

Galatians: Spiritual Relationships

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[0 : 0 0] Good evening, everyone. I'm glad that we could be here together. For those of you who have not been a part of our church or maybe here for the first time, we've been using this time in our worship to look at a letter that was written by the Apostle Paul a long time ago to an area of the Roman Empire known as Galatia, so we call this letter Galatians.

And we've been looking primarily at how the gospel, which is the good news of Jesus Christ, how that transforms society and how it transforms the way we think about things like race and social class and gender and how it makes possible an entirely new way of being human.

It makes possible a new way of being human together. And so we've looked at that at a kind of cultural level. We've looked at that at the level of society at large.

This evening, we want to look a little more specifically and personally at our relationships, the relationships within the church.

So more specifically, we're going to be looking and thinking about what it means to have spiritual relationships. You know, there's a lot in the news right now and a lot of research being done on the epidemic of loneliness and on the importance of friendship and having strong social support.

[1 : 2 8] And so there's a lot out there about this. And, you know, research shows that you, people who have strong social support networks, they're less likely to be depressed.

They're less likely to be suicidal. They're better at dealing with stress. Apparently, it's also good for your BMI. You live longer. All of these studies are showing the importance of friendship.

And so we know this. We know friendships matter. But the question we want to ask is, is there anything unique or different about friendships in the church, about relationships between Christians?

Is there anything that makes this different than, say, college friends or co-workers or neighbors that we're close to and spend time with on the weekends? And so we're going to be looking at that theme here in the last few chapters of Galatians.

It talks about spiritual relationships here. And in fact, Galatians has a lot to say about the Holy Spirit in general. A lot of people don't immediately realize that Galatians is really a letter all about the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit does in the life of God's people.

[2 : 3 3] And Paul's describing here what a Spirit-filled church looks like, a Spirit-led church. And what's interesting is he does not describe a Spirit-filled church as a church where people are being slain in the Spirit or speaking in tongues or prophecy and all these things.

Even though those things are a part of the life of the church, absolutely, that's normally what we first think of when we think of a Spirit-filled church. But Paul says that the clearest sign, the first sign that you have a Spirit-led church is in the relationships.

It's what the relationships look like. And so we're going to look at these places where we see a description of Spirit-led relationships in the church. In chapter 4, verses 12 to 20, Paul describes his relationship as a pastor to his people.

So what we're first going to do is look at what does a Spirit-led relationship between a pastor and a congregation look like? Now, I don't know that we've ever talked about that in the history of our church, specifically what this relationship should look like.

So we'll see that. And then we'll look secondly at what the relationship in a Spirit-led church looks like between people in the congregation. So let's pray and then we'll open God's Word together.

[3 : 47] Father, we thank you, Lord, for your Word. We thank you, as we do every week, that we have the privilege of coming and sitting under your Word. And we pray that you would use your Word to open our hearts to reveal to us our need for grace that you see so clearly.

And that in that we would meet your living Word, Jesus Christ. And we pray this in His holy name. Amen. So we're looking first at the relationship in Spirit-filled churches between pastors and people.

What should this look like? You know, these days I think there are a lot of expectations about the role of pastors. Some people say, why do we even have pastors? Other people say, well, I know why we have pastors and we have all kinds of reasons why we think pastors exist.

Some people operate as though pastors are a lot like CEOs. And a lot of pastors operate that way. They assume that their main job is to keep the organization running smoothly, to cast vision, to make sure that you're growing, and to make sure you're promoting the church as much as you can.

Other people think of pastors as kind of motivational speakers, you know, sort of spiritual TED talk speakers. And the main function of a pastor is, again, an inspirational message to kind of keep us going through the week.

[5 : 07] And other people think of pastors as maybe life coaches. You know, if you need some tips on making marriage work or tips on how to do a better job at work, then pastors are your go-to people for that sort of thing.

And so all of these things are reflections of things that pastors do. But what's the central purpose of a pastor? Why have pastors at all? And we see that in Galatians 4, specifically in verse 19.

This is Paul sharing his heart. And it's beautiful because you see that Paul is not some distant, stoic, ivory tower theologian. He's a pastor. And he passionately loves his people.

And at the end of this passage, he says in verse 19, My little children. That's what he calls his people. My little children for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.

What is the purpose of a pastor? The purpose of a pastor is to form Christ in others. It's to see Christ formed in other people.

[6 : 13] And you say, well, what does it mean to have Christ formed in you? Well, it means that all of your beliefs and all of your desires and the way that you live and your imagination, that all of those things are aligned with the person and the character and the heart of Jesus Christ.

So instead of saying, well, I believe this, and yet this is what I really love and care about, and this is kind of how I live, and this is what I fantasize about, right, all of those things are aligned with the person of Christ and the character of Christ.

That's what it means to have Christ formed in you. It's as though your very identity has been supplanted. Right, so Paul says that's the reason that pastors exist.

And he compares this work to birthing and raising a child, which I think is just wonderful. I mean, I don't obviously personally know what it's like to give birth to a child.

I was there with all three of our kids when they were born, with my wife. And what I know from her is that as painful as it can be and as anxiety-provoking as the entire process can be, all of that pales in comparison to the joy of bringing new life into the world.

[7 : 32] It's staggering. Right? And in the same way, Paul is saying, as hard as this is and as much anguish as it causes me at times, that pales in comparison to the beauty and the joy of seeing new spiritual life come into the world.

And, you know, if you think about when you have kids, one of the things that I didn't realize really, truly, about having kids is that, you know, we have three now. Our oldest is Riley.

And I remember having Riley, and I remember for about a year after having Riley, I was constantly in a state of kind of low-grade panic. Panic. Because what I kept realizing is I'm always on duty.

You know, I had never had a job before where I'm always on. You know, you don't clock out after 12 hours and somebody else comes in and takes a night shift. You're just kind of always on. And people can come and family and babysitters and all that and kind of help here and there, but you're the one always on duty, and you're responsible for that child's well-being.

And so, you know, low-grade panic. It's about a year. It still kicks in every now and then. And Paul's saying it's very much like being a pastor. You know, it's not a day job.

[8 : 40] You don't clock in and clock out. And he says, you know, everything I do, all of my life, is oriented toward one goal. Just like being a parent. Everything you do as a parent is oriented toward that child growing up and becoming a mature, healthy adult.

And in the same way, Paul says, pastors, everything you do is oriented toward those people becoming mature, healthy disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. This is the goal.

And so he says, here are some of the things that I do. And we see in this passage some of the things that Paul does in order to form Christ in his people. Number one, Paul identifies with his people.

First thing he does in order to form Christ in them is he identifies with them. It says in verse 12, brothers, I entreat you. Become as I am, for I also have become as you are.

So he's saying, I became like you in order to reach you. And, you know, he's a Jew. He's kind of a Jew's Jew. He's a Jewish elite, you know, in his former life.

[9 : 48] And he says, you know, you're a bunch of Gentiles. Not too long ago, I wouldn't have even associated with you. I would have crossed the street if I saw you coming. But I became in every way like you.

I've lived with you. I've eaten the same food at the table with you. We've laughed together. We've cried together. We've experienced life together. I know what it's like to be in your shoes.

I became like you in order to see Christ formed in you. And I think that there is a principle for pastoral ministry here, a kind of model, right?

I mean, as good as, as wonderful as technology is, as wonderful as, you know, podcasts are and video projection and streaming media and all of these technologies and as amazing as those technologies are for getting the gospel out to the world.

And I love all that stuff. I listen to tons of podcasts. There is no substitute for a flesh and blood pastor preaching to people he knows, preaching into situations that he's personally familiar with.

[10 : 57] There is no substitute. I became like you. I know what it's like to be in your shoes. Now, pastors can't know every single person in their congregation deeply and intimately. But pastors can know their people, know what it's like to be them, know what they go through on a day-in-day-out basis.

So Paul says, you know, I identified with you so that I could form Christ in you. The counterpart to that, number two, Paul set an example with his own life. He says, become like me, for I became as you are.

And that's staggering to me. Become as I am. To me, that's staggering. You know, and what he means is obviously in Galatians 2.20, a couple of chapters earlier, he says, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And what's he saying? He says, I'm doing everything I can so that you will have the kind of relationship with Christ that I have. Or I'm so, it's not about my moral excellence.

It's not about my resume. It's not about all of my impressive accomplishments. It's about the fact that I'm so in love with Jesus. I'm so taken with him that it's almost as though I no longer exist, that he lives in me.

[12 : 13] He fills me up. And he says, I want you to have that. You know, the great Scottish pastor, Robert Murray McShane, famously said, he's a pastor, and he said, the greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.

That hits me like a sledgehammer. I don't know how you feel about it. But I'm staggered by that. You know, I hang out with a lot of pastors.

It's kind of one of the hazards of the trade. And we hang out, and, you know, pastors are always trying to think about how they can grow. And, you know, pastors are always working on stuff. You know, and so a lot of pastors talk about, I want to become a better preacher and a better communicator.

You know, or other pastors say, I want to become better at fundraising and development. And other pastors say, I want to become better at organizational leadership or, you know, vision casting. Or, you know, and so pastors are always talking about this stuff.

Rarely do you hear pastors say, I want to grow more holy in the way I live. You just don't hear it that often. And yet I think what McShane is saying, what Paul would say is, my people's greatest need is my relationship with Christ.

[13 : 28] That that's worthy of imitation. And so I think there's probably no other quote out there that has convicted me more than that quote. It's always in the background whenever I'm praying or confessing to God my own weakness.

So Paul set an example. He was able to say, become as I am. Number three, the third thing Paul does to form Christ and his people is, he preached God's word even if it made enemies.

He preached God's word faithfully even if he made enemies doing it. So he says, you know, in verse 5, What has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

Have I then become your enemy? By telling you the truth? And you've got to hear the pain. You've got to hear the heartbreak. I mean, Paul's been in anguish over this.

I mean, he's essentially saying, we were friends. We loved each other. We lived life together. We laughed together and we cried together.

[14 : 40] We had all kinds of plans of the ways that we wanted to live our lives together. We were brothers and sisters. And now you don't even talk to me.

You don't return my calls. You act like I don't exist. In fact, you act like I'm your enemy. All because I preached what was revealed to me by Jesus Christ.

And you didn't want to hear it. And so now the relationship is off. And you say, how could that be? And you know, we've had that kind of thing happen over the years in our church.

And I will tell you, it hurts every single time. It hurts. And there's this temptation, you know, to ameliorate the tension.

There's this temptation to skip over the troublesome parts. And the things that we don't want to talk about are, you know, to kind of mitigate those. Or to kind of, you know, explain things away. Or to just kind of soften this.

[15 : 44] And there's this temptation to do that because it would make it a heck of a lot easier. It would be so much easier. If there were nothing in Scripture that were in any way challenging. Or offensive to our modern sensibilities.

And yet, you know, I think personally of my own ordination vows. Questions like this were asked of me. Are you determined out of the Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge?

Will you be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the body of Christ all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word?

And you realize that pastors are ordained not to tell people what they want to hear, but to tell people what they need to hear from God's Word.

And there are things in God's Word that we all need to hear that none of us want to hear. Including pastors. So chances are, if you have a pastor who is only telling people what they want to hear, it's probably not a pastor.

[16 : 49] It's more of a peddler. There's probably a book for sale in the lobby somewhere. Paul says what is true based on God's Word, even if it makes enemies.

And of course, number four is maybe the most important of all. The last thing that Paul does in order to form Christ and his people is, he relies on the Holy Spirit to do all of the things that he can't do.

Verses 13 and 14 tell us that Paul was sick when he arrived in Galatia. He was ill. We don't know exactly what was going on, a lot of theories about that. But we know that it was a significant illness, and that it was a burden to the Galatian people.

They had to take care of him. And he was so sick, and the condition was such that it inhibited his ability to communicate and do his normal kind of ministry. He was kind of bedridden or something.

But what we realize is that even though he was limited, and even though he couldn't communicate the way he wanted, the Holy Spirit still did amazing work in Galatia. There's this thriving church as a result. And you realize that the Spirit is the one actually doing the work of ministry.

[18 : 00] And there are so many things that in pastoral ministry, day in and day out, so many situations that confront you with your own limitations. Your highest estimation of yourself is the day you graduate from seminary.

I know everything now. I've got all the answers, all the techniques. And in about a month, you're sort of down here. And then, you know, slowly but surely, your self-estimation gets chopped away, you know, which is a good thing in the kingdom of God.

But it confronts you with your limitations. You know, I realize again and again and again, I can't fix marriages. I can't convert people.

I can give great arguments, great apologetics, illustrations. I can't convert people. Only the Spirit can do that. I can't make people ask other people out on dates.

Okay? I just can't do that. I can arrange marriages. I have a contract, and if you sign that contract, I will arrange a marriage for you.

[19 : 08] It will go wonderfully for you. A little awkward for the first couple of years, but you'll work it out. I can't make people stop dating people. I can't make people stop doing self-destructive things.

I can give them all the reasons. I can't take away chronic pain. I can't take away depression. There's no magic word that I can tell you that's going to alleviate your anxiety.

I can't make your life easier if you struggle with chronic mental illness. I can't tell you what your future holds.

I can't tell you which job you should take. I can't even tell you if you're going to be okay. All I can do is pray.

And I can do what John the Baptist did, which is to continually point to Jesus Christ and to decrease so that He would increase in your life.

[20 : 17] That's all I can do. And then, as I'm praying and as I'm pointing, I can sit back and I can watch the Holy Spirit do what no human being could do in your life.

And that is one of the great joys and privileges of pastoral ministry, is getting to see the Spirit work in people's lives in amazing ways. Getting to see the Spirit do things that I couldn't do in ten years of trying in an instant.

You know, compared to moving, you know, compared to the work that sometimes needs to be done in the human heart, moving mountains is easy. It's way harder, infinitely harder, to change a human heart than it is to move a mountain.

You see the Spirit do amazing things in the church. So we take all this together, and just a word before we look at the relationships that exist within the congregation, you know, over the last few years, I've been working to try to clarify my sense of pastoral calling in this church and what that should look like and what my priorities should be.

And one of my great heroes who passed away last year, Eugene Peterson, says that there are three jobs of a pastor, preaching and teaching and leadership, administrative leadership, and he says those three jobs hinge on three core practices.

[21 : 40] Prayer, Bible study, and spiritual direction. And you know, what's interesting about those is they all have to do with attention. Prayer is attending to God.

Bible study is attending to God's Word and the great story of salvation history, all that God has done in the lives of His people. And then spiritual direction is attending to the work of the Holy Spirit here and now, in your lives and lives of our congregation.

And in our community in general. Where is God calling us to go? What is God doing right now in our midst? And you know, all of these things concern attention.

And to be totally honest, I don't have a lot of attention. I have about that much. My attention span is very, very, very small. Right? Medication gets me to about here.

You know? Monster gets me to about here. You know, that's about, and that's about my, I'm maxed out, highly medicated. I'm about right there. Right? And it's not that much. And so I have to be very choosy about where I invest that tiny little bit of attention that I have to give.

[22 : 48] And so this is why I went off all social media. And this is why I've mostly gone away from email. is because those things were robbing my attention.

Another thing I've done is, you know, as we've grown, I've tried to focus more and more of my attention on equipping our staff, on equipping our other pastors, on equipping leaders.

Because even though in this parish it feels like we're a church of, you know, a couple of hundred people, the reality is we're a church of like 400 people. And in a church that size, even with three pastors, it's impossible to know intimately and care for everybody in ways that people need to be cared for.

And so that kind of brings us to the second piece of this, which is what does the relationship at a Spirit-filled church look like between people? And for this we look at Galatians 5 and 6.

Galatians 5, 25, if we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

[24 : 03] Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. What I want you to see here is that the work of forming Christ in people is not only pastoral work.

The work of forming Christ in people is the work of every single Christian. Right? When you were baptized, that was kind of like your ordination and you became a full-time minister.

And part of the ministry of the saints is to see that Christ is formed in one another. So when Paul talks about bearing one another's burdens, he's talking about sharing that sense of responsibility for seeing that Christ is formed in all of us, that we're all growing and maturing.

It's the burden of discipleship. It's the yoke of discipleship. And he says, no one is called to go it alone. There's no such thing as a lone gun Christian. By design, the formation of Christ in us is a communal effort and everybody has a part to play in that.

So he's saying, our church relationships are categorically different than your friendships, your college friends, your co-workers, neighbors that you hang out with, even your family.

[25 : 27] The church relationships are categorically different because we're all called to pastor one another. And so just like Paul, everything we do, all the ways that we interact are meant to orient toward that end.

And so we ask, well, okay, what does that actually look like? And I'll just give you a couple of examples of what that might look like. The first example of how we form Christ in each other is simply this.

We attend to the work of the Holy Spirit in one another's lives. You just pay attention to what God is already doing in the lives of the people around you.

You notice it. So in verse 25, he says, if we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit.

Track with what the Spirit is doing. Pay attention to that and then align your efforts with it. That's what he's talking about here. So just imagine your relationships, your Christian relationships for a second, and imagine how different they would be if you were attending to the work of the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 33] In other words, what would it be like if you saw all of your relationships in the church, every single person, as a work in progress of the Holy Spirit? You know, like when you're driving down the street and you see some row house and it's being renovated and they've got all the scaffolding built out front and all the machinery and the tools and the hard hats and serious work is going on.

What would it be like if you just assumed that everybody in the church was like that? They were under renovation. Open house coming soon. You know, so imagine if you had a disagreement with somebody.

You have a major falling out with somebody, angry, argument, the whole nine yards. You know, I think maybe that might be happening right now. I don't know. There may be somebody here, a few of you here, who are in a major disagreement right now and you're hurt and you're angry and you feel attacked, you feel let down.

Imagine if instead of however you're thinking about that situation right now. Instead of that, you assumed that you are a work of the Holy Spirit and this other person is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and that this argument is actually one of the ways that the Holy Spirit is renovating you.

You know, there's like an old bathroom or kitchen that just needs to be completely torn out. There's something, there's a part that just needs to be gutted and that's what's happening right now. The Spirit is working on you.

[27 : 57] How would you respond differently to that conflict? Have you assumed this is how God is working in my life and their life? Think about dating people and think about our typical approach to dating, relationships, or not dating, hanging out with intentionality or however it plays out.

And imagine that you treat the people that you date like renovation projects of the Holy Spirit. The main thing that's happening in this person's life is that God is working in them, forming Christ in them.

You know, if you saw a house being renovated on the street, you wouldn't go in there and trash it. So why would we do things that might trash other people? Right?

You would be very respectful. You'd be very aware of and attentive to what's happening there and you'd try to appreciate it even if ultimately you go your separate ways. Those of us who are married, same thing.

You know, we have conflict all the time. Marriage is hard. And imagine if we saw the conflict in our marriage not as a sign that we married the wrong person or that we made a mistake or that we've just grown apart or that marriage is too hard.

[29 : 10] Right? Imagine instead we saw that as that's exactly what's supposed to happen in marriage because the point of this marriage is not necessarily my happiness and fulfillment all the time. It's my holiness. It's that Christ would be formed in me.

And guess what? If God's doing a renovation project and you're the house guess who the chief contractor is? It's your spouse. God's like this is a gut job we're going to have to redo the whole thing we need a major you know some highly competent contractor to come in who can just manage the whole project.

Guess who that is? It's the person that you married. They're going to be the main one that God uses to renovate you from the inside out to form Christ in you. And what if you responded to your disagreements and differences recognizing this is how God is at work?

What in me needs to go? I'll just give you one more example you know as Paul says instead of becoming conceited or provoking or envying one another what if we paid attention to the ways that God may be producing fruit in other people's lives?

So he's saying stop comparing yourself stop resenting the success that other people have stop envying people for being smarter or more successful or better looking than you stop doing that whole thing instead notice and affirm where God is at work in people's lives.

[30 : 31] If you see fruit affirm that. You know sometimes the best way we can know God is at work in us is when other people give us feedback. Wow I've just noticed you're a lot more patient than you used to be.

You have this kind of gentleness that you didn't used to have. I've noticed that you seem less preoccupied you seem more tuned in to what's going on and the needs around you. That's God at work in your life.

Imagine if we did that instead of resenting and comparing all the time. We attend to the work of the Holy Spirit. Number two last point. What do these relationships look like in a spirit led church?

It means that we take seriously the work of restoring those who sin. Restoring those who sin. the ancient view of friendship assumed that the point of the relationship was to cultivate virtue in one another.

Now I think that the view that we have today of friendship is quite different. Most people think of friends today. Who are your true friends? Well your true friends are the people who always affirm you.

[31 : 39] They never question your decisions. They never push back on what you're doing. They're the people that have your back no matter what. Right? That's a true friend. And I just think that's an anemic counterfeit view of friendship.

If you look at what Paul says about these relationships he says in a spiritual relationship we are quick to restore those who sin. We're ready to push back if necessary.

And there are a couple of ways that we can think about this. You know you're sitting you're talking with your friends you're hearing about their life you're hearing about things that are going on or decisions that need to be made and just a couple of things to think about.

One if you're serious about forming Christ in other people then do not hide behind neutrality. You know don't take the approach of saying well you know I don't know there's no real right answer here and you know I just whatever you want to do I just want you to be happy.

Don't hide behind neutrality. Listen we're not neutral. Christians are not neutral. Okay? We're not neutral. We're not agnostic.

[32 : 45] Paul has literally spent several chapters saying that we are born slaves to sin and that only through the greatest sacrifice imaginable has God set us free and yet we are perilously close dangling over enslavement again.

It could happen and we have to and he's saying that every single day we have to fight to hold on to our freedom. That's not neutral. Nobody's neutral.

Everybody's biased. Don't hide behind neutrality. Don't hide behind the well whatever you think is right. That's not true friendship.

So don't do that. We have to fight for our freedom all of the time. Number two I would say that in most cases avoid giving advice. Just in fact just don't give advice.

Just don't do it. You know statistically speaking most of the time when you give people advice they're much less likely to do it if you told them to do it.

[33 : 53] Did you know that? So like research shows that if somebody has a problem decision they're trying to make and you tell them what to do you give them advice statistically they're very unlikely to actually do anything that you suggest.

By contrast if people are able to come up with a solution on their own they're much more likely to actually act on it. And guess what?

Here's the kind of you know here's the other side of it is that regardless of whether they follow through a lot of people will secretly resent having to ask you for advice because they don't like to be nobody likes to be in the position of not knowing.

Right? And so I would just avoid advice altogether and you know what I can get advice from my college friends I can get advice from my co-workers I can get advice from those people I can go to my neighbor and say what do you think I should do?

I don't need that from my Christian friends what I need from my Christian friends is I need them to pray with me and for me and when they say they're going to pray for me they mean it and I need them to sit down and help me understand how God's word might speak to my situation and when we do that when we come alongside somebody we don't tell them what to do or prescribe a solution or problem solve or advice give and instead we do what?

[35 : 09] Attend to the work of the Spirit in this renovation project guess what happens? You don't rob that person of the opportunity to grow in Christ you don't rob them of the opportunity to take their issue to the Lord you don't try to supplant the Lord in their life instead you say let's go to the Lord together and see what God's going to do with this so avoid avoid a voice giving advice last thing I'll say do confront sin whenever you see it do confront sin but do it with gentleness and humility I love that Paul uses the word restore here you ever seen an old car or an old piece of furniture that somebody restores maybe some of you do that on the side you restore furniture restore cars or a house renovation and that work is done first thing you have to do is you have to look at that old piece of furniture and you have to envision what it could look like restored the finished work and you know for Christians what does the finished work look like when the renovation is done it looks just like

Jesus Christ and so you have to envision the end result and then what do you do well you begin to restore that piece of furniture or that car very gently very lovingly very delicately with great attention to detail recognizing that it's probably going to take a long time it's going to be a long obedience in the same direction so to speak and that's I think exactly how we should think about restoring brothers and sisters who are sinning who have fallen away from Christ it's a gentle gradual work of love and attention and care and it takes time and it takes an enormous amount of humility so if you have friends and none of those friends have ever pushed back on you they've never questioned anything about your life who you're with or how many hours you're working or this or that they've never pushed back then maybe you don't have friends maybe you have yes men

Paul's calling us to be spiritual friends to seek to form Christ in one another so as we bring these things together the relationship of a pastor to the people and the relationship between people and one another this is what spirit led relationships look like in the church and I think one of the reasons we go wrong here is because we actually misunderstand what the church is all about in general a lot of people think that the church is just another non-profit doing work in the city like anyone else other people think that the church is more of a social club to meet potential spouses or make friends and other people think of the church as a kind of therapy support group where we can come and learn coping strategies to deal with life and none of these even come close to the truth because the church is unlike any other institution on the planet the church is the place where the eternal has broken into the temporal the church is the place where the infinite has come to dwell in the finite and the church is the place where the future has broken into the present and you're not going to see that anywhere else so the church is a place of transcendent worship where God is actually present and the church is a place of political subversion because every week we proclaim our allegiance to the king of kings and implicit in that is the idea that this and all administrations will come crumbling down the church is the place of spiritual rehabilitation where we are relearning how to be human together and all of this is because we know that one day

Jesus is going to return and is going to renew and restore this world and so we need to make sure that we are fit to live in that new world and the only way to be fit for new creation is to have Christ formed in us and that is our common calling let's pray