.

[ 16 : 30 ] Literally, I set you aside. I laid you aside. That you should go and bear fruit. And your fruit should abide. Your fruit should last.

And what he's saying is this. He's saying the fruit of that love, the fruit of the spirit can't be kept in. You know, like a chihuahua in a handbag. You can't keep it in like that. Because love intrinsically reaches out.

You know, Jesus says to his disciples, you didn't choose me, but I chose you. He didn't wait for you to be pleasant. He didn't wait for you to be accommodated. He didn't wait for you to take the first step.

He took the initiative to woo you to himself. Just as you were at your worst. And he says, as I have loved you, so now you go and love one another.

Go to that moron in your office. That socially awkward person in your CG. Whoever I've placed around you to love them because love reaches out.

[ 17 : 31 ] You know, when couples first start dating, have you noticed this? That they often just kind of cut themselves off from everybody else because they're so obsessed with each other.

Have you seen this? Okay. You know, you used to have a friend. And then, like, every time you try and contact them, they're like, sorry, I've just got to hang out until 1 a.m. every single night with my girlfriend.

Okay. Have you seen that? And the Bible says, actually, that's not the way God works with us in the church. It's not a kind of cozy love-in. It says, my love, when I give it to you, it's like an amazing restaurant where you taste the food.

You taste the love. And then you want to bring others to taste it too. That's why Jesus says, go and make disciples of all nations.

He's actually saying the same thing about bearing fruit. It's not just, come to where I am in my little comfortable sofa. It's not, come to my CG and do whatever we're doing already because that's what makes us feel comfortable.

[ 18 : 38 ] And if you don't like it, tough. It's actually, we go as a community to where people are and we look to help them to take the next step towards Christ. That is bearing fruit.

You know, it's becoming intentional in the ordinary things of life. Just the everyday rhythms of life. You know, you go to the school gate.

And instead of just rushing away to get on with your jobs, you look and see the other parents there and you say, hi. You ask how someone's doing. You invite them for coffee or a play date.

You pray for opportunities to share Jesus just in the everyday ordinary things of life. You go to work. And instead of avoiding that annoying colleague who irritates you, you actually every morning start taking the time to pray for them.

And say, God, help me to love them. Give me opportunities to share about Christ with them. That's what it looks like to bear fruit. It's the fruit of love.

[ 19 : 39 ] One commentator said this about this passage. He said, the union of love that joins believers with Jesus can never become a comfortable, exclusivistic huddle that only they can share.

You see, the fruit of our love mirrors God's love to us who reaches out to us and will discomfort ourselves for others because we know how much we've been loved.

I don't know if you know, when you see kids when they're young, the world kind of, they're the center of the universe. Like, you've got young kids. They're the center of the world, right?

They scream and everyone just gives them food or everyone just tries to clean their nappy, whatever it is. They're the center of everything. It's like life revolves around their bath time, their bedtime, their poop time, whatever it is.

Now, as they grow, they get more responsibility. Right? And they mature and then they become, they get to move out and sometimes they get married and then they get kids.

[ 20 : 45 ] And now it's no longer if I scream, I get whatever I want instantly. Right? Have you noticed that? Some people still think that's the case, but yeah, we won't go there.

But if a 30-year-old comes to you and is expecting their parents to come and bath them every night and is saying, can you organize my bedtime for me, you'd think something was wrong, right?

But that's the same in the Christian life. New Christians need feeding. So those of us who've been Christians for longer in our lives need to be looking to see how we can feed them.

That's the call to make disciples. It's not a call for super Christians. It's a call for every Christian, which means we get involved in people's lives. We look to share and point them to Jesus through the Bible.

That's what it's about. We walk with them through the ups and downs of life. That's discipleship.

You see, some people say that they're mature, but if you're not reaching out and feeding others, then you cannot count as mature because spiritual infants grow to eventually bear that fruit of love, which is more concern for others than just for yourself.

[ 22 : 12 ] It's challenging. But some of us are spiritual infants. We've been in church a long time.

And we say things like, hey, I just need to grow deeper together with the people around me before I can reach out to someone else.

We say, I need to learn more before I can walk alongside someone. And all of that sounds wise. All of that sounds helpful. But what I notice is that when we start off with that mentality, and we often continue with that mentality, because when have you grown deep enough?

When have you learned enough? And I rarely see us saying things like, teach me so that I can know how to go out and make disciples. See, Jesus is challenging.

And here we want to have deeper community, but I call us to check our hearts. Sometimes when we just want to be with the people we want to be with, but if we're not praying for the loss, if we're not looking to reach out, then it may be just a desire for my own comfort.

And God's going to say, I want to prune that so you can bear fruit of love, which glorifies me in your life. So this year, this year, by the end of 2018, we are praying and believing that God would enable us to start a second service in the community center, to reach out to the people around there, to go and to make disciples with people there.

[ 23 : 49 ] There are so many people who don't know Christ in that area, and coming to Ebenezer is a barrier for them coming. We want to gather a group of people who will be able to reach out, a team of 10, 20 people who will be able to form there to be able to start something which can impact the people's lives around there.

We want everyone in the church, and here's a call for every single person who says you're a believer, to be looking to walk alongside someone and pointing them to Jesus within watermark, and to have one person at least that you're looking, who is not a believer, who wouldn't call themselves a Christian, that you say I want to intentionally walk alongside them, pray for them, and look to see if I can share the gospel with them.

That's the challenge. That's where God wants to call us to bear fruit. But I don't know about you, because the call for fruitfulness, and then the nature of fruitfulness, the reality is, if you're like me, I need a power for fruitfulness, and that's the third point, because I know the problem with this.

I know the problem with this. If you look to pursue bearing fruit as your chief focus in life, you get worn out. You get worn out.

You know, a tree that's trying to squeeze out apples all the time will get exhausted, and discouraged, and give up, because other things crowd out its time.

[ 25 : 28 ] But Jesus says, you can have a strategy and goals all you like, but it means nothing, unless you're abiding in me. Here's what he says, as a branch cannot bear fruit, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. Did you hear what he said? Apart from me, you can do nothing. What that means is this.

It means, you can't bear the fruit of love by yourself. You can't do it. I've tried. It means, the only way we as a church will be fruitful, is if we're abiding in Jesus.

You know, we could have a thousand people in the church, and if we're not abiding in Jesus, it's all outward performance, and God will say, that's rotten fruit. But abiding in Jesus, that's a strange term.

We don't say that. I don't say to my friends, who just got married, oh, they're now abiding with each other. I mean, how often, when did you last use the word abide? Anyone?

[ 26 : 37 ] But what we say, we say things like, they moved in together. They're sharing their lives together. And the word literally means, to continually dwell, reside, to move in with someone, in a

deep, ongoing, intimate relationship.

It's what in theological language, we call union with Christ. It's having been brought into relationship with him. You don't just sleep in separate bedrooms, and then see each other once a week.

Jesus doesn't want, a couch surfing relationship with you. You know, have him for a few days, have him there on Sunday, but then you've got to live somewhere else, for the rest of the week.

He wants intimacy with you. Because you don't bear fruit, just by trying hard. When you're pursuing intimacy, with your spouse, what do you do?

You consciously make decisions, that will enable your relationship, to flourish, right? You plan time together, you communicate together. When your friend says, stay for another drink, you say, I've got to head back to my wife.

[ 27 : 48 ] Because loving her, shapes your world. That's what it's like with Jesus. But I think, one of the things, that holds us back, from intimacy with Jesus, and receiving his love, is that we often think, he's offended by us.

We look at our fruit bearing, and we think, it doesn't look great. And you know, when you feel like, you're in the dog house with God, you tend to, avoid him.

Do you notice that? You see, when I lost my wedding ring, the last thing I wanted to do, was to come back home, to my wife. Because I hoped, I could get away, without telling her.

And, I wanted to avoid her, because I feared, what she'd say, about my offense. When I actually, opened up to her, and said, hey, I've lost my wedding ring.

You know, she was so gracious, to me, that I didn't expect, that my love for her, grew, as I saw her kindness, to me. Many of us live, with that suspicion, that deep down, God is actually, deeply disappointed, with us.

[ 29 : 05 ] And our religion, is simply to try, and get ourselves, on his good side. But here's, what we need to do, we need to learn, to run to Jesus, rather than run from him.

Even in our failures, and sinfulness. That's the only power, to bear fruit. I love Peter, in the Bible.

You know, it's great. I just love the way, it's just so raw, and so real.

Peter says to Jesus, I'm never going to deny you. He says, you know, Jesus gets arrested, and he's like, I'm defending you Jesus, I'm with you, he's got a sword. He cuts off the guy's ear, to defend Jesus.

I don't know how he did that. Have you ever thought about that? That's pretty precise. Right? I don't know what he was doing there. But, but, you know, maybe he's good at carving, I don't know.

But, but he gets, Jesus has to tell him, put it back. Peter, that's not the way we do things around here. He gets to a courtyard, a little servant girl, comes and says, you were with him, and he totally denies ever knowing Jesus.

[ 30 : 11 ] He starts swearing, starts cursing him, and Jesus is right there in the courtyard, walks past, and he turns and looks at Peter, and Peter is devastated, broken. Broken. If you think you've offended Jesus, Peter experienced it more than you.

A short time later, after the resurrection, there's a little way out from the shore fishing. It's been a bad night. Someone on the shore calls out to them, and John turns to Peter, and says, hey, it's Jesus.

What does Peter do? Peter doesn't say, tell him I'm in a meeting. Doesn't say, I'm on the phone.

Do you know what it says? It says, he takes off his t-shirt, equivalent, wraps it around his waist, and dives into the water. It says, literally, he threw himself into the sea.

Threw himself into the sea. Swimming before the boat even gets to the shore. He's so desperate to get to Jesus. You see, from that point, he sees Jesus, because he knows that Jesus is just then so gracious to him.

[ 31 : 22 ] He loves him. He restores him. He says, I'm going to make you bear fruit. And from that, you see, Peter is an imperfect man. But Peter knew what it was to abide in Jesus, because he knew the love of Jesus in his life, and he knew that when he went astray, he needed to run straight back to him, and to pursue him.

Has Peter kept every command? No. But when he comes back to Jesus, it's that love that fuels his obedience. And as he obeys, he experiences more of his love, and more of his love, and more of his love.

Jesus says, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you'll abide in my love. Don't run away. Run to me. Pastor Matt Chandler says that abiding in Jesus is to fill my life with things that

stir my affections for Jesus.

You get that? Fill my life which stirs my affections for Jesus. And to cut out anything which robs me from delighting in Jesus.

You get that? You know, what stirs my heart to long for Jesus? I mean, to start with, God's word and prayer.

[ 32 : 53 ] Individually, community. But you know, the Pharisees were people who read the Bible more than anybody else. They prayed more than anybody else.

So what is the kind of intimacy that God is looking for you in your life? It's not to say, okay, I read my Bible. It's a kind of good tick box. Now I'm a good Christian. Or I didn't do it.

Now I'm a bad Christian. It's he saying, I want you to want me. As you come to read the Bible, come to ask that you want me to speak to you.

I want you to come and to seek my face, not my hand. Don't just seek me to get a whole lot of stuff from me. But will you actually seek me?

For me? I wonder, do you ever pray with desperation, God, Jesus, I want to know you. Or do we just pray, kind of, God, give me a good life, help my kids.

[ 33 : 55 ] You know, those are good things. But do you ever get to actually saying, I want to abide in you? You know, and Jesus says, when you, when you, my words abide in you, when I am, when you're abiding in me, you pray, and whatever I ask, you know, when you pray, give me a desire to know you, I'm going to give you that.

I'm going to give you that. So it's stirring your heart and cutting out what robs it from the joy of Christ. You know, I discovered, and maybe this is a little bit too much information, I don't know, but every time I went to the bathroom, okay, hold on, wait for me.

Every time I went to the bathroom, I discovered my mind would just kind of wander into this little fantasy world of me being on the throne of my life. You know, you've got a couple of minutes in there, whatever, however long, and it would just wander onto all kinds of unhelpful things in my mind.

And I'd come out of there and all of it would be just be centered around me. And I realized that I have two minutes there where I can either choose to stir my affections for Jesus or choose to let something rob me of joy in Jesus and center me around myself.

So I started to get just one verse from the scripture and I just try and memorize it in those two minutes. One verse. And it stirs little by little my affections for Jesus.

[ 35 : 23 ] You see, if you're a Christian, it's not an option about loving others. It's not an option about making disciples. You can't say, I'm not into that right now.

It's not a good time. Because it's a command. But we obey out of a security in God's love, not trying to earn God's love together.

When my wife tells me not to eat in the bedroom and I'm there eating a snack and suddenly I realize the word comes in my mind, I can carry on eating.

That's not going to flourish our relationship. Right? Some of you know what I mean. I can stop and say, if I eat outside, maybe she'll love me more.

Maybe she'll think I'm an amazing husband. That's just completely ridiculous. Doesn't work like that. Or, I can say, I'm secure in my relationship.

[ 36 : 28 ] And I'm going to go outside because I desire to please her. And as you do that, your relationship begins to flourish more and more. That's what abiding and obedience to God is looking for.

And I don't know what that looks like in your life. But that's what God's calling each one of us to do. To abide. To pursue Jesus. Because when you do that, then you will see, you'll begin to see the people around you in a different way.

God will show you step by step the people that you need to love, which maybe you weren't loving. And he will push you out of your comfort zone. You'll go, I don't really want to do that.

But then he'll say, listen, this is where my joy is found. When you find me. For us this year, there's a few things that it will look like.

What does it look like? We're going to stop the CBGs meeting together for the first five, six weeks of this semester and we're going to have this CG together time. Okay, we're going to start meeting this Friday at the community center, 7.30.

[ 37 : 42 ] Because we want to discover and learn more about what does it actually really mean in practice to help walk alongside each other, to help make disciples in the ordinary things of life, to learn how to do that.

Some of us, that will be uncomfortable. But that's okay because God wants you to be fruitful. We also want to talk about membership this year more.

We want to push it as a way to call you and to call people to step up and say, I'm in for this mission of bearing fruit. I don't know how to do it. I need Jesus. And if you're not a member, we'll be challenging you to say yes to the call of Jesus that he has through your life in this church.

Because we don't just want to stay comfortable. We want to encourage people to learn to be stepping up into leadership in different ways, in deacons, in preaching, in eldership, in parenting, in different things.

We'll have our new lead pastor, Kevin, will come in in January. He'll take some time to settle in. But I'm just really excited about that time. It's going to be a tremendous blessing for us.

[ 38 : 58 ] But you know, a new leader coming in is not the secret to this church bearing fruit. Abiding in Jesus is. Right? That's every one of us. Let me close with this.

As elders, we talked about the mission of making disciples last week. And someone once said, the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.

And we believe that. You see, the university ministry, the great stuff that's going on there. But I have to be just really honest with you and say, as we talked about what our hearts are like, we just have to repent before you as leaders.

Because we realize that actually, in our lives, while we reach out to some friends, while we do certain things like that, when it comes to really looking at our heart, does my heart burn with love that people might come to know Christ?

And does that shape the way I do things? Does that shape the way I'm just thinking and praying? Am I desperate that people would come to know how amazing Jesus is?

[ 40 : 12 ] And we had to look at ourselves and say, so often that's lacking in my life. I can do a whole lot of stuff, you know, we can organize a mission outreach. And then we do that and we tick the box and we say, we did mission, but actually our heart is it filled with a love that Jesus has for us so that we can go out and love others.

And as a church, I believe that we as leaders just need to repent of that before you because also, I think as us, as a church, we need to see that that's what God is calling us to be.

And some of us need to repent as well because if you think about it, where's my heart? Where's my heart? Jesus wants you to know that intimate pursuit of him in whatever your circumstances are right now.

He's not saying, here's a list of a hundred things to do. He's saying, I want you to pursue me. Some of us, we need to repent because we've been chasing after everything else but we haven't chased after Jesus.

But when we do, this church will flourish and bear fruit, fruit that will last. I want us to pray. I want you to think in your heart now and I want to call us actually, as the band comes up, just for a time of just thinking about repentance.

[ 41 : 42 ] What does repentance look like in my life? Where do you see your heart? Where do you see your heart right now with Jesus? Do you feel distant from him at the moment?

Have you been running from him? Have you just been so wrapped up with all the busyness that you haven't seen the people around you?

God just says, just come, run back to me now. Ask me to forgive you. Ask me to cleanse you and you experience my grace and my love again.

And I want to send you out and just show you this week one person that you can connect with. just spend a minute just spending time with God now.

What is God saying to you? Just open your hands, just let the spirit just speak into your heart. some of us are tired.

[ 43 : 02 ] Some of us just need to run and say, Jesus, would you fill me again? choose this time to just speak to Jesus.

Am I desperate for you? God bless you.

Father, just, we can't work up and manufacture fruit. We can only do that.

it's only you who's going to produce fruit in us. But Father, just admit that I need you.

We need you. As a church, we need you. And I pray that you create in us a prayerfulness which is so desperate for you.

[ 44 : 32 ] Where we long for you. Even in the busyness of our days, we're looking to see how you can be, you can be there in that day. Make us a church where like a barbecue coal, which is cold, just gets heated and heated by your love till we become white hot for you.

and as that coal burns, Lord, it will spread and touch others and Lord, I pray that as a church you would make us a blazing furnace for you which produces tasty fruit.  
Let us long for you more. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.