

# 3 Words For 2026

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[0:00] So today I'm going to talk about three words for 2026. Most of you know this, maybe some of you don't, but the church that sent us out, we had a yearly tradition that every year we would ask the Lord what he was saying to our church for the new year and ask him for three specific words.

And then just ask him, where should we aim? What should be the direction that we should have for this next year? And so we're trying to keep that tradition here at Christ Church as well. And I want to give you a little biblical background on why we would do such a thing.

Okay. Revelation. In the book of Revelation, I think God has something to say for the churches, right? In Revelation 1 verse 20, it says, as for the mystery of the seven golden lampstands, the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

And then in Revelation 2 verse 1, it says, the words of him who walks among the seven golden lampstands. So the lampstands are churches. And so God here in the beginning of Revelation, we see it before it gets in all the apocalyptic literature there.

He has specific words that he has for seven specific churches. And he is the one who walks among the lampstands. He's the one who walks among the churches. And so there's seven different churches.

[1:18] And to all seven churches, the same thing is said. Revelation 2 and 3, you see with all seven churches, the same thing is said to all seven. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Okay. And then he says to Ephesus, he says, I know your works. He says to Thyatira, I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. To Sardis, he says, I know your works.

I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. To Philadelphia, he says, I know your works. And to Laodicea, he says, I know your works. I believe to Christchurch, he says, I know your works.

Right? He is the God who walks among the churches. Not just those seven churches in Revelation. He walks among the churches today. He walks among our church. And I believe he knows our works.

God has something to say about our church. The Spirit has something that our ears should be attuned to hear for our church. No different now than it was then. And we should seek him and say, God, what is it that you would say to us?

[2:25] What is it that you would say to our church? And you can even see there's even a case to be made for there's, you know, specific words that he says to each church.

And to Ephesus, he tells them to remember where they had fallen. It says to repent and to do the works you did at first. So maybe to Ephesus, he'd say, well, the three words for you are remember, repent, and do.

Okay? He says to Smyrna that there's a time of testing coming. Tribulation and faithfulness will be required until death. Says to Pergamum, he says, there's some that hold to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

Then he tells them to repent of these two false teachings. To Thyatira, he speaks of, in two of these seven, he has positive things to say. The other ones, he's bringing corrective words.

So to Smyrna, he had a positive thing, Philadelphia. But to Thyatira, he says, you're tolerating that. He's confronting their toleration of a specific person named Jezebel and her teaching and seducing. [3:24] And then he tells them to hold fast. Okay? To Sardis, he says to wake up. He says to strengthen what remains of his wants to die and to remember what you've received and heard. Keep and repent.

So he says, wake up, strengthen, remember. To Philadelphia, he has an affirming word. He says that you have much patient endurance. That he's going to keep you from the hour of trial. And he says, hold fast to what you have. And then the Laodicea, one that we're maybe most familiar with, he says that he wants them hot, not lukewarm. He wants them to buy gold refined by fire, white garments, salve to put in their eyes.

And then he says to be zealous and repent. So here you see seven examples of what the Spirit is saying to these seven churches. And he has specific words for them, right? It says the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

Jesus has a testimony about each one of these churches. He has the prophetic words that he wants to speak to these seven churches. I believe in the same way God wants to speak to us. I believe he's still speaking.

[4:24] I believe he still has things to say. I can't, I looked, there was no Church of Christ Church in there that he said anything to. So we're going to have to seek the Lord now, right?

Christ Church didn't exist when he wrote the Bible. So we can ask the Lord, God, what are you saying for Christ Church? We are his sheep. We hear his voice. And there's no reason why we can't hear what the Spirit is saying to our church.

So that's what we do. That's what we do each year. And that's what we're trying to do here at Christ Church as well. And that just gives you maybe a little bit of the heart and the value behind why we would do such a thing. Okay? So as we sought the Lord, we asked everyone or partners or members of this church to say, Hey, submit words that God might be given to you for this church. And then we'll try to discern what God is saying from that. And so the three words that I believe that God has given us for 2026 is labor, honor, and faith.

Okay? Labor, honor, and faith. And I'm going to speak to you today about those three. Sound good? You with me here still? We're good? Okay.

[5:28] Let's jump in with the first one. Labor. First thing I want to say about this word, I think it's really important for us as a church and just thinking where we're at as a church.

I want you to hear me as someone speaking who has planted two churches before this. One of the things I have to say when I pray for this church and I look at this church is that I believe that more work is required to establish this church than what is currently being done.

Okay? More work is required to establish this church than what is currently being done. Now, that doesn't mean that I'm saying everybody's lazy or, you know, no one's doing anything. Please hear me.

I'm not saying nothing's being done. There's a lot of good work being done. Okay? What I'm saying is, from my experience and when I'm looking at how this church is getting established, I think it's going to take more work.

It's going to take more work than maybe we're doing right now. And don't take that to say, oh, the work we're doing isn't good. No. The work that's being done is good. It's just going to take more.

[6:30] You might say, wow, this is already a lot of work. Yeah. Welcome to church planting. That's what church planting is. It's very difficult work. It takes a lot of work. And my concern is that maybe some of us are putting in the same amount of work that we did in an established church.

That amount of work that we put into an established church, we're now putting into an unestablished church. And thinking that's going to be enough. And I'm saying it's not. And I believe the Lord is saying it's not.

I believe the Lord is saying, hey, we've got to focus more on being laborers, on laboring. And here's three areas that I believe increased labor would be necessary. Okay. Number one, embracing discomfort and sacrifice.

Okay. Embracing discomfort and sacrifice. Now, again, hear me. Don't hear me through a negative lens. I'm not saying no one's embracing discomfort and sacrifice. I believe we are. Some of you just being a part of this church is discomfort and sacrifice.

That was hard to do. Okay. So, trust me. I get that. But I'm saying that sometimes maybe we avoid the necessary discomfort and sacrifice that we need to do.

[7:41] And I'm saying we've got to lean into that. We've got to push into that. There might be some things we're thinking, man, I'll do this and I'll do that. But I'm good up to this level of discomfort or sacrifice.

But that's a little bit more than I'm comfortable with. And so I'll go this far, but not that far. That's in that you're not going to plant a church that way. You're not going to establish a church that way. We have to be able to lean into that discomfort, that sacrifice and say, I'm in. I'm all in. I'm not coming into a church that already has been established for 10, 15 years.

I'm coming into a church that is still being established. The foundation is still being laid. I have to embrace discomfort and sacrifice. Okay. Second thing is an area of increased labor that's necessary is building family that didn't exist before we started.

Okay. Building a sense of familial bonds that didn't exist before Christchurch started. What do I mean by that? I'm saying it's easy to continue to experience and enjoy and work upon relationships that already existed before or that were already solid before or that were already easy before.

[8:54] And sometimes we can gravitate too much to those relationships at the expense of the whole. Do you hear me on that? And I think there needs to be more work in building family that didn't exist before we started.

Okay. And again, this comes back to things I've said before, that it's one thing to be able to consume family that already exists. It's a whole nother thing to be able to build family that doesn't exist. That is apostolic work.

And I want you to believe that you will have the grace to do that together as a people to see family birth where maybe we don't have it. And that means there's certain relationships you say, we're cordial, I enjoy them, but I don't have this strong sense of familial bond with them.

I don't have this strong sense of trust with them. I don't have this strong sense of sharing life in an easy way with them. We got to put in the work. We got to labor. We got to say, all right, who are those people then that I'm going to labor with and do that with?

I'm going to put the work in to make sure I'm going to build relationships with the people that I wasn't as close to before we started this church. And not just lean on the ones that I was close to when we started this church that gets me through.

[10:01] Now, we got to jump in and build relationships with the whole crew. And that doesn't mean you're going to be besties with everybody. But don't say because I'm not going to be besties with everybody that it makes an excuse to not be doing the work to try and be closer and more knit and have our hearts put together more as we go.

Okay? And then three, an area where there needs to be increased labor, I think, is evangelizing together. Evangelizing together. Just getting on mission together.

Not just as individuals. That's just Christianity. Every Christian should be on mission and should be evangelizing as a Christian. But doing it together. Embracing it together as missional communities and saying, okay, how can we get on mission together?

How can we target specific people and places? How can we labor together to see lost people saved? How can we radically reorient our lives around specific mission to specific people and places?

So that it inconveniences us. So that it causes us to have to reorientate our life. Maybe put our kids to bed later. Maybe cause us to not do some hobbies that we'd like to do.

[11:08] Maybe cause us to be with people and to go deep with people that aren't as easy to. But we're going to do it because we're here to establish a church for his glory. And to see lost people come to faith.

Okay? So we've got to put in the work. And I'm saying, I hope you receive this as a fatherly rebuke from, I believe the Lord, is that more work is required. More work is required.

And that's not me saying I'm not proud of, encouraged by the work that has begun. The work that has been established already. It's just going to require more.

And if that's overwhelming to you, God's grace is sufficient. God's grace is sufficient. Right? So let's look at some verses on this. Acts chapter 13, verse 2.

It says, While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, this is with Barnabas and Saul. The Holy Spirit said, Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

[12:06] Okay? For the work. You guys believe that God called you to be a part of Christ's church. Okay? I know we've got some guests here as well. So I'm speaking to the people. God told you, hey, this is the church I'm going to be in.

You took that step of faith and said, hey, I'm going to jump into this church. You believe that the Holy Spirit was setting you apart to do this work. I'm asking you to believe that he set you apart for the work.

And that the one who sets you apart for the work will give you the grace to do the work. But we've got to do the work. You can't just say, oh, because God sent it, everything's going to be sent. You know, it's just going to, God's just going to do everything.

It's like, well, no, God sent us. Now we've got to partner with him to do the work. And we've got to put in the work. And it takes work. It takes a lot of work. The reason why most, most church plants don't make it.

Do you know that? Why is that? It's because it takes a lot of work. It takes a lot more work than the ones that already exist. Once you get something going, once there's momentum, once the ball is rolling, so to speak, it's a lot easier to keep that thing going.

[13:09] But the things that are easy to abort are things that never got off the ground in the first place. Church plants that start out fail in the first two years all the time. That happens all the time.

You've got to put in the work. We've got to put in the work. And God has set us apart for the work. Ephesians 4, 11-12 says, He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up with the body of Christ.

Do you believe you've been equipped for the work? Do you believe that you have what it takes to do the work? That God has equipped you before this time to do the work of God. This is what apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists are for.

To equip the saints for the work of ministry. We've been equipped. Now we've got to do the work that we know what God's called us to do. Paul, when he was thinking about whether he wanted to live or die, which is an interesting little conversation he's having in Philippians, he's thinking, what's better?

Is dying better? Is living better? And he says, For me to live is Christ. This is Philippians 1, 21. And to die is gain. If I'm to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.

[14:20] Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. But when he thinks about, he thinks, well, to die is gain. But when he thinks of being alive, he's not saying, To live, for me, means, you know, good barbecue, you know, sunsets on the beach, you know, like vacations, a great paycheck.

He didn't say that. And he lives in a beautiful part of the world, too. He could have said, man, to live means I get to enjoy all this good stuff. He said, to live means fruitful labor.

Who says that? Hey, if I live, that means I get to work more. Isn't that awesome? Yeah, he's saying, I'm actually conflicted.

Now, what's your view of the work? Would you ever be so enjoying the work that you would actually think, oh, that you'd be conflicted of whether it would be better to die and to gain or to work and have fruitful labor?

He esteemed the fruitful labor that came from his life so high that it was conflicting to him whether it would be better to die and to gain all that he would gain in death.

[15:32] He was conflicted as to which would be better. Do you look at the work that way? That's a fascinating way to look at the work, isn't it? He was so esteeming the work of the Lord. And he so enjoyed it.

He so exalted it above all these other things in life. He said, I'm conflicted. I don't even know which one I should choose. I can't even tell, he says.

Yes, because to be alive means fruitful labor for me. Do we have this kind of view? When I said that, hey, it's going to take more work, what did your heart do? What did your mind do? Did you say, I don't know if I want to do this? Or did you say, amen, let's get to work. Let's do it. Okay. And again, you might say, I don't know if that's what I signed up for. I'm telling you, if you signed up for a church plan, that's exactly what you signed up for. You might not have known it. It ain't because I didn't tell you. But that is what you signed up for. To establish a church takes work, takes fruitful labor.

[16:32] And God has called you to be fruitful laborers together for this. Okay. What other kind of labor? Labor of evangelism. 2 Timothy 4, 5. Paul encourages Timothy.

He says, for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. Evangelism is work. Evangelism is work. Maybe that's why it's avoided so often. Right? It's work. It's a lot easier to just be with people you know. It's work to talk to strangers. It's like, man, this is uncomfortable. They might reject me.

They might make fun of me. Hey, they might even hurt me. I mean, that could happen, right? Like, why would I want to do this? Because I love the Lord. I love Jesus. Because he saved me.

Somebody told me about the gospel.

Someone took the uncomfortability on themselves for me and preached the gospel to me at one point in time. How much more should I do it to someone else? Right? Do the work of an evangelist.

[17:29] Do the work. It's work. It's labor. It's laborsome to be an evangelist, to do the work of evangelism. Are we willing to do that? Will we fulfill our ministry in that?

So I look 10 too. He said, the harvest is plentiful, but what are few? Laborers. The laborers.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

What does a harvest require? It requires laborers. You know, anyone who's done farming, I know Mark's done a lot of farming, and you know how he's able to do a lot of farming? Right? He birthed a bunch of laborers with his wife.

Right? He had all these kids, and he put them to work. There's no way he could have pulled off what he did there without all those laborers. Right? He had a big family, and so they pulled off a farm. You can't pull off a farm without laborers.

You can't pull off a harvest. How many harvests did they do? Oh, year after year after year, they did harvest. Well, that wasn't doing it itself. It's not like, oh, God planted this, and God harvested. No.

[18:31] No. Someone had to pick rocks and run combines and plant seeds and, you know, do all that kind of stuff and pray for rain, you know? Someone has to do that.

Well, it's the same thing with the harvest field for evangelism. It's laborsome. It takes labors. It's like we say, God, we want souls.

And God says, I want labors. Lord, I want souls. I want labors. And if those two don't come together, it's not happening. You want souls? Then God wants labors, and they go together.

Who will say, hey, I want to be that laborer. I want to do the work. I want to pray earnestly, but I want to be the answer to my own prayer.

Right? Lord, send workers. And he's like, I did. It's the one talking to me right now. Go. Go. Go. Keep praying, but go.

[19:31] Get out there. Preach the gospel. And don't do it just alone. Although you're going to do it alone in the everyday stuff of life. But be strategic. Do it together. Do it with your brothers. Do it with your sisters. Do it with your missional community.

Do it together. Okay? Harvest is plentiful. The labors are few. Who will do the work? Philippians 4, 2-3. He says, I entreat Judea and Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

And I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Laboring side by side. So there is an evangelism and a sense of mission that has to be side by side work. It's labor. Laboring side by side together in the gospel.

Are we doing that? Could we be doing it more? Could we be... Are we avoiding it to a certain degree? Are we just doing kind of the minimum effect, you know, what we think is the effective dose?

[20:31] But I'm saying, I don't know if it's effective. I think we got to put in the work. I think back to the churches that I've planted in the past. And I'm thinking, man, it was just a constant thing. How can we get out?

How can we build relations with people? How can we schedule time with people? How can we get closer to each other than together on mission, go and win souls, right? Like the work of getting close to one another is unto something bigger.

That we could together be locked in arms together to labor for the gospel. And then how can we do it? How can we schedule things around that? How can we... And gave up a lot of things. Gave up relationships.

Gave up even, you know, my kids didn't have a lot of friends at that time. Because we went and said, hey, we're going to labor for this. Eventually the Lord came through and provided that for them. But it's like, it takes sacrifice.

It takes work. It takes doing things a lot of times that you don't want to do. It takes hard work. 1 Corinthians 15, 58 says, My beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

[21:34] Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. The NAD says, always giving yourself fully to the work of the Lord. Okay? How much are you giving yourself to the Lord?

Is it a side thing? Is it a most of your life thing? Or is it an all of life thing? Okay? God requires all our life. He says to pick up our cross, to lose our life and we'll gain it. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.

Is the work of the Lord just something we do in our spare time? Is the work of the Lord something we do out of guilt? Or is the work of the Lord the joy of our life? It is fruitful labor. It is why we live. It's a response to the gospel in our own life. What God has done for us and in us and to us. So that he can now do through us for other people to receive. We're abounding in the work of the Lord. We're giving ourselves fully to the Lord. Knowing that our labor of the Lord is not in vain. Do you know that? So you might say, man, it seems like this is in vain. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. It's never in vain.

[22:31] Everything you do unto the Lord will be remembered for eternity and rewarded for eternity. This is why it is worth more than all the temporal things. There are some really enjoyable temporal things, by the way.

I mean, they're really enjoyable, right? I mean, you can have a lot of fun in this life. And then that's it. You got it. And that was it. Man, that was a great night. It was a great night.

And it's done. That's it. It's all you get. And there's nothing wrong with that. Like, I love a great night. I love a good time. But just remember, there's so many good things, enjoyable things in this life that aren't eternal.

They don't last. They don't last. They don't last. What are we doing for eternity? It's like C.T. Stedlin said, only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

Philippians 2, 25 to 30. He said, I thought it was necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need.

[23:35] A fellow worker. For he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed, he was ill, near to death. That God had mercy on him, not only on him, but on me also.

Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him, the Lord, with all joy and honor such men.

For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Okay? He nearly died for the work of Christ. This is a guy. Epaphroditus apparently was a guy.

Like this guy, he was putting in the work. This guy was, and you can, can you sense the affection in Paul's voice about this guy and how the Philippians were receiving him?

There was a bond of love that was there. And you know where that comes from? It comes from doing hard things together. Again, I've said this multiple times, and I'm going to say it again. Some of the aspirations to spiritual family that we're after and that we're working towards are only found on the other side of working together towards the gospel.

[24:42] Because there's certain things that cannot be, that we will never bond upon, that are not like-minded. But when we seek the greater purpose of advancing his kingdom and preaching the gospel, it binds us together like a band of brothers, like men in war.

And you can see that here, where Epaphroditus and Paul is just like, I'm eager to send him. He has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.

There's this affectionate language and longing for one another that happens when people are at war together. When people are like, we're in the thick of it together. We're doing the work together. We're doing this together. He nearly died for the work of Christ.

Risking his life to complete was lacking your service to me. Colossians, he speaks also of Epaphras. And he says that Epaphras has worked hard for you.

I bear witness that he has worked hard for you. In Acts 20, Paul says, In all things I have shown you that by working hard, you know, he set an example of working hard.

[25:42] 1 Corinthians 15, he says, I worked harder than any of these other people. By the grace of God, I am what I am. His grace towards me is not in vain. I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me.

Can we trust God for greater grace upon us? Can we trust God to work through us in a way that grace flows through us in a powerful way, that we can do things that we wouldn't be able to do apart from his grace?

He says, I worked harder than any of them, but it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me.

Philippians 2, 12 to 13 says, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The difference between God working in you and God's grace working in you is burnout. When you work on your own strength, you burn out. When you work on your own strength, your life gets out of order.

When you work on your own strength, you're up and down. When you work on the grace of the Lord, the work actually energizes you. Also, if it's not fruitful, you're still energized.

[26:48] Also, you're satisfied in Christ and Christ alone, and you're not contingent on your religious performance or what other people think about you. Okay? You're energized by God's call of you, his choice of you, the fact that he saved you, and you're just like, I'm going to do the work.

And I'm going to do it by the power of God, in the grace of God. Second word. Honor.

Okay? Honor. 2 Corinthians 8.21 says, We aim at what is honorable, not only in the Lord's sight, but also in the sight of man. Okay? So there's a two-fold way of viewing honor.

It's honoring the Lord, but it's also honoring one another. Okay? And they go together. He says, that's our aim. And these words are our aim for the year. One of the things I think the Lord wants us to do is aim towards honoring the Lord and honoring one another.

Doing what's honorable in the sight of the Lord and what's honorable in the sight of man. Romans 12.17 says, Give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

[27:54] Okay? How much thought do we put in to say, how can I do what is honorable to other people? How can I honor the people that I don't know as well? How can I honor the people who are laboring amongst me?

How can I honor the weaker parts? He says, give thought to this. I believe that it's important for us to spend time this year giving thought to how we can do a better job honoring the Lord and honoring one another.

To give it some thought. To give it some time. To think about it. Notice he doesn't say pray about it. He says think about it. And I say, really? Is that a noble thing? It's scriptural. That's what he said to

do.

He said give time thinking about it. Sometimes people think, we don't realize that sometimes just thinking about something, meditating on it, taking the time to think, how can I do this? Is a beneficial thing.

And here's an example of it. He says give thought to do what is honorable. Take some time to think about it. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the busyness of life, we're just doing, doing, doing. We never think, oh, is this the best way to honor?

[28:55] Is this the best way to honor the Lord? Is this the best way to honor each other? And that has to do with all the little details of how we do our life together. Sunday mornings, our life together with missional communities, how we do life together.

Just say, hey, have we thought about it? Is this the best way to do that? Is this the best way to do life together? Well, that's always how I've done it. Well, maybe that's not the best way. What's the best way?

Well, that's why I did it in this church. Well, is that the best way to do it in that church? You know, just to really ask those questions. Give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 1 Peter 2.17 says, honor everyone.

Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. So it's honoring everyone, but it's fearing the Lord. Saying, God, I care deeply about what you care about.

Romans 12.10 goes a step further and says, love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. So one time in the Bible, it tells us to be competitive about something.

[29:54] It says, outdo one another in showing honor. So in order to do that, you got to think, well, how are some other people showing honor? Whatever way they're doing it, I'm going to outdo them.

I'm going to outdo them. Well, first you got to think, how are some people being honored? And you think, well, I can't think of it. Well, then we got a problem. We got to make sure we're honoring people. But then when you see honor, think, I'm going to go above and beyond that.

I'm going to outdo them in honor. If everybody did the work of outdoing one another, like saying, how can I honor even more than the other person honors? That would be a good godly competition that would just blow the socks off of our life together.

But we got to think about it. We got to look for it. You got to say, what does it look like to honor one another? And then what does it look like to outdo one another in honoring each other?

How do we speak about each other when we're not around each other? How do we speak to people when we are with each other? How do we speak the truth? And how do we honor the Lord as well?

[31:01] How do we honor the Lord with our speech? How do we honor the Lord with our behavior and how we interact with one another? How do we honor the weak parts, the strong parts? I know I preached on this, so I'm not going to go too into it.

But 1 Corinthians 12, starting in verse 21, says, The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

And on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor. And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.

But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Do you see what God's doing there? One of the problems that happens in churches is we naturally gravitate towards people that we like better.

[31:59] And it's naturally easier to care for those people. God has so designed the body, composed the body, that when we give greater honor to the parts that lack it, you give greater honor to the parts that maybe are harder for you or that you don't get along with as well.

And you seek to outdo one another in showing honor and say, I am going to make effort and work to get close to these people, to love these people, to disciple these people, to receive from these

people, to glean from these people, to learn from these people, to appreciate the good things in these people that I can't see because I'm so gosh darn obsessed with the things that I don't like about those people.

When I do this and I give greater honor to the parts that lack it, there ends up being no division in the body and then the members have the same care for one another. I can tell numbers of stories over the last 15, 20 years of people that I would have never gravitated to outside of Christ in relationship and maybe that we butted heads with.

I mean, I can think of, I can think of really close friends. I have just one memory just came to my mind right now of someone yelling at me in the foyer of one of our old buildings at another church, telling me I was doing leadership wrong at our church.

And this person is now one of my best friends. And I thought, I don't even know if we're still going to be in the same church after this conversation. Like, this is going really bad. And I thought maybe it was going to turn and then it got worse.

[33:33] I thought, oh. And everything within me wanted to blow this person off and say, you know what? Fine. Get out of here. Like, be done. Like, you don't like the way I do things?

Then just don't be here. No one's making you. Like, bye. See ya. Like, I'm done. I'm not dealing with you. Like, why are we even having this conversation? Like, I want to be at home right now with my family and I'm in the foyer with you and you're yelling at me.

And I'm really glad I didn't give up on that person. Because I would have forfeited the relationship we have now. I would have forfeited all the benefit they've been to me now. I would have forfeited, you know, all the ways they've challenged me. All the ways that they've been good in my life.

But if I would have said, oh, you're different than me. You don't see things the same as me. You're frustrated with me. You don't like the way I do things. If I would have pushed that person off, I would not have benefited from their friendship. I would not have benefited from their challenge.

The fact that they're different than me. And now they're a great brother, a great ally, and we've been through a lot together. But I remember, I thought maybe that was going to be the end. And if I would have blown that person off, it might have been.

[34:36] And maybe you have relationships where you've blown people off and that was the end. And maybe you don't have a lot of friendships with people that you can look back and say, I pushed through the hard part. I'm saying to establish a church, we've got to push through the hard part.

We've got to give honor to parts where we would typically lack to give honor and just say, you know what? I don't want to do life with these people. I'd rather do life with this person. I'd rather do life with that person. I was just hearing about a guy the other day who was saying he didn't want to do life with the people in his church.

He wanted to do life with someone else out of his church. And I'm thinking, yeah, that's, you know, you can do life with people outside of your church. But, I mean, you really got to do life with the people in your church. I mean, otherwise it's not really church, right?

That's not church. There has to be that focus and that pressing in. And it takes work. It takes work. We've got to honor one another in that.

I'm going to throw out a specific little section to it with this in honor and just honoring our wives as well. It says in 1 Peter 3, 7, Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

[35:46] Let's throw a little thing out here and just say, men who are married, especially men who are married and are go-getters, who happen to join a church plant and want to see this thing get going, make sure you take your wives with you.

Make sure you honor them. Make sure you don't look down on them because they're weaker than you. Make sure you don't get frustrated with them because they're not running as fast as you. While they're taking care of all these little kids while you're at work and you're dreaming about how the church is supposed to be and planning this, that, or the other, and you're thinking, hey, remember your wives.

Remember your wives. Show honor to the woman as the weaker vessel. And if you want to lead, bring order in your home. Because no one's going to respect your leadership if you can't bring order in your home and you can't love your wife.

That's not going to work. Honor and sanctification as well. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2, 20-21, In a great house, they're not only vessels of gold and silver, but also wooden clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he'll be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. There's that work again, that labor.

[36:55] Okay. It says cleanse yourself. Isn't that interesting? It's not you just waiting, oh, God, just do the work. Yeah, God's got to do the work, but we got to step in and do it with him.

Cleanse yourself. Just say, okay, what needs to be cleaned? What's some house cleaning in our lives that needs to be done? What's something we know needs to be taken care of? Take care of it. Let this be the year. Let's remove the things that are lacking honor, that are ignoble.

And let's be a house and vessels of honor, useful to the master, ready for every good work. 2 Thessalonians 3.1 says, Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you.

There's something about evangelism that has to do with honor as well. It's praying that as we preach the word, that it would be honored among lost people. It would be honored among lost people. Guess what?

It's probably not going to be honored by lost people, but it's not being honored by us first. We've got to start there. 1 Peter 3.15 says, Isn't it interesting those verses are right next to each other?

[38:06] It's like, what's the correlation there? In your hearts, honor Christ the Lord is holy. Okay? Got it? And then it's still in the same sentence. He says, Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

Could it be that honoring Christ is making sure that you're always ready for evangelism? That honoring Christ means you're always ready to give a witness? Honoring Christ means you're always ready to make a defense to anyone who says, What is the reason for the hope that you have?

This is honoring Christ. Honoring Christ is to be always ready. If we're a people that aren't ready, we're not a people that are honoring Christ. Lastly, third word, faith.

Faith. I think it makes sense that God wants us to believe in him, to trust him. John 6, 29 says, This is the work of God, that you may believe in him who was sent.

Okay? What is ultimately the work? It's to believe. It's to believe. We can be doing a lot of work and not doing in faith, and is it really the work of God? I think according to this verse, no.

[39:11] The work of God is to believe. Do you believe that God wants to establish his church? Do you believe that God wants to save sinners? Do you believe that God wants to bring us closer together and to push through relational obstacles?

Do you believe that God wants to advance his kingdom? Do you believe that? This is the work. It's got to start there. We've got to take our unbelief to the cross and say, God, I admit I have more faith in the negative than I do in the positive.

Unbelief is just faith in the opposite direction. It's not the absence of faith. It's just faith in the wrong thing. I actually have more faith that bad things are going to happen. I have more faith that things aren't going to happen than I do that God will actually work.

What in the world is that all about? That's unbelief. It's just moving your faith to say, No, I believe that God wants to do great things. What is faith? Hebrews 11.1 says it's the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

What are the things you can't see yet that you're believing God for this year? Think about it. What are the things at Christchurch that you currently can't see that maybe discourage you?

[40:17] Maybe they're things you talk about. Maybe they're things you vent about and you say, This is something I'm not seeing at Christchurch that I really want to see, that I wish was here, and I'm upset about it, or I'm frustrated about it, or I'm bummed about it.

Well, the difference between that and faith is to see the things that are unseen, and then believe, have conviction for, have assurance, that God is going to bring about what you don't see. God's going to bring about. What is that for this year? What are the specific things you're going to cry out for in prayer? You're going to believe for in prayer that you don't see, but you're going to get faith for, and you're going to stay in faith, and you're going to be steadfast in faith, and say, God, I'm holding on.

I'm believing your promises. I'm believing your word. I'm believing that you want to do this. I believe that you're building your church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I'm believing that when the gospel goes forth, it doesn't need power.

It is power. It is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe. I believe that people can't believe unless someone's sent, and they can't believe unless they hear, and I'm going to speak, and I'm going to believe that when I speak the gospel, that the gospel I speak is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe.

[41:27] I don't see it now, but I'm believing for it. I don't see those souls yet. I don't know who's going to get saved, but I'm believing for it. I don't see how this relationship's going to get better, or this is going to grow stronger, but I'm believing for it.

What are those things? Write them down. Pray them. Pray them every day. Pray them regularly. Get in faith. 2 Corinthians 5.7 says, We walk by faith and not by sight. Our faith should be full, firm, strong, and patient.

Acts 11.23-24 says about Barnabas, that he was a good, he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and a great many people were added to the Lord. Could it be said of you that you're someone who's not just full of the Holy Spirit, but full of faith? Are you full of faith? I believe God wants Christchurch to be full of faith this year.

Do you believe that? I believe he's saying that to us. He's saying, Christchurch, I want to fill you with faith. I want to fill you with faith. We want a bunch of Barnabases, right?

[42:38] A bunch of people who are not just full of the Holy Spirit, but full of faith. Good men and women who are full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. I believe that's what God wants to do. Will we receive that?

Will we believe for that? Colossians 2, verse 5, Paul said, Though I'm absent in body, yet I'm with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Last year, one of our words we had was order. Well, what goes together with order? Firmness of faith. That's a good word right there. Okay? Sometimes, when our families are not in order, because we're not firm in our faith.

And especially the heads of the home, the fathers, the husbands, I'm especially exhorting you, be firm in your faith. If you're wishy-washy, if you're shaking, if you're insecure, if you're up and down, it'll cause disorder in your homes.

Order comes when we're firm in our faith. And when the patriarch's firm in his faith, when the husband's firm in his faith, when the head is firm in faith, it brings order.

[43:45] Now, wives can help in that. Single people can be firm in faith and can be helping that in the church and just say, hey, you need to believe. You need to believe.

You need to be firm in your faith. Your faith needs to be as firm as the God you're trusting in. I rejoice to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Romans 4, 18 to 21, says, in hope, speaking of Abraham, he believed against hope that he should become the father of many nations as he had been told.

So shall your offspring be. He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead. It's kind of blunt, don't you think? Since he was about 100 years old or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

Okay, so he's got, it's not, his eyes look at it and think, it's not looking good here. Not looking good. Right? But he didn't weaken in his faith when he considered his own body, when he considered being as good as dead or the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised. Are you fully convinced?

[44:59] Are you fully convinced? You know how you grow in your faith? Keep giving glory to God. Be a worshiper. Be someone who honors the Lord. Be someone who worships day in, day out.

Fully convinced. Not wavering concerning the promises of God. And lastly, Hebrews 6, 11 to 12 says, we desire each of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

What goes together with faith? Patience. Everyone wants to do, you know, you have all these faith preachers. Where's the patience preachers? Right? What movement are you part of? The patience movement.

That one doesn't bring as much money in. Okay? Faith and patience to inherit the promises. Okay? We're, let's see here, May will be two years since we started this church.

Okay? So, what do we have here? We're at a year and seven months. Okay? A lot of you, one of the reasons you joined this church, because you had a lot of faith for it, is your faith patient.

[46:12] Your faith patient. Are you still holding on? Are you losing some of that faith because of impatience? Because it hasn't happened as fast as you wanted it to. Because the people you've been reaching out to haven't gotten saved.

Or, relationship is hard. Or, I think the Lord's saying, hey, hold on to your faith. Be strong in faith. Be firm in faith. Be steadfast in faith. Keep holding on.

Be patient in faith. God is faithful. He's a keeper of his promises. So, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Let him hear what the Spirit says to our church. I believe this year the Lord wants us to be, to give ourselves to labor. To honoring the Lord and to one another and to increase in faith.

Amen? Amen. Amen. Let's stand.