

How To Leave Your Church

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Date: 24 July 2011

Preacher: Ralph Depping

[0 : 00] Thank you.

I'm going to be looking this morning in particular at verses 25 to 30, focusing in on Epaphroditus and looking as well at the first few verses in Philippians.

I warned Johnny about the title this morning. I don't know if it's up there now. Not to panic. Don't worry, Johnny. Hopefully there will be people here still next week.

But, yeah, really this is in some ways a how-to guide as to how to leave your church. But we'll get to that over time.

A fictional character, although maybe some self-autobiographical elements too. Mike had some big decisions to make. So far life had just kind of, you know, just kind of flowed from...

[1 : 23] He'd gone to college near his home, which was very helpful because then he was able to stay part of the church that he'd grown up to. And he really enjoyed it. He'd been part of a Bible-believing church, a church that loved Jesus.

But now college had finished and it seemed like anything was possible. He knew that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, a chance to spread his wings and to find his role in life.

Maybe he was going to move to the big city, go to Dublin or even go abroad for a couple of years. He's sure he'd have the opportunity to find a good Bible church wherever he's settled.

There were Christians everywhere after all, isn't there? So people in his home church would understand. Nobody was going to tell him that he shouldn't go or couldn't go. At most, maybe his pastor would gently say that, well, you know, you'd be missed here.

And maybe you should consider staying here or finding a job locally. But Mike felt that all the options were there before him. But which to choose?

[2 : 25] How could he know God's direction in all of this? So if Mike was in our church, what would you say to him? Maybe you're in the same situation this morning.

Maybe you're needing to decide about going or staying. Do you know how to make the decision? Do you know what you should consider? On the other side, do we know what we can say to someone like Mike or someone in these situations?

What is the right answer? Is there any advice that we can give? And the theme or what I want us to get this morning or really come to is this. It's our love for Jesus will be measured by how our decisions involve the Christian community.

Our love for Jesus will be measured by how our decisions involve the Christian community. So what we're looking at this morning, I think, is very critical, very important, and really reveals our heart and our love for Jesus.

And I have to say, as I'm speaking this morning, this isn't directed to individuals particularly or individual situations. I don't have all the answers for your particular situation.

[3 : 37] So I'm not up here telling you to go or to stay. Happy to have those conversations. I think they should happen. But what I want to say is that the good news is that the Bible speaks this morning into all these very similar kinds of situations.

And I believe it's as we listen to the Bible and we bring our hearts and our minds under Christ that we can begin to have confidence about the answer to the particular questions for our situations and situations we know about.

We can be confident, I believe, in what God has given us. He's given us his word. He's given us his spirit. And he has given us his people. So let's look together now then at the example of Epaphroditus in Philippians chapter 2 and verses 25 to 30 and see what it is that God expects of us in these situations.

You may have read it for us. But I think it's good if we just take a minute just to go through it again quickly. This is what it says. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs.

For he longs for all of you in his distress because you heard that he was ill. Indeed, he was ill and almost died. But God had mercy on him and not on him only, but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

[4 : 57] Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him so that when you see him again, you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

And the first thing I want us to notice here is that there are three distinct activities happening, I believe. There is, first of all, sending. There is going.

And then there is receiving. So there's three activities. Sending, going and receiving. Do you see them? The first couple are in verse 25. Paul says, So Paul is the one who is doing the sending. And obviously, Epaphroditus is the one who is doing the going. And if we jump down to verse 29, this is what Paul says. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor such men.

Welcome is, it's the same word as receive or welcome him. And it's written to the church at Philippi to receive Epaphroditus as being sent by Paul.

[6 : 04] So three things. There's a sending, a going and a receiving. And even now, I want us to be honest about ourselves and about what often takes place within church communities.

When people decide to go from the church, in a lot of cases, there is really only one party involved. The person who goes. This isn't what we often see, is it?

So there's more happening in these few verses here than what we're used to. So this morning, I think we need to take time to look at all three of the activities. And we can't separate those from the people involved.

So we need to look at the people, the characters, what we read about here. Because I believe what we have here in Philippians, it's not weird. It's not special. Or it's only for gospel ministers or gospel Christians or people in the first century.

I believe it applies to all of us who want to follow Jesus. And really, the example we have in verses 25 to 30 and most of chapter 2 is really just a careful outworking and application of the first four verses of Philippians, which is, in some ways, the teaching element.

[7 : 14] So verses 1 to 4 is kind of the background or the teaching or the principles that Paul wants the believers in the church to grasp. And in some ways, what happens after verses 4 are examples and encouragements and outworkings of that.

So if we say we love and know Jesus, as it's described in verse 1, it's talking about unity with Christ, loving Jesus, then we have to accept what it says in verses 2 to 4 as a demand on our lives.

And we should see the examples contained within the rest of the chapter within our life together as a church, the same kind of examples. So this is written to a church just like ourselves, working through the gospel.

And in a sense, chapter 2 is just working out the very words of Jesus himself to his disciples. This is Jesus' own measure of discipleship. John chapter 13, two verses, they're familiar, 34 and 35.

Jesus says, A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. And this is the key. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

[8 : 24] By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. And it's this that's been worked out in chapter 2. Love for God, love for Jesus means love for others. So again, I get back to that title.

Our love for Jesus will be measured and should be measured by how our decision making involves the Christian community, the church. I think it's good to have just, we're landing right into the middle of the book of Philippians, which is a little bit unfair, I think.

Why are we here? What's Philippians about? So a little bit of background information. The apostle Paul himself is in prison at this time. He was in prison a number of times and not 100% sure, but it seems that in this case he was in the city of Rome and prison there.

So according to the authorities, the rulers of the time, Paul is a criminal and not just any ordinary criminal. He's one who is sitting on death row awaiting either execution or freedom, life or death, the two things sitting in front of him.

And you can look back at chapter 1 and verses 15 to 17 and we can see there that there were many preachers of the gospel, fellow believers it seems, who have turned against Paul, have turned on Paul and are delighting in the opportunity to promote themselves and to cause trouble for Paul while he rots in prison.

[9 : 46] Imagine that. And so we can begin to relate to Paul the kind of emotional and mental stress and strain that he must be under. He's imprisoned. He's under attack.

He's chained. Yet in all of those circumstances, in all those personal discomforts, Paul writes this letter, the letter of Philippians, which is known as the letter of joy within the New Testament to the church in the city of Philippi.

The letter is, it's filled with joy. The word joy or rejoice or things like that are mentioned 16 times throughout the letter. It's running through the whole thing. And there's constantly these warm feelings, these warm thoughts, warm prayers, and indeed warm actions towards his dear partner church in Philippi.

And the church in Philippi was a faithful church to Paul. It had always partnered with Paul, supporting him when others didn't. If you look at chapter 4 and verses 14 and 15, I think we get a sense of this.

And there's some helpful things here. As we look at the example of Paul and the church in Philippi, how they relate and how we relate to those that are bringing the gospel to other parts. And what Paul says, While others sought to discredit and harass Paul at the time he was in prison, the community in Philippi had a different approach.

[11 : 25] They got off their backsides. Yet again, they had a history of it and they reached out to Paul, partnering with him as they always had in this matter of giving and receiving. And it was one of these church-sponsored mission trips, for want of a better phrase, that Epaphroditus was sent to Paul.

And sorry, back to chapter 2 now, verse 29, and we can see that. Risking his own life to bring a gift from the church to Paul.

So that's what's taking place. The church in Philippi has sent Epaphroditus to Paul to bring a gift. And now we're picking up the story, the return leg. Paul is writing a thank you letter, effectively. The letter of Philippians is in thanks for that gift and the occasion of the letter is the gift that they've sent him. And he's sending it back to the church. And he's also sending back to them Epaphroditus. So we're going to look at the three things now. Sending, going and receiving. Firstly, Paul the sender. Back to verse 25. And to understand Paul sending Epaphroditus, I think we have to understand the value of Epaphroditus to Paul.

[12 : 38] There's a lot packed into verse 25. There's five different characteristics. I'm not going to go into them in all their detail. I'm sure you're thankful for that. But there's five characteristics of Epaphroditus given to us in verse 25.

And all of them directly relate to how valuable Epaphroditus is to Paul and show the value of Epaphroditus to Paul. Towards the end of the verse, we see that Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians as a messenger and as a minister to Paul.

As a messenger, he's simply carrying news about the church to Paul. Bringing news of how they're doing, how they're getting on. And as a minister, he is coming to take care of Paul's needs, to minister to Paul, to take care of his physical needs, to bring him a gift.

And the phrase at the end of verse 30 is, it's translated easily for us here, but it is a little bit strange. Literally it reads that Epaphroditus completed what was lacking in the Philippians' service to Paul at the end of verse 30.

Risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. Or Epaphroditus was the one who completed what was lacking in their service. And there was nothing lacking in the gift that they'd set aside or what they were seeking to do.

[13 : 54] Sorry, just say the power light is flashing on the battery light, flashing on the laptop. I don't know if there's a power supply for it. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry about that.

So there's nothing lacking in the gift per se that they've set aside. But what was lacking in a sense was someone to bring it to Paul. And that was where Epaphroditus stepped in as a minister of the

gift to Paul.

So these two descriptions of Epaphroditus describe his role as a messenger and a minister. But in other words, they show the heart of someone who is willing to serve the needs of the church before his own needs.

Someone that was willing to go. Someone that was willing to minister. And at the start of verse 25, we have three more descriptions. These ones are given by Paul to describe Epaphroditus the man. Epaphroditus is to Paul first a brother, a fellow worker, and a fellow soldier, as he says in verse 25. So Epaphroditus has become more to Paul than just a carrier of news. He's more to Paul than just a minister of needs. He's more to Paul than someone that's just bringing some money.

[15:04] Because these three descriptions, brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, they're warm. They're strong endorsements. They're affectionate. They speak of a dear brother who is working and fighting side by side with Paul, even as Paul sits in prison.

So not only does Paul spend his time in verse 25 speaking in such glowing terms about Epaphroditus, but it's not just a head knowledge or recognition of who Epaphroditus is, but Paul clearly loves Epaphroditus and cares from deeply.

Verse 27, speaking of Epaphroditus, Indeed, he was ill and almost died, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

Verse 27 speaks of Epaphroditus' narrow escape from death, having been something that spared Paul sorrow upon sorrow. It's almost as if Paul, already under the stress and strain of being in prison, couldn't have bared to have seen Epaphroditus taken from him, and for Epaphroditus to have died.

So it's no exaggeration to say, and this is what I'm building towards, that Epaphroditus mattered to Paul. Epaphroditus is one of the best companions and co-workers that Paul had at this time.

[16:27] And imagine, you know, that he was faced by people on the outside that was stirring up trouble for him while he was imprisoned. Epaphroditus is a welcome and valuable companion and co-worker.

Epaphroditus is valuable to Paul. All of which I think makes the first part of verse 25 more than a little surprising. If Epaphroditus was your friend serving in your church, what would you do with him? Honestly. I think I'd hold on to him. Well, this is how Paul introduced them back to his home church. I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus. If I was reading that, getting a letter back about someone that we'd sent away on a missions trip, I'd be going, what have they done this time? I knew we shouldn't have sent them. But no. So, why is Paul saying it's necessary to send him back? What is Paul thinking? What's driving him? It's clearly not that Epaphroditus has been a disaster and needs to be kind of shunted to the side.

What's driving him is something completely different. Paul is being compelled to send his best and his brightest, his most loyal companions. Well, we return to those words of Jesus, I think.

[17:41] That's where we start. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another. How do we know that Paul is a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Because he says it? Because he says some nice words? Because he wrote verses 1 to 4? Are they enough? Well, I think we can know that Paul is a disciple of Christ because we can see a connection between what he writes and what he says in verses 1 to 4 and what is taking place and happening in verses 25 to 30.

So let's look back to those verses at the beginning of chapter 2. Firstly, Jesus. Jesus. Verse 1. Being united to Christ and a love for him is always our starting point, isn't it?

Jesus first. Others second. Verse 2. Unity matters. Verse 3. Humility matters.

Verse 4. The interests of others matter. Jesus first. Jesus first. Others second. And finally, well, it's going to be ourselves last then, isn't it?

[18:56] If I love others as Christ loved others, then my personal sense of fulfillment or my personal sense of comfort is irrelevant in those lights.

So the teaching of verses 1 to 4 is put into practice for us in verses 25 to 30. 25 to 30 is others-centered love in action.

For Paul, it's first of all, others-centered love for Epaphroditus. Look at what it says here in verse 26. Epaphroditus is distressed.

Epaphroditus is longing. Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi to relieve that stress, to relieve that longing, to take care of Epaphroditus' needs and his wants and his desires and his

relief.

Secondly, Paul's love is centered on the church, isn't it? He's sending Epaphroditus back to the church so that the church may be glad, the church may be full of joy and blessed by having Epaphroditus with them.

[19 : 56] And what it says in verse 28 there, Paul as well can be less anxious for the church. Why would Paul be less anxious for the church knowing that Epaphroditus is back there?

Well, wouldn't you? Someone like Epaphroditus, as able and as blessed and as gifted and as Christ-centered as he is going to that church, sure, Paul can be less anxious about the church that he loves, knowing that he sent Epaphroditus back.

So the inspiring words about unity, humility, other-centered love that we read about in the first four verses of chapter 2 are backed up by real feelings for real people and real sacrificial giving.

So it's clear then, isn't it, that sending Epaphroditus back is necessary. Paul is compelled. He has no choice. He's a disciple of Jesus Christ, therefore Epaphroditus is going back.

Our love for Jesus will be measured by how our decisions involve the Christian community. Paul's priorities are always other-centered. His concern is for their well-being and their growth in the gospel, others' well-being and others' growth.

[21 : 08] It's there time and time again in this letter. Just look back at chapter 1 and verses 23 and 24. Philippians chapter 1, verses 23, verse 23-24.

I am torn between the two, Paul talking about his imprisonment. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

It's that same word again, necessary. As Paul wrestles with the thoughts of facing death and going to be with Jesus, which is what he really desires himself, Paul is confident that his life will be spared, as Epaphroditus' life was spared, for the church, for others.

It is necessary for Paul to remain for the same reason as Epaphroditus, but because it is more necessary for the sake of the church that he remains alive. In some ways, we are not used to this level of commitment or talking in these terms quite often.

We love Jesus, but then we struggle with being part of a church community. Well, we say we love Jesus, but have we worked it through to how we love others by putting them at the centre of our decision making?

[22 : 29] Have we connected loving Jesus with putting others at the centre? Number two, Epaphroditus, the goer, the person that goes. So Paul is the sender who's practising what he preaches, which is good to see.

Epaphroditus then is the willing goer. And he too has the same other-centred outlook on his life that's driving him. If we look at verse 29 and verse 30, he is the godly risk-taker, isn't he?

Motivated by love and service for others. His original trip was to serve Paul in the church, and it says in verse 30, for the work of Christ. And the term about risk-taking here, it's almost like a gambling term.

It's like a calculated risk that he took. He knew there was dangers. Trips at those times were often quite dangerous between these big cities and over distances. But he was willing to take the risk for Paul, for his church.

He was willing to make the trip. And now his return trip is also motivated by other-centred love. It sounds like, doesn't it, in verse 26, that he is deeply troubled and distressed in his spirit.

[23 : 45] He's longing for his home church because he knows that they are worrying about him. So, I don't know, if I was coming off the end of a life-threatening illness, I think it would be okay to be worried about yourself, to be worried about your own health, to be worried about your own well-being.

But Epaphroditus is others-focused. He's worried about this church in Philippi, hearing about him being ill, and about them being worried, even though he was the one that was infected, that was near to death, that had suffered.

He is totally others-centred in his emotions and his outlook. And, you know, I think sometimes we're a bit scared of talking about emotional language or addressing emotions like this within church life. And can I say it, maybe especially in Baptist circles, we're kind of more comfortable talking about the will and the mind. And we kind of rightly see the danger of emotionalism and being driven by your emotions and how easily what we call the heart, you know, we mean the centre of our emotions, can easily lead us astray.

And so we disconnect the head from the heart and we kind of maybe focus more on what we call the head and try and get the heart in line with the head. But I think it's a bit more connected than that.

[25 : 04] I think our emotions and our will are much more closely linked than we say. We try to separate them, but I'm not sure that's always the best. Because can we say that we believe that we should love others and that that is important and then not be moved deeply within us, deeply inside us by that love?

If we say we love people, should we not be distressed? Should we not be longing for them? If we're not anxious, if we're not rejoicing, if we're not glad, if we don't feel these emotions, have we really understood it?

What is that head knowledge? It's meaningless, it's worthless. It's not real knowing. Real knowing keeps these two things connected and close.

So we should talk about the will, we should talk about the mind, but we should talk about the heart. Other centred emotions should be a central part of our lives as Christians. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about them, to encourage them, to see the close connection.

One thing I find helpful in thinking about this is a kind of a little illustration from Jonathan Edwards. I don't read Jonathan Edwards because it's very difficult.

[26 : 21] I just pick up quotes. He's an 18th century American theologian and preacher, but he has this little illustration. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness.

Let me say that again. There's a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness. The two should be connected, shouldn't they? Do we speak about loving others or are we moved deep within us to actually love others like Epaphroditus and like Paul did?

Our hearts and our actions reveal the depth of our understanding, whether we just know about the sweetness of God or whether we have really tasted it will be seen in our decision making how we treat the community around us.

And of course, the problem isn't often just the lack of the emotions or that we're suppressing emotions or anything like that, but rather that the emotions we feel are self-centered, not other-centered.

So when it comes to making decisions about going, about the direction of our lives, the emotion we probably most often feel is fear. Fear that our careers will fail if we don't take this job opportunity, if we don't take this promotion, which will take more time and take us away from our families, our church life and everything else.

[27 : 44] Maybe we have fears about being stuck in a small house or unsuitable accommodation if we don't make the move right now and grab this opportunity. We could be stuck here forever. We have fears that we won't have a Christian boyfriend or girlfriend or ultimately a Christian husband or wife if we don't go to another church or move out.

We have fears that if we stay in this church, we're going to have to work really hard because it's really small and wouldn't it be nice to be part of a different church and doing different things and maybe a bigger church or just something new and different because this is all really hard and we have those fears.

And so we go. Not because we love others. We go because we love ourselves. In the business of going, there are senders, goers, and finally receivers.

And the receiver in this case is the church in Philippi to which Paul gives the instructions in verse 29. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honour men like him.

When people come to us, how do we welcome them? It's always interesting to talk to people that have been here a little while and to ask them about their first experiences of coming to Carragoline and to see how we do in that.

[28 : 56] And I think at times we do well and at times we do poorly as a church. But I think the encouragements are there. So be encouraged this morning. But are we willing to make the effort with new people as they arrive?

Or have we become burned too many times in the past? Maybe you've made the effort to reach out to a couple or a family or an individual that has come to the church. You've tried to befriend them.

You've tried to get to know them. You've invited them to things only to find that they then move on without any sense of having belonged, any sense of having been connected or any acknowledgement of the efforts that have been made.

Now other people have come and it's hard to get yourself up again, to risk again, to try again, to open up again. Don't become despondent. Continue to welcome people.

Continue to receive people. Continue to spend yourself again in loving them. Thankfully in some cases there are cases where there's others centered sending and going and receiving taking place and even within the life of the church here people come to church with the commendation of their previous church like the commendation that Paul sends Epaphroditus back with.

[30 : 07] Those words in verse 25 speaking of Epaphroditus. And that does happen and that's encouraging to see because then it's natural, isn't it, to receive such people with joy and to honor such people.

Receiving works best when there is sending and going that is in line with these biblical principles and ideals. We can send and go and receive with confidence when God is put first others come next and self follows last.

When we do this we become living examples of Jesus Christ to one another. Our lives begin to reflect true humility and true love.

The love and humility of the Saviour as we put others first. It is his example that then shines through. Verse 6 Who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant and be made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[31 : 44] For Jesus is the true and better Epaphroditus who not only risked his life but gave his life to be our messenger and to be our minister bringing with him good news and sent to take care of our only real need the need of salvation from the wrath of God.

Jesus is our true and better brother who we now serve as fellow workers and fellow soldiers bringing the same message and ministering his grace to the nations.

It's all about him. You can't read Philippians 2 and not come back to the example of Christ. He is the fulfillment of it all.

He is the ultimate example. It is him ultimately that we want to point others to. So what about us? Some applications maybe some things to hopefully chew over and if there is anything that I am speaking about this morning you want to talk about please just come and chat or talk to other people within the life of the church.

I think these are good things to discuss. Don't just go number one but be part of gospel sending and receiving. If going from one community of believers to another community of believers involves three parties and three actions going, sending, receiving why do we reduce it to just our decision to go then?

[33 : 21] We need to take the opportunities we have to practice others centred sending, going and receiving. So when confronted and we will be if you haven't been already with decisions that will impact your ability to be part of the Christian community don't begin to isolate yourself.

Talk to the church talk to people here talk to people you know ask people what do you think about this? Ask yourself what putting Jesus and others first would mean for this decision.

How would it look different if Jesus and others were the priority in this decision? Job opportunities long distance relationships study at college setting up home deciding to go away for a few months over the summer?

These are all things that we can and should work out within the sense of a community because they impact a community. By the way the answer is not always you have to stay where you are.

In fact if we look at this section of scripture the answer for Epaphroditus and Timothy who we haven't had a chance to consider both of them the answer was yeah go great so don't be afraid that if you engage with the elders or leaders in the church or the church community if you do that openly and honestly if you look at these questions that the answer is going to be oh no we really think you should stay.

[34 : 48] It may mean that you go with the clear blessing and support of a whole community behind you. And as a church and I'm speaking especially to myself and Johnny I think we need to be proactive in identifying and encouraging people to go and to stay don't we?

We need to be thinking about that and helping people through that but that's something for the whole church and I think if we bring it back to this three way involvement then we can have confidence that what we are doing like verse 30 is for the work of Christ.

Number two when do I need to involve the church? That's a good question very practical you don't need to call a church members meeting about whether you should be driving to work or taking the bus okay so that's the first one okay and that's I don't have a list I'm not going to go through everything like that but obviously there are times where you have freedom to make decisions you know it's not it's not that you have to involve the church in every decision and what I have now is taken from the gospel centered life which is a study by Steve Timmis and Tim Chester that we were using in our growth groups on this very topic and I thought it was very helpful and this is what it says our principle should be we involve the Christian community in decision making to the extent that our decisions affect the community we involve the Christian community in decision making to the extent that our decisions affect the community this doesn't mean that the community or its leaders tell people what to do in their personal lives but it does mean that we should make decisions firstly with regard to the implications for our Christian community and secondly that we make significant decisions in consultation with members of our Christian community so in other words if what we are deciding affects the church or the life of the church the community then we really should involve the church in those decisions number three our motives will always be mixed motives around leaving one place and going to another they're always going to be mixed to some extent it's very hard to keep

Jesus centeredness and others centeredness to the fore we will struggle with sinful idols in our lives that are going to drag us away from loving others before ourselves that can be our jobs it can be our family it can be our interests it can be our hobbies these are all things and there's many different things that are going to just going to drive us in different directions all the time and the reality of this side of heaven is that Christian life is often more about struggling through these things rather than victory over them but saying that isn't to excuse it but it's to say that we must struggle and we must bring our sinful desires to Christ and seek his help in overcoming them and I want you to this is helpful for me keep this in mind Jesus others yourself spells joy yourself others Jesus well you end up with yodge and I know which one makes sense to me

Jesus others yourself that's the priority that's the order finally look to Jesus Jesus is not just our example but he is the one who loves us and dies for us we look to him not only for the inspiration that we find in those verses in chapter 2 but we look to him for the power to overcome sinful idols we look to him to help us to love others above ourselves as we see Paul's example of sending going and receiving we must always look through it and see the saviour who was sent by the father to go from the glories of heaven to a broken world not to be received but to be rejected by the world and crucified by us let's pray our father we we confess sin this morning because we're confronted by it father or our desire to be in charge our desire to be the boss our desire to rule ourselves to find satisfaction in things besides you and father that's a real struggle and it really does come out when we have to make decisions about staying or going or how things affect the church and we we ask for forgiveness father but we're encouraged by the example in front of us in scripture by Epaphroditus by Paul how they loved others and ultimately by Jesus and father we ask for

[39 : 45] Jesus' help for an increased love for Jesus a closer unity to him and that our minds our emotions our whole being would be driven in the right direction driven to serve you to do the work of Christ faithfully we ask for the help of the Holy Spirit in all of this in Jesus' name Amen well thank you Ralph it's a powerful message and something that's close to home for me especially as we've just gone through the process of somewhat inadvertently being sent out and having to find a new home but we need look no further than Jesus' examples with his own disciples where he came and spent a brief time with them discipling them only to send them out into the world his plan was never to keep the small group together and have what some people would call a holy huddle where those people are just happy together in their little place the goal was always to send them out to impact the whole world and that's his beautiful model of redemption that he goes out and sends believers out into the world so thank you for that

Ralph before we sing our last song I'm sure a lot of people are going probably to the wedding today and so we're kind of on a tight time schedule if anybody can stick around and help with putting all of the equipment away and all that kind of stuff it'll give us an opportunity to let everybody get out a bit more quickly so no one's kind of left behind so if you could help with that we'd appreciate it thank you for coming today we're going to wrap up with song let's stand and sing this last song to the glory of God I'm not sure how many people know it but the men sing the first line all those strong male voices and then the women echo it while the men hold that note they love they love girl grup teenage and haveuell and love

May the glory of Jesus build in church for you.

May the glory of Jesus build in church for you. Shining from our faces and feet in my wish.

May the glory of Jesus fill my life.

[43 : 21] May the beauty of Jesus fill my life. Fill my thought, my word, my deed, my all I know.

May that grace your heart. Fill my thought, my word, my deed, my all I know.

May that grace your heart. May the glory of Jesus fill my heart. Let's pray.

Father, we do rejoice in your salvation, Lord, that you have saved us and that you have given us a model of how to live lives that put Christ first and put others second and put ourselves last.

Lord, that Jesus has shown us the way of sacrifice and the way of the cross. Lord, we pray that you would help us to be people who consider our Christian brothers and sisters, Lord, as we make decisions, as we go about our lives.

[44 : 48] Lord, that we would include others, that we would reach out to others, Lord, even within our own church, Lord, that we would be a community where your love is modelled.

Lord, we praise you. We look forward to what the rest of the day holds. And we ask, Lord, that you be at the centre of all that we do. Amen.