

The Importance Of Exclusivity

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[0 : 00] I want to talk to you this morning about the importance of exclusivity. The importance of exclusivity. As we are establishing this church, I think this is an important foundational value into how we form the church.

And I think it's necessary for the future health of our church to understand the importance of exclusivity. Um, just the, just the term exclusivity is offensive, especially nowadays when inclusivity is the order of the day at all costs.

Uh, so I'm asking you to hear me out before you get triggered in your heart and mind by the word exclusivity. Um, and think through with me what the nature of the church should be.

What is the most potent version of the church? What did Jesus say? What is the New Testament in the early church? What was their experience? Um, looking back on, uh, church planting over the years that I've done, I've witnessed a lot of anger over the years, uh, over not accommodating people's different views so that they can feel included.

Especially those who want community without responsibility or accountability. Those who want church on their own terms. Okay. Uh, a lot of people have gotten angry over the years at this and expect us to change our values or our standards in order that they can have what they want, when they want, how they want, the way they want.

[1 : 44] And, uh, I've been honestly a little bit surprised over the years at how many people have been angry that we, uh, put a certain standard, uh, on what the church is or on our membership or partnership.

And, uh, but it has definitely, uh, kicked the hornet's nest, so to speak, over the years and caused a lot of anger, frustration, misunderstanding. And so I, I, my hope is to try and give a little bit more value for that as I talk about this this morning.

Um, because unfortunately what happens is, and the reason I think people get mad is there's this kind of common mentality of, I have a right to be welcomed into your community on my terms.

Okay. People come into the church and they don't say that, but they say that. I have a right to be welcomed into your community of believers on my terms.

And if you don't give me that right, I'm going to be mad and I'm going to put up a fuss. And that's just the way things are.

[2 : 55] And with that comes a certain level of intimidation. Uh, fear is often associated with that because it makes you afraid to disclude someone in a certain thing or gathering.

Or partnership, like the membership, the church, church in general, because we're afraid of offending people. And what I'm trying to say is this is offensive to people, but we don't want to offend people for offenses sake.

We're not trying to be obnoxious or, uh, a church that, you know, uh, is known for identifies with offense and being bombastic or obnoxious.

That's not our goal. Okay. But when people ever come in with a right to be welcomed in your community on their own terms, um, not understanding that the terms themselves are what make the community desirable to be welcomed into in the first place.

Then, you know, that's something we need to take a stand on. That's something that we need to hold important because the people who are desiring to come into that said community don't understand that the very standards and values and, um, terms that are placed there are the things that make it desirable in the first place.

[4 : 11] Okay. That's kind of the value behind it. So it's also important to remember, remember, cause some people would say, oh man, that sounds exclusivity. That sounds like cult-like language. Uh, yeah.

Cult-like language. If that's the only thing you have, if everything is exclusive, yeah, that sounds pretty cult-like. I would agree with that. But if some things are inclusive, where there's certain things that all people are invited to, and then there's certain things that aren't, in order to hold together something that could be the drawing point, and we'll look at that in a second, um, that's the difference.

Okay. We have always, uh, we, we think of church that there are some things that are open to all people and then things get narrower and narrower. And that's the way it should be.

Just like all people are welcome to fellowship with us on a Sunday morning. Not all people are welcome to be partners. There's terms for that. Not all people are welcome to be deacons.

Not all people are welcome to be elders. Not all people are welcome to take of the Lord's table. You know, there should be restrictions on different aspects and that's for the benefit of the whole. So like I was saying before, one of the things that happens when people come in with that kind of mentality is this fear of excluding people.

[5 : 23] Okay. I think getting over your fear of, uh, that we need to get over our fear of explaining to a newcomer that a meeting is exclusive.

That's a really important fear to get over. There's great value and importance in certain meetings being exclusive and it's really good for people to feel left out of those things.

Uh, a verse I want to bring up on this is Acts chapter 5 verses 12 to 14. Okay. In Acts chapter 5, it says, Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

Listen to this verse in verse 13. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

Did you hear that? They had church together and it says, none of the rest dared join them. Okay. Right before this was Ananias and Sapphira dying because they lied about, you know, the money they were giving.

[6 : 29] So that was definitely played into it. But there was a sense of church and respect for what the church was that nobody was joining willy-nilly, so to speak.

There wasn't just this casual, yeah, I could join this on my own terms. You didn't join the early church on your own terms. In fact, if you try to do it on your own terms, some people even lost their lives.

Okay. And then it says, so you might think, well, how does that work? No one dares join them. But then the next verse, verse 14, says that more than ever, believers were added to the Lord.

First of all, it says more than ever. Isn't that interesting? At the time when people were afraid to join, more than ever, God added to them. Do you see that?

We get it backwards, right? We right now, everybody dares join the church now, right? There's no fear of joining the church.

[7 : 29] There's an entitlement with, you must let me join the church. You must let me do it my way. There's no, not only is there not a fear of people joining, there's not a fear of people joining on their own terms, completely disregarding the terms of the Lord, or the terms that the local church has set in place in order to uphold God's ways.

So everyone dares to join, and not many people are being added by the Lord. Do you see the difference? Whereas here, it says more than ever, when people were, didn't want to, they wouldn't dare join the church, God added to their number daily.

I think there's something there. I think there's something there. And I think the something that's there is the potency of the church, that we have to be careful that we don't delude, okay?

In our effort to include people, we end up dumbing down what it means to be a part, okay? And then there's nothing beneficial about being a part, which creates no incentive to be a part.

What we end up working against, we end up working against ourselves when we have a fear of not including people. People feeling left out in ways is what gives value to being a part, because there's something there that is deep and real and committed.

[8 : 48] When you dilute that, then being a part doesn't mean anything. Exclusion gives the opportunity to include.

To exclude no one is to have nothing to include people into. Do you understand what I'm saying with that? To exclude no one is to have nothing to include people into. Let me say it another way, and I think this is important, so hear me when I say this paragraph here.

Letting someone in out of fear of leaving someone out dilutes the potency and power of what you are letting them into, thereby not really loving them.

Let me say that again, okay? Letting someone in out of fear of leaving someone out dilutes the potency and power of what you are letting them into, thereby not really loving them.

Because to love is to guard the whole by not letting people in who would dilute it. By protecting the potency of the whole, we love those who are excluded because we now have something of value to offer them that can change their lives for their good and God's glory.

[10 : 03] That is what, that's kind of the crux of what I'm saying here. Inclusion without regard for dilution is unloving. We exclude people for the sake of people.

Inclusion without regard for dilution is unloving. The church has gotten this off and what has happened, the result is we've diluted the power and the potency of the church by not being careful who is let in, who we regard as Christians.

The majority of people in America by far are not Christians who profess to be Christians. And therefore the church becomes weaker and weaker and the Lord is not adding to our number because everyone dares join the church.

It's important to remember that Jesus was exclusive.

Okay. John 14. John 14. Luke 14. Okay. Jesus gets really exclusive here. Says some really offensive things to our American minds. Right. He says Luke 14, 25 to 27.

[11 : 17] And then verse 33. Great crowds accompanied him. And he turned and said to them. Again, Jesus was not afraid of excluding people. Notice the verse that precedes what he's about to say.

Great crowds. I mean, really you should be, oh man, Jesus. Jesus, you're really packing them in here. This is great. This movement has really taken off. This is, this is awesome.

Jesus, you're finally doing it. Like you're getting, we're growing. This thing is awesome. Great crowds are accompanying him. And then he turns and says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life.

He cannot be my disciple. And you could just probably see some of the disciples like, oh, what? What are you doing? We had a good thing going here. Do you see these crowds? You're going to, you just, you, whoa, whoa, Jesus.

He just went super exclusive. He just said, hey, you can't be my disciple unless you come to me. And if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life.

[12 : 31] He cannot be my disciple. And then he says, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. And anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Do you see the exclusivity here? But it's important exclusivity. If Jesus himself did this, we have to ask the question, is this important?

He did this in John chapter 6 as well. John chapter 6, again, things seem to be going really well here for the crew that's hanging around Jesus as far as gathering a crowd, gathering some kind of successful type movement.

And it says in John 6, verse 2, a large crowd was following him. And then it says why? Okay, a large crowd is following him.

And then it says because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. So they're not following yet because he's the Messiah. They're not following him yet because they need him to save them.

[13 : 38] They're not following him yet because he is the one that's been promised from those chapters in the Bible that Adam's been going over with the kids, like all the way back in the beginning.

They're not following him for that reason. They're following him because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Okay? And he ends up feeding 5,000 men with women and children.

There's a good chance it was over 10,000. This is big-time miracle stuff here. Okay? Man, you can see why people are following him for the signs. Man, we could be hanging out with this guy.

We don't even have to get food. This guy just makes food appear. This is a good deal. I want to hang around this guy. Right? Verse 26, after all this, after the feeding of the 5,000 with just bread and fish, Jesus addresses the crowd.

He starts talking about being the bread of life. And then he says, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you had your fill of the loaves.

[14 : 44] So now he's saying it's even worse than just coming for signs. You just want food. That's why you're here. Okay? It's like, Jesus, what are you doing?

What are you doing here? Again, he's pointing out that there are some people coming for the wrong reasons. And he's about to kind of drop the hammer, so to speak, and make them not feel included.

Right? Because he's basically saying, this is not the right motive. And there are people who come into the church for all the wrong motives. And one of the most common now is they want community, but they don't want responsibility.

They want a message that challenges them, maybe tickles their ears, or maybe legitimately challenges them, but they don't want to do anything with it. They want to hear people preach repentance without actually repenting.

They want people to have a church where they enjoy certain aspects of the show. They like the music. The childcare is good. The preaching is dynamic.

[15 : 46] You know, you'll see this when you advertise churches. We have dynamic preaching, relevant preaching, these kind of things, which, is there any other kind? I mean, I don't know. Anyways, if it's true preaching.

Truly, I say to you, you're seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Then in verse 41, he says, it says, and he starts going into it, starts saying that he's the bread of life.

And then the Jews grumbled about him because he said, I'm the bread that came down from heaven. Okay? All of a sudden, it's like, these ones who are so excited about the signs and about getting fed start grumbling.

And this is exactly what happens in the church. Hey, this is cool. I mean, I remember when we used to serve the once-a-month meals back at Bellicose, you'd have people that come in.

You know, Michael stops some guy from eating about 40 pieces of sliced cheese one time. Some homeless guy off the street. Again, people come for all these different reasons.

[16 : 53] And we open things up for people to come who might have wrong motives. But we don't keep it that way. There has to, at some point in time, being a narrowing for salvation, of course, but also for the potency and power of the church to be what it's supposed to be as witnesses in the earth.

And most likely what happens is people grumble. They did it to Jesus. They'll do it to us. The Jews started grumbling about him because they said, I'm the bread that came down from heaven.

That was offensive to them. Verse 60. Now, even when many of the disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?

Okay? Because he's talking about himself being the way, himself being the bread, eating of his flesh, drinking. I mean, this is some crazy language. I'm not going to get into that.

You know, these sound like vampire verses here. Jesus is talking about drinking his blood. You can understand why they were a little weirded out. But even his own disciples hear it and they say, this is a hard saying.

[17 : 57] Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this?

Do you take offense at this? And he goes on. And then verse 66. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

He says to the disciples, hey, do you want to leave? And they said, no, where else are we going to go? You have the words of eternal life. Jesus was exclusive. Jesus said things that offended. Jesus caused people who were coming for the wrong reasons to be offended when he started declaring what was the right reasons.

And he started talking about language that would ultimately form what would be called his church. Okay. He opened it up and then got exclusive when it comes to him building his church.

The early church was exclusive. Acts 2.42 says, They devoted themselves to the fellowship. Okay. There was a devotion to making sure they had fellowship.

- [19 : 05] And what was their fellowship around? 2 Corinthians 13.14 calls it the fellowship of the spirit. There are some people we don't have fellowship of the spirit with. And there are things that we believe and do that cause us to have fellowship in the spirit.
- And there are things we believe and do that cause us to not have fellowship in the spirit. Okay. But our fellowship is in the spirit. And there was a devotion to be fellowshipped, to have fellowship around the spirit, not around other things.
- And the temptation sometimes is to have our fellowship be around other things, but not really realizing that the exclusivity of having fellowship around the spirit actually is more inclusive than having fellowship around other things that limit us.
- Because the exclusivity of having fellowship around the spirit actually includes more people. Because it doesn't mean we have to have the same age, same background, same economic background.
- It doesn't mean we have to have the same interests. It just means that our primary interest is Christ's. And our fellowship is in the spirit. And that's actually, that pressing into exclusivity is actually in the long run more inclusive.
- [20 : 20] And that we can relate to people that we would never be able to relate to apart from the spirit, apart from Christ. Now, the early church was exclusive, obviously, with not being yoked with unbelievers.
- Do not be, 2 Corinthians 6, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? Okay?
- So, clearly, there's no fellowship with unbelievers. When that gets intermixed with the church, that's very diluted. Okay? But there's no fellowship there. If you're devoted to the fellowship, you can't let that happen.
- Okay? 2 Thessalonians 3, 6 through 15 says, Wait, what?
- You're supposed to... He commands them to keep away from a brother? That's pretty exclusive language there, Paul. What are you talking about? He commands them to keep away from any brother who's walking in idleness.
- [21 : 25] I mean, Paul, aren't you supposed to bear with those who are weak? What's the deal? You can't... You got to keep away from any brother who's walking in idleness and not accord with the tradition that you receive from us?
- Do you see that Paul had a tradition, a way of life that was being handed down, and he said, If these people aren't adhering to this, you should keep away from those brothers. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor do we eat anyone's bread without paying for it.
- But with toil and labor we work night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you and ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command, if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.
- For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.
- As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.
- [22 : 35] Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. Do you see the language here? You see this exclusive language. Titus 3.10, as for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

Guarding the quality of life together. Saying if certain brothers, yes, there's things that unbelievers should be excluded from. But even those who call themselves brothers, who are idle, who are divisive, who aren't adhering to certain principles laid forth in the scripture, certain traditions that the apostolic tradition that was laid down to form potent churches, he says have nothing to do with them.

Have nothing to do with them. 1 Corinthians 5. He says, I wrote you my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters, since you would need to go out of the world.

Now I'm writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler. Not even to eat with such a one.

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? Whom you are to judge?

[23 : 59] Whom you are to judge? Oh, I know that everyone wants to say, you're not supposed to judge. And they love to misquote Jesus and take it out of context and say don't judge. He just said, Is not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

God judges those outside. And then he says, Purge the evil person from among you. There should be judgments within the church, by the church, in order to keep together the power and potency of the church and not to dilute it.

Romans 16 said, I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Avoid them! For such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites.

And by smooth talk and flattery deceive the hearts of the naive. Second and last one. Second Timothy 3, 1-5. Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.

People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable.

[25 : 08] Man, if there's the one thing I've seen people coming into the church is unappeasable people. No matter what you try to do to include them, they're never happy. They're always grumbling.

You try to include them, you try to make them happy, and the more you try, the more unappeasable they become. You give them an inch, they take a mile. Right?

Slandrous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power, avoid such people.

Avoid such people. There are many professing Christians where there needs to be exclusivity from in order to keep the church where it's supposed to be.

And I think one of the reasons there's confusion about this, there's offense about it, is because of the way church has been done for most of our lives and most of our experiences. Because most church experience is an attractional model.

[26 : 11] Meaning the goal, and the irony of us talking about this on the first day that we have our building in our church, is the goal for most churches is to get people in the building. Even though nowhere in this entire book do you see anything even remotely close to even mentioning that.

Inviting people. You don't see that. You see multiple people on mission to specific people and places, but you do not see places where the focus was just make the place great so that the people come.

But that in essence is what church has become. Make a great place with the, you know, the Holy Trinity of church planting, great worship, great child care, and great preaching. And if you got that, the people will come.

And your job isn't to evangelize. Your job is to invite. We've replaced evangelism with invitation. And then we get a little bit arrogant and haughty sometimes because we think, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, Josh.

We're not like those people. We have a small church, and we don't invite people to some mega church thing with the slick worship and the slick child care and the slick preaching presentation.

[27 : 26] Oh, no, no. What we do is the same thing in a smaller setting. We invite people to gatherings and homes and replace evangelism for a meeting invite in a home rather than actually taking them into our own home or taking the uncomfortability on us and going to where they're at instead of putting the uncomfortability on them to come where we're at in religious settings where they don't know people and they feel uncomfortable.

And so because that's the norm, because that's what we've experienced, we get confused with exclusivity because the order of the day in the church is not exclusivity.

It's to include as many people as possible. This is where we get the phrase seeker sensitive. Be as sensitive as possible to the seeker. Make them comfortable. Make them happy.

Do whatever you can to do that. And so when you get someone like myself now talking about exclusivity, talking about being missional to people and not replacing evangelism with a meeting invite, and that partnerships should be excluded to a certain core group of people that adhere to certain values and principles, and that we're not using the service to attract people but the people.

See, the difference is what has happened is in the church, products and services have been the attraction rather than the people. And I don't see that in the scripture.

[28 : 51] So I will always preach to you. I will always advocate to you that our greatest attraction, our greatest potency is the quality of the people.

It's the people who are the drawing factor. The church is a people. It's not a building. It's not products and services. It's not the preaching, the worship, and the childcare. It's the quality of the people that make up the church.

And so we're not aiming at a slick worship service that gathers in as many people as possible. We're willing to offend people with the exclusivity of what we call partnership and membership in our church in order to have the impact that we see in the scriptures that Jesus wants us to have by being a people that are potent.

A potent. A potent people because the people are the ones we're focusing on, not other things to attract people. And what happens is when you have that, instead of consumers, you have participants.

We're looking for participants, not consumers. When attraction is your model, when you're just trying to attract people into a building, then all you're getting is consumers, not participants.

[30 : 01] If it's partnership, it's participants. And then the other thing, the danger of that is it's just gifting and not character.

Because then gifting is what draws people. And then when the person who's gifted falls into sin, oh, we've got to keep them in ministry because without their gifting, the church has nothing. And so we perpetuate and we hide adultery and we hide sexual sin and we keep people in leadership because the church is too big to fail.

And we need you to be the one attracting people. It's gross. It's disgusting. It's immoral. It's sick. It should be called out for what it is. Unafraid.

Unapologetic. And there's no way in any way, shape or form we should ever allow that. But you don't need to allow that when the people are the drawing factor, when the character and the quality of the people, if character is what draws people, then gifting is not what impresses, then we don't get impressed by gifting.

Because we know that you can build something with your gifting that you'll destroy with your character. So we're not impressed by that. It creates a hypocritical environment where products and services that are offered are disconnected from character.

[31 : 14] When character is all you got, there's no room for hypocrisy because you're not trying to sell something other than who you are. Do you understand? When we just have us be the thing, the quality of the people, there's no hypocrisy because what you see is what you get.

There's not hypocrisy, but there is a lack of potency because what you see is what you get. And if what you see is not that great, you're not going to get much. No one's going to be interested.

No one wants to join a group of people. God doesn't add to a group of people that have no reason why you'd want to join them. There's no quality of life together. There's no real integrating of life together in a powerful way.

You know, John 13, 35 says, By this you will know that you are my disciples by your love for one another. Our love for one another is our greatest asset. It's our greatest compelling narrative.

It's our apologetic. It's the preaching itself. It says more than a slick service. And it says it all day, every day, not just a Sunday morning and a Wednesday night.

[32 : 25] That's what we're after. We're after true discipleship that is shown in our love for one another. We're after partnership. Partnership is our way of devoting ourselves to the fellowship.

Amos 3, 3 in the King James says, New King James, says can two walk together unless they're agreed? The problem is you have the church filled with so many people who don't agree on a set standard that they can't walk together.

And you wonder why it has no potency. Because you have people walking all over in different directions. I want to walk this way. I don't want to walk the way you walk. But I still want all the benefits of your community. Let me walk with you. No.

No. We're not going to. We love you too much to let you do that. Mark 3, 25 says, As a house is divided against itself, that house shall not be able to stand.

And this is what you have. Churches all over the place with people who have their own value systems, their own way of life. There's no common way of life. There's no common vision. There's no common priorities.

[33 : 27] They're not sharing these things. And so you have people going in multiple different directions. And a house divided cannot stand. Why are churches closing all over the place? Because their house is divided. Don't be offended when church leadership is fighting against the devil's plan to divide us.

Church leadership's emphasis on us being united in a set standard for which we come together on is actually loving so that we have something that's sustainable and that won't crumble to the ground.

We're not just talking about agreement in word, but agreement in action. The dictionary defines partner as one who shares. True partnership requires exclusivity to those who share.

To those who share. Partner is someone who can count on shared priorities, shared vision, and shared responsibility. Okay? If we're not a kingdom-first people, if you have a church where kingdom isn't first, we don't share the priority of the kingdom of God, there...

I'm not saying in the negative. Let's say in the positive. Okay? When we do share the priority of the kingdom of God, when we're treasuring Christ and his kingdom, Matthew 6, 21, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also, our hearts are all one.

[34 : 47] One in heart, right? The Bible talks about being one in mind, but it talks about being one in heart. You can't be one in heart if your treasure isn't the same thing. When we're not exclusive in our joining together of the church and making it so that we have to have the same heart, we have to have the same priority, okay, that we treasure Christ and his kingdom more than anything else, then we're disjointed.

We have to seek first the kingdom of God. And so holding up the exclusivity to say, we really, the only way we have true fellowship is when we're all seeking first the kingdom of God and we share that value.

That's the only way. Secondly, shared vision and all of life people. If we have people who aren't keeping our life, who aren't trying to save it, who aren't just looking at Wednesdays and Sunday mornings, but there's an equal value of the same cost.

If there's not the same cost, then we don't have that potency. But when there's same cost, when there's no confusion about it, everyone knows, hey, it's Luke 14.

I have to give up everything to be his disciple. It's 2 Corinthians 12, 15. I most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. What does a church look like when everybody who is a member can say this with honesty and sincerity?

[36 : 19] I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. What does that church look like? Guess what? It's a lot more potent. It's a lot more powerful. The problem is we've made church to be where you don't have to do that.

Where spending is a burden instead of a gladness. Most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. It's a parable of the kingdom of heaven, treasure in the field.

Kingdom of heaven is like treasure in a field, Matthew 13, 44, which a man found and covered up then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. That is our fellowship.

It's the fellowship of joy experience when we've seen the same treasure and all given everything we have to buy it. It's the treasure in a field fellowship.

It's the people who've all bought the field and they've all invested the same amount, everything. If someone were to come into that fellowship who hasn't bought in completely, who it's a burden to them, it's not joy to them, and they're begrudgingly giving and they're not giving all, what have you just done to that church?

[37 : 34] You've diluted the fellowship. You've diluted the power. You've diluted the potency. There is so much potency in a fellowship of people who've seen the treasure. Oh my gosh, this is worth way more than what I have.

This is worth way more than what I have, but it only costs what I have. This is an amazing thing. This is worth way more than what I have, but it only costs what I have.

I'm going to sell everything I have to get this, which is worth more than what I have. I can't believe this. Is there anybody else who knows about this? And then the church is those people.

It's the people who've said, yeah, I saw it too. I bought it too. Oh my gosh. Isn't this amazing? Yes, it's amazing. I want to sing about it.

Yeah, let's do it. Let's sing about it every week together in a group of people. Let's take the Lord's table together and remember this treasure in the field that we all bought and gave into.

[38 : 33] Let's talk about it. Let's tell other people about it and let's show them, hey, there's a treasure in a field. It's worth more than all you have and all you have to do to get it is to give all you have, but it's worth more than all you have.

Can you believe it? Turn from believing that what you have is more worth than the treasure in the field and buy the treasure in the field and come be part of the family of people who believe that the treasure is greater than everything.

Do you know what happens when you let people in who don't believe that? Yeah, you do because we've all lived it. It sucks. It's not church. It's not powerful.

It's not potent. And you wonder why it's not effective. We have to share that same cost. 2 Corinthians 7, 2-3 says, Make room in your hearts for us.

We have wronged no one. We have corrupted no one. We have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

[39 : 38] It's that kind of people. People who are in each other's hearts to die together and to live together. That's cost. And it's the same cost. And then third, a together people.

Sharing the responsibility of being together. Right? 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 8 says, So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our very selves.

Because of affectionate desire. Making sure that the people of God are filled with affectionate desire to share not just the gospel, but our very lives with one another. Where the church is being built up like Ephesians 4, when each part does its work.

It's not community without responsibility. It's community with responsibility and accountability in joy. It's like, I'm going to do my part. Because if I don't do my part, the church is not built up. Something falls apart.

The roof starts to leave. You know? Like, I need to do my parts. Each part or partner, part owner, are the ones we count on to do the work.

[40 : 48] Closing with this, the cost of dilution. dilution. If we have different priorities, it's Philippians 2.21, they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

If we dilute the priorities and let people in with different priorities, we have multiple interests. And then Christ is in center.

It has to be a people who seek the interest of Christ, not their own interests. If we have different buy-in or different costs, you know, where some people didn't give up everything to be a disciple, well, then you're not really a disciple.

We've diluted it. It ends up being like John 10. John 10, 12 to 15, it says, He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own the sheep sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. Why does he flee? He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd.

[41 : 52] I know my own and my own know me. Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. If you don't have ownership, then when trouble comes, guess where you go?

Go out of here. If you don't have ownership and someone needs to be protected, where do you go? You let them be eaten by wolves. And is this not true in church after church after church and name only all over the country?

Hirelings getting paid a salary who don't have true ownership, don't have true buy-in. And so then when hard things come, they jet. Isn't this what happened during COVID? Hirelings who don't care about the sheep.

So when hard times came, they stopped meeting. Hirelings who don't care about the sheep. So when pressure came to politics and race and all this weirdness, the church capitulated and became woke and irrelevant.

We have to stay potent. We have to have the same cost and buy-in. We have to own the sense of ownership of the sheep so that we fight for the sheep and don't run away when trouble comes.

[42 : 56] He flees because he's a hired hand who cares nothing for the sheep. And then lastly, we can't be independent of one another.

If we're independent, 1 Corinthians 12, 26 says, if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Okay? Together.

All rejoicing together, all suffering together. If some people rejoice and other people don't, we're not together. If some people suffer and other people don't suffer with them, we're not together. And then people sit in a room with a bunch of people, even though there's a bunch of people with them, on a regular basis and they still feel lonely.

That is the deluded church that we don't want to have anything to do with. Last thing, I'm reading this paragraph that I read before.

Letting someone in out of fear of leaving someone out dilutes the potency and power of what you're letting them into, thereby not really loving them. To love is to guard the whole by not letting people in who would delude it.

[44 : 02] By protecting the potency of the whole we love those who are excluded because we now have something of value to offer them that can change their lives for their good and God's glory.

Inclusion without regard for delusion is unloving. We exclude people for the sake of people. So I hope you can hear my heart in this. We do have exclusivity in our church.

We have partnership. It's not open to everybody. We have certain meetings with certain people. It's not open to everybody. It's not because we want to offend people. It's not because we want to be rude to people. It's not because we're trying to be obnoxious.

It's because we're guarding a certain value system and structure of people to be the most powerful, potent force on earth that the gates of hell shall not prevail against.

So as to best love the people who are on the outside and so that we can bring them in to something that's worth being brought into. To bring somebody into something that's not worth being brought into just so that their feelings aren't hurt is not love.

[45 : 06] And some of us need to check our hearts to see whether or not we care too much about what other people think of so that we are unwilling to offend them in order to love them.

Because we have to do that sometimes. And if you're someone who's offended or has been offended or who will be offended, ask yourself, why am I offended? Why am I offended?

Do I have rights to certain things? Am I entitled to a certain experience on my terms? Or must I seek the interests of Christ and submit to His terms so that ultimately because of His terms we end up having a potent, powerful church that is the best way to love people?

That's my question for you to consider. That's my question for us to think about. And I'm sure there's multiple nuances that we can wrestle with and maybe even have questions about it. But I hope that what we're really coming down to is that the value itself is that by being passionate about a people, an exclusive group of people, that's the best way to be passionate about those who are on the outside.

That by guarding that, we love that. Amen? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.