

Fellowship In The Light

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Preacher: Josh Christophersen

[0:00] This morning I want to talk to you about fellowship in the light. Fellowship in the light. Okay. As I talk about this, for some of you, this is going to be very familiar to you.

If you've heard me speak on this before, some of you it might not be. Either way, I'm asking that you listen with fresh ears in one sense. And just ask, okay, where am I at with this?

Let this land in my heart. Let this stir my heart. What is necessary? Because I really believe that this topic, fellowship in the light, is extremely necessary for the church to be established and founded on the right foundation.

And we'll look at that here in a second. So really, you know, how do very different people feel and act like family together? Okay. How do you get a group of people called the church who can feel and act like family together?

How do you get different people to do that? People who aren't all alike, who don't have all these major similarities. How do we do that? And I want us to remember that we're not after attendance.

[1:04] We're after assembly. Okay. What do I mean by that? Well, a lot of people say, well, you know, the word church comes from the Greek word ekklesia, and that means assembly. So as long as the church assembles, then that's a church.

And we often just think that assembly is just getting people in a room together. Okay. But, and some of you have heard me use this example many times, but if you have a plane hanger and you have all the parts for a plane sitting in a pile, is that a plane?

No. Even though they are all in the same room together, they are not assembled together.

Together. In the same way, you can have the parts of a church in a room together, and they not be assembled.

They not be fitted together. And we're not after just attendance. We're not after just filling a room with people. Okay. Lame Church 101 is just going after attendance without assembly.

Right. Just trying to fill rooms with people who are not joined together, who are not knitted together, who are not fitted together. Okay. That is a great way. You want to know how to make lame church?

[2:10] Do that. Just try and get people in a room. We're not interested in that. Because God's not interested in that. God doesn't want just, you don't, you think Jesus, that God became a man, suffered and died on a cross and rose again so that we could just get a bunch of people in a room?

I think he was after more than that. We know he was after more than that. Okay. And so we're after assembling. We're after togetherness. So how do we move from attendance to building an actual assembly of the parts together?

And I believe that's what true fellowship is. Okay. So I'm going to look at five different things here in regards to fellowship in the light, in regards to how we can get people to be fitted together.

Right. Okay. Number one, fellowship in the light. Okay. Or fellowship with God and one another.

We're going to start with 1 John chapter 1 verses 5 through 10. Okay.

It says, this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

[3:16] But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. We say we have no sin.

We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We say we have not sinned. We make him a liar and his word is not in us. Okay. So he's talking here about walking in the light. He's talking here about having fellowship with one another.

He makes some really strong statements here. Okay. As John does in 1 John, a lot of kind of binary statements, black and white statements here in 1 John, right? Here's one of them.

It says, if we say we have fellowship, okay. And that's what the church does, right? The church would say, well, hey, we have fellowship, right? That's a common thing.

[4:09] Yeah. I'm a part of this church. We have fellowship. Okay. But he says, if we say we have fellowship while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin. Okay. So he's saying, if you say you have fellowship, but you're walking in darkness, you don't have fellowship with God.

And if you don't have fellowship with God, you most certainly don't have fellowship with one another. But the key to having fellowship with one another is walking in the light. And the way that he is displaying what that looks like to walk in the light together is verse 9.

He says, if we confess our sins. You can't have a church that's walking in the light that doesn't confess sins. And you'll never have a church that confesses sins that isn't deeply founded on the gospel.

Because otherwise you can't confess your sins. Because you'll be found out. You'll have nothing to stand on. You have to cling to your self-righteousness. But a church that is founded on the gospel, believes the gospel, boasts in the gospel, is free to confess their sins.

[5:16] And so that's absolutely necessary. You might say, well, yeah, of course it's necessary. Well, yeah, of course it's necessary. But so often this is not the experience in church.

I was just talking to someone the other day who just moved to Kansas City and was a part of a church in another state and fell into some sin that was really destructive to their marriage.

And he went and confessed his sin to the church. And they were like froze. They didn't know what to do. And immediately he realized, oh, wow, I'm at a church that doesn't know what to do with confession of sin.

And they didn't know what to do. And he found out that as he was with this church, he never heard anybody confess sin. Again, you might say, well, that's ridiculous. In one sense, yes, it is when you read verses like this.

But in another sense, this is all too common sometimes in church. And a part of it is if we don't cling deeply to the gospel, we are always in danger of drifting into a self-righteousness that has to put on religious cosmetics.

[6:23] It has to dress things up and say, I'm good enough in and of myself. And therefore, if my hope is in my own righteousness, if my hope and identity is in being right, then I'm not free to be wrong.

If my hope and identity is in being a good person, I can't ever admit where I wasn't good, where I fell short. And so this is a big deal.

There is no walking in the light without confession of sin. And there is no fellowship without confession of sin. And so if we're saying, oh, I want to be close to people. I want to have fellowship with them. We have to be open and vulnerable to be able to let people in to see not just the good stuff in our life, but the bad stuff as well.

Otherwise, there is no fellowship. And the last thing we want to do is build a church that at the ground level is not free to be able to share these things.

It's not free to confess sin. Whatever you have in Christ, you're free to lose everywhere else. Okay? And when you know that you're right in Christ, when you trust in the righteousness of Jesus, when you believe in the doctrine of justification, that is just as if you had not sinned, it gives you a freedom to confess your sins because it's not this devastating thing that if I confess my sins, I lose all identity if my identity is not in me being righteous in and of myself.

[7:45] My identity is in the righteousness of another. I'm free to confess the unrighteousness of myself. And I no longer have the need to put on these religious cosmetics to always make myself look better than I

am.

It's a church that can be rather than appear to be. It's a church that's free to be. And when you're free to be, now we got real fellowship. Now we have fellowship in the light. This is what the church is supposed to be, where we can really fellowship in reality with each other.

Okay? 2 Corinthians 6 verse 14 says, what fellowship is light with darkness? You see, when we keep things in darkness, when we're gathering in the same room, we're not hiding in the sense that we're physically not there, but we're hiding in the sense that we're not honestly there.

You can be physically present in a room and be dishonest with the people that you're there with.

We can be in the room, but not in the light. And if you're in the room and not in the light, then there's no fellowship.

Then we're just playing church. We're just filling rooms in attendance. And it might look good on the outside, but if it's not real fellowship, what is it? It's not what Jesus died for.

[8:57] What fellowship is light and darkness? It's a rhetorical question. None. John 3, 19 to 21 says, this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Okay? Whoever does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his work should be exposed. Unless, of course, you realize that there is redemption in the light.

There is a covering of your sin with the blood of Jesus in the light. He's saying about it this morning, right? When you know that, you go to the light, you run to the light.

You don't run away from the light. But so often, it can easily build church culture where we run from the light and we have to hold up a certain level of sobriety and image, you know, a certain image to be accepted.

[10:06] And when we fight for this and when we wrestle with this to say, I have to be this in order to be accepted, I have to be this in order to be a person that is in right standing in the church.

And if that thing that I have to be is something different than the imputed righteousness of Jesus, we're in a bad spot. We're in a bad spot. It's not good. It's not. It is not a place where we are going to walk in true fellowship.

And not to mention, the church should be what Larry Crabb called the safest place on earth, a place where you can be free to open up your heart, let people into your skeleton closets, because, again, our fellowship isn't around having it all together.

If that was the case, then yeah, why would you ever let anyone know that you don't have it all together? If our fellowship isn't the fact that none of us have it together and that apart from Christ, we are all a mess.

Apart from Christ, we are all lost. Apart from Christ, we all have no hope. If we all believe that, then our fellowship is around the same thing. Our fellowship is around the saving grace of God.

[11:12] Our fellowship is around the freedom that we have to admit our weaknesses and even boast in our weaknesses because in our weakness, he is strong. We end up relating to each other based on the reality of Jesus rather than some phony religious facade, which everybody hates anyways.

We know we hate it. And yet the very thing we hate, we so often do because that's what human nature does. So this is not something you just hope you drift into.

You know what? I'll probably just drift into being really open and honest and free to just confess my sins. No, you won't. That's not how it works. We have to be intentional in this.

We have to be really focused on it. Ephesians 5, 8 to 14 says, At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.

[12:23] For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine in you. If you hear that verse, anything that becomes visible is light.

So what does it mean to walk in the light? It means that you bring into visibility the things that are hidden. You bring into visibility the things that are hidden. And the only way you're free to do that is to know what you have in Christ.

Everything you have in Christ, you're free to lose everywhere else. If you have being right in Christ, you're free to be wrong everywhere else. If you have acceptance in Christ, you're free to be rejected everywhere else.

But if you don't have acceptance in Christ and in the work of Christ, then you have this fear of rejection that causes you to appear to be rather than to be. And that's not true fellowship.

Anything that becomes visible is light. And I want to look for a second at the difference between transparency and vulnerability, because sometimes we can think that walking the light, especially because of verses like this, anything that becomes visible is light, that walking the light is just transparency.

[13:30] Just transparency. In other words, someone might say, well, hey, I'm an open book, man. Like, if you ask me a question, I'm going to answer honestly. And that's half, you're halfway there.

Okay. Transparency is like having your windows open and people can see in. But without vulnerability, transparency is just like a house that you can look in the windows, but the door is bolted locked.

Okay. Vulnerability doesn't just let people see in, it lets people come in. Transparency without vulnerability is still a facade. It gives you this sense of satisfaction to say, hey, I'm an open book, man.

I'm transparent. I let my windows. I never put up the blinds. The blinds are always open. The shades are always up. Right. But I got six bolts on the door.

You try to go in there and correct. It's like ghosted. Right. Yeah. It's like he's the guy who's always confessing sins on the thread or whatever. And then when you try to jump in and try to bring love and bring correction, crickets.

[14:38] He's transparent, but he's not vulnerable. Transparency opens the window. Vulnerability opens the door. It says, come into my life. Speak into my life. Challenge, encourage, exhort.

Question. Okay. Are we doing that? Transparency is not enough. Transparency isn't true walking the light. It's kind of a, it gives you a little bit of satisfaction because it's better than having the windows closed, right?

Where you don't let anybody in and you're just walking in darkness. It feels good because there's a little bit of light. But when we don't open up to, when you don't open yourself up to be hurt, then you never open yourself up to be helped.

Okay. And that's a lot of reason why we don't do it. Because we're afraid if I open up my heart, someone's going to stomp on it. Someone's going to crush it. Someone's going to reject me. Someone's going to hurt me.

But the only way you can be helped is the vulnerability that opens yourself up where you could possibly be hurt. And what gives you the boldness and the braveness, the courage to be able to open your heart up to the point that you risk it being stomped on, the only thing that can do that is a ruthless trust in the person and the work of Jesus.

[15:51] It's a ruthless trust in the gospel itself. When you trust in that, it gives you the courage to be yourself because you know you are loved perfectly by your God.

That's huge. Okay. Ephesians 4, 24 to 25 says, put on the new self created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Okay. We have to be free to put off falsehood. He says, having put away falsehood. Okay. This means you don't say God is good when you don't believe as God is good, just because you know that that's what you're supposed to say to people when you go to a meeting together.

You understand what I'm saying? Like that sounds good. Hey man, God is good all the time. Yeah. Right. But you haven't believed in God's goodness for weeks ever since you got sick or ever since you had this trouble in your marriage or ever since your friend's child died.

It's like, you're actually having a hard time trusting in the goodness of God. So don't say God is good when your heart doesn't believe it. You can say, Hey, someone says God is good.

[17:00] You say, you know what? I know in my head that that's true, but gosh, in my heart, I'm having a hard time right now. I'm having a hard time believing that. I could say it.

It rolls right off the tongue, but man, it is not coming out of my heart. And I don't want to play games. I need help. I'm having a hard time believing right now. I'm having a hard time believing that God is good right now.

I'm struggling with it. You know, a friend of mine used to say, Christians don't say lies. They sing them. It's easy sometimes to sing these things. And I know sometimes you got to just kind of tell your soul, soul, praise the Lord.

You know, you got to do that. But, you know, we have to be honest, too, because there's no fellowship in some religious facade where we're saying things we don't mean to fit a certain caricature of what a good church member is supposed to be.

We want true fellowship. We need true fellowship. And God died and made a way for us through his resurrection that we could be free to have true fellowship.

[18:00] And this is the relationship that everybody's longing for. This is the relationship that's distinctly Christian that the world can't compete with. This is what makes church the most unique entity on the planet.

It's the company of the redeemed, the company of the non-fakers. It's not a company of posers, fakers, and wannabes. It's a company of people who are real. We're free to be real.

When all the world can't be free to be real, because they have to put on some kind of facade, some kind of identity to hope in, we are free to be who we are with all the warts and all the things, foibles and failures, because we've been redeemed.

We've been loved as we are, not as we should be, because nobody is as they should be. And that's a revolutionary thought. Okay? This is why in the early days when we planted bellicose, we used to, one of the things we would do here and there is we would, especially when I would hear, you know, in one of our missional communities, I'd hear that a bunch of people were having a hard time.

I remember doing this a couple times where I'd say, all right, tonight when we gather, this is what we're going to do. I'd go to the store, I'd grab a couple bottles of wine, grab a couple bottles of grape juice, I'd grab a couple loaves of bread.

[19:11] I'd sit down in the middle of the table. We had a big table in our old house back then that could seat like 12 to 14 people because we had some benches. And we'd all sit down around the table. I'm like, all right, tonight we are going to take the Lord's table together multiple times and preach the gospel through it in our weakness.

Okay? So what I want people to do is open up about sins or struggles in belief here around the table. And then someone's going to grab some bread, grab some wine, or grab some grape juice, and we're going to preach the gospel to one another through the Lord's table.

And so someone would share, hey, I'm having a really hard time not believing that I'm under condemnation. I'm having a really hard time not identifying myself with my sin.

Okay? And then someone would take the bread and the cup and they'd say, all right, we're going to remember the Lord. And we're going to remember that he didn't die for good people. He died while we were yet sinners.

And so we'd take this bread and cup to remember his death. And what was his death for? His death was for sinners. Not for people who have it all together, but for, as Brennan Manning says, for the people whose cheese is falling off their cracker.

[20:15] You know, he died for the people who are having a hard time. He died for the people that don't have it all together. Okay? And so while we were yet sinners, Christ died. And let's take the Lord's table together and remember.

And then you might have someone who's saying, hey, I'm just having a hard time believing. I'm having a hard time. I just have this trouble believing that God is for me.

I feel like these bad things are happening to me because of this, that, and the other. And we'd take the Lord and say, all right, someone to grab the bread, take the cup. And they'd do what Chris did this morning.

And they'd say, hey, listen, you know that because of our sin, the world is subjected to futility. You know that we broke the world with our sin. And so people die. People get sick.

Bad things happen to bad people. Catch that? Bad things don't happen to good people because there are no good people. Not even one. Right? And we'll say that. But Jesus died for those bad people.

[21:16] And then what we do is we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. And we say, one day all the wrong things will be right. And I know it's hard right now. Broken things happen to broken people in a broken world.

But we have the hope of gospel future that one day he's going to return and death will be swallowed up in victory. And we proclaim his death until he comes. And then you preach the gospel through that.

And, you know, we could just keep going. But that's what we would do. We would do that together around a table. And by the end of it, everybody would be encouraged. Why? Not because we did an accountability group where everybody leaves thinking that we made much of the sin and is not motivated to do it again next week.

But because we've left making much of the Savior and making much of the power of his salvation, which is what the gospel is. It's the power of God for the salvation of those who believe. The problem with a lot of modern day accountability is everybody hates it and no one wants to go back because basically it is, hey man, I'm having a hard time.

Oh, I'll pray for you. Hey, I looked at porn. I'll pray for you. Hey, I haven't been reading my Bible. Hey man, I'll pray for you. Cool. You want to do this next week?

[22:21] Not really. You know, instead of getting around together and saying, all right, we're not going to make much of our sin. Let's talk about our sin.

But the way we talk about our sin, let's make sure we make much of the Savior. Okay, so let's talk about, you know, the Bible talks about salvation in three tenses. It says that you've been saved. It says that you're being saved. And it says that you will be saved. You've been saved from the penalty of sin. You're being saved from the power of sin. And you will be saved from the presence of sin.

Justification. Sanctification. Glorification. You've been saved. You're being saved. You will be saved. Oftentimes the church likes to talk about, I've been saved.

Went to that camp when I was a kid. When I was a kid. And brother, I've been saved. Right? And then one day, you know, when the Lord returns, I'll be fully saved. I'll no longer have this body of death.

[23:20] What about in between? What about in between? What are you going to do in between? Well, man, I just grit my teeth and can't wait till Jesus returns. You think that's what it's all about? You think that's good news?

Doesn't sound like good news to me. Sounds like horrible news. Thankfully, it is horrible news because it's not true. The truth is you have been saved. And you're being saved.

What is this being saved thing? What's that all about? The same salvation that you received to save you from the wrath of God and the way you received it through faith is the same way you received the saving power of God so that sin no longer reigns in your mortal flesh.

You believe in Jesus that he also can save you from the power of sin. You receive it the same way you received salvation by faith in the beginning when you received it from the wrath of God and being saved from the penalty of your sin.

And so when you talk about that, now we confess our sins, but we share, this is what God is saving me from. And this is how God is saving me. So it's much easier to even confess your sin when you can confess it in a way that is a present tense.

[24:29] This is what God is saving me from. This is how God is saving me. And sometimes you don't know how God is saving you. Sometimes you have a hard time believing it. You need someone else to say, hey, I want you to know that God can save you.

You from the power of this sin. And the gospel is the power for salvation. Even in the now moments with the power of, he can save you from this power. Sin shall no longer reign over you, it says in Romans.

Okay, so let's testify of what Christ is saving you from. And so we get around a table. We take the Lord's table together and everyone's confessing and professing about God's saving power and what God is saving them from.

And currently, we all leave believing more in God's saving power and going into our everyday lives with temptation and saying, I'm not going to give into that temptation because I heard the testimony of the church saying to me what it is, how it is that God saves people from the power of sin.

And I know that God has given me a way out. I know that there is power to be saved from the sin. I'm not going to give into this sin. And that's a beautiful thing. That's what the church is supposed to be.

[25:42] It's a freedom literally from lame accountability. Okay? Nobody likes that. Nobody wants it. People just do it just because that's all they know. I'm saying we got to go for something higher. We got to believe for something higher.

But the only way you're going to get there is if you start in a light. If we're posers, for fakers, for wannabes, if we're just religious experts and religious professionals, really good at putting that religious makeup on and dressing it up so it looks just right so that I do whatever it is that the group of people I'm with wants to see and hear.

There's no fellowship. There's no fellowship. There's no real true fellowship. Okay? That's the first one. Second thing. Fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13, 14 says, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. The church is many things. One of the things it is, is a fellowship. Okay? But it's not any fellowship. It's a fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Which means it's not a fellowship of the NFL. It's not a fellowship of your favorite movie or song.

[26:53] It's not a fellowship of being the same age. It's not a fellowship of having the same background or the same socioeconomic background. It's not a fellowship of going through the same experiences. It is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Now, all those other things I listed are cool. They're great. But they're not distinctly Christian. There's a lot of people I could talk to about. I love football. I'm going to have a great time watching the Super Bowl today.

Okay? I enjoy watching football. But listen, there's nothing distinctly Christian about relating to someone about a stupid football game. There is something distinctly Christian about the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

There's something you could, even someone who doesn't even speak the same language as you. Sometimes you can sense this like fellowship with them. You're just like, there's something there. What is it? It's the Spirit.

Amen. Now, when I speak the same language, that's a big deal, right? That's why God confused the languages back to Tower of Babel. We're not going to go there. But the whole point is there's a fellowship of the Spirit that we need to aim for, that we need to work towards.

[27:55] Okay? We need to be able to say, all right, I look at you and think, man, I don't have a lot to relate with you outside of the Holy Spirit. It's okay. Because there's a lot of people, they say, I don't have anything to relate to you, and then they just don't relate.

The church should never be that. Because the church always has this trump card of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. I can always have this relationship with you based on relating around who God is, relating around what God has done, relating around who I am in Christ, relating around what I've read in the Word, relating around what God is doing in answered prayer.

What God is speaking to us. What kind of cool stories that we can share about how God is working in our lives. There's always that. But that means we've got to ask people that. And that means we also have to be honest when none of that's going on.

You say, oh, Josh said we've got a fellowship with the Holy Spirit. So if someone asks me, I better be able to come up with some way that the Holy Spirit's working in my life. Or you can just say, you know what?

I'm having a hard time connecting with the Holy Spirit later. And again, now we can, all right, let's talk. Let's have real fellowship in the life. But then that person can remind you about the Spirit's work.

[29:09] That person can remind you about who God is, what he's done, what he's doing. Maybe he or she shares some stories about what God's doing in their life. And it ignites a passion or desire or curiosity in you to go seek it out.

To go get into the Word, to go get into prayer, to go ask God for abundantly more than all you can ask or imagine and see him do miracles, see him do big things, see him do exciting things. When you get with people and you get excited about who God is and what he's doing, it creates this depth of unity and fellowship that is like nothing else.

But if you're not excited about what the Holy Spirit's doing, yeah, you're not going to feel a lot of fellowship. If you're not in touch with who God is and what he's doing, yeah, you're going to have lack of fellowship. That's why we need to relate around that.

And if we're going to be a church, we have to aim to say, hey, these other lesser things are good. They're okay. They're permissible. They're sometimes helpful. But they are never a replacement for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

They're never a replacement. It is an absolute necessity that I relate to people based on the Holy Spirit, especially those people that I find it hard to, especially those people that I find it hard to relate on anything else.

[30:18] Well, I always have the Holy Spirit. I've found over the years in church, in ministry, I've found so often that some of the people I have the least in common with have become some of my best friends based on nothing other than the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

And it's something, again, that trumps all other relationships. What's deeper than the fellowship of the Spirit? Nothing. There's no greater depth of relationship than that. Which brings us to number three, that being devoted to the fellowship.

In Acts chapter 2, verse 42, it says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to prayer, to the fellowship and the breaking of the bread. A lot of times we don't talk about this one.

That verse 42, it says they devoted themselves to the fellowship. There was a devotion to the fellowship. You know, oftentimes fellowship is not something we devote ourselves to. It's just something that kind of happens, right?

Oh, we have, at 10 o'clock before, we have a little time of fellowship. You know, a little half hour of fellowship. And it's just like, yeah, maybe I'll get there, but maybe I'll get there late or whatever.

[31:18] It's like not a big deal. And, you know, if people come over, we'll have fellowship. And it's always, fellowship oftentimes becomes an afterthought to us. It becomes just kind of a, if it happens, it happens.

If it doesn't, it doesn't. You know, if I make it, I make it. If I don't, I don't. If I make the most of that time together, you know, and, but you can be with people and have no fellowship. We can, we can not be deliberate and be devoted to it.

And, um, it can be lame. I just had a time with some guys recently, uh, that was really lame. Uh, just, there was not, uh, there wasn't fellowship.

We hung out, you know, we did some fun things, but there was no fellowship of the spirit. And I left thinking we laughed, we played some fun games, but like there was lacking some fellowship of the spirit there.

And I felt this emptiness when I left. I felt some emptiness when I left. Again, it wasn't horrible. It wasn't, you know, it's not like, oh, I can't stand these guys. It's like, I love these guys.

[32:16] I like them. But what we just had with, there's nothing distinctly Christian about it. I can have that with anybody, but that's not what I'm after. The church is a uniquely Christian experience.

I want to have true fellowship. I want to, I want to relate on something more than, than just fun. And I love having fun. And I love enjoying the things that God's created that are fun to do, fun to watch, fun to consume, all these kinds of things.

But I want to, I want to, I want to experience God together. I want to experience something transcendent. And that's the fellowship of the spirit. So I have to be devoted to it. Otherwise it's not going to happen. First Thessalonians two verse eight says, I just love this language.

Paul, the apostle saying, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you became very dear to us.

Do you hear that language? That's not the language of someone kind of sliding into fellowship or is an app as fellowship was an afterthought for the apostle.

[33:19] It was not an afterthought. Paul's heart was not a afterthought fellowship. Okay. Great name of a church, right? Afterthought fellowship. Now he says, being affectionately desirous of you.

I want you to think, I'm not asking you to raise hands. I'm just asking you to just think this through a little bit. Just ask the question, have I, and am I ever been affectionately desirous of the people in my church?

Like affectionately desirous where I want to be with them. I want to be affectionate with them. I want to hug them. I want to love on them. I want to, and I desire to be with them.

I'm affectionately desirous of them so much. So, and the proof of that is that I don't just share the gospel. I don't just share Christian pleasantries. I don't just share your, your stereotypical, you know, expectations of a Christian gathering.

I, I share with them, not only the gospel of God, but our very lives. I'm getting in homes with them. I'm around the table with them. I'm, I'm, I'm in a living room with them. I'm, I'm not just sharing the gospel.

[34:24] Paul's like, this isn't just a message for me. This is my life. I want to get in your world. I want to get in your home. I want to get into your heart. That's the language that Paul uses.

And it comes out in an affectionate desire for them. Do you have that? Do you have that? If not, we need to cry out to the Lord because this is what the basis. Again, this is the apostle planting churches.

The apostolic foundations must be there of affectionate desire for one another. The apostolic foundation of sharing not just the gospel, but our very lives with one another.

And not just with the people we are. It's easy to do it, but with everybody in the church where we can share our lives with one another. That is apostolic foundations. We've aborted enough apostolic foundations in the church in the West for long enough.

It's time for us to get back to these apostolic foundations and say, this is not, this is not optional.

And this is certainly not something we can just abort and say that that was for a different time. We need these apostolic foundations of affectionate desire where we share not just the gospel, but our very lives.

[35:27] Because people have become so dear to us. That's the kind of church that somebody wants to be a part of. That's the kind of church where someone walks in. And when I say walk in, I'm not even just talking about a Sunday morning.

I'm talking about walks into the life of the church. In the everyday stuff of life. When they walk into that and they say, what is this? What is the reason for the hope that you have?

What is this that I'm experiencing that I've never experienced before? I want it. Tell me about it. You've showed me something. Now I'm asking something. Okay.

And really what this comes down to is time equals relationship. We're willing to put in the time. We're willing to put in the time. Everyone, everybody wants deep church. Everybody wants real church.

I mean, in the last 15 years of doing church planning, so often people come to the door and say, man, they're just talking about church. And they say, what do you want? I want community. Like, yeah, you and everybody else.

[36:23] Let me ask you a question. Do you want sacrifice? Do you want to give up your time? No, man. I want time. I want community without giving up my time. Good luck with that.

You're not going to find it. There is no such thing. There is no such thing as community without responsibility. There is no such thing as community without sacrifice. There is no such thing as community without time.

Well, you know, don't you know my kids go to bed at a certain hour? Well, don't you know that if your kids go to bed at a certain hour and you're never willing to budge on that, that you're never going to have the community you want so bad?

It's going to have to be through sacrifice. It's going to have to be through you opening up. And, you know, the other night I went to bed way later than I wanted to. And then I forgot I had an early appointment the next morning.

That kind of stuff happens to me all the time where I'm just like, man, I would have loved to get more sleep. Enjoy sleep. I happen to think that sleep is a really healthy thing for people. You know, you don't need a bunch of ice baths.

[37:20] You could just get eight hours of sleep and that could help you, you know. But a lot of times I have to give up sleep in order to get time with people. And that's worth it to me. I still don't like it.

I still don't like getting up and not being really tired. I don't like that. But I hope that I have some affectionate desire for people that I'm saying it's worth it.

I'm doing it. I'm counting the costs. I'm taking the time. There's no way I'm going to have community if I don't put in the time. It doesn't work that way. Time equals relationship. Number four.

Number four, which you guys are all familiar with because we say this all the time. But that's what I'm telling you not to tune me out. I'm asking you to just think this through. Okay, number four, open hearts, open homes, and open schedules.

Open hearts, open homes, open schedules. It's easy for you to hear that because you've heard me say it so many times and not think about what that actually is. But I'm telling you, the reason I say this so often is because it's absolutely necessary.

[38:15] Okay, let's remember where some of this comes from. 2 Corinthians 6, my favorite scripture on this. 1 Corinthians 11 to 14. Paul, again, the apostle modeling exact language that should be used for this kind of stuff.

He says, we have spoken freely to you, Corinthians. Our heart is wide open. Our heart is wide open. And then he says, you are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return, I speak as the children, familial language, widen your hearts also. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. What partnership is righteousness with lawlessness?

Or what fellowship has light with darkness? Same theme, right? He's saying, this is the language. This is what we use. This is reality. This is so practical. There are times in church life when one of us has our heart wide open.

And then someone else has their heart closed. One of us has our heart wide open. One of the other ones, restricted, it says. He says, I'm not restricted. This isn't restricted because my heart is closed.

[39:18] It's restricted because your heart is closed. And he says, I speak as to my children. He uses the familial language. He's saying, widen your hearts also. In order for us to exchange the love, wisdom, and power of God, it comes through hearts.

It comes through hearts. Open hearts. Open hearts. And if your heart isn't open, meaning you're not walking the light. You're not confessing your sin.

You're not letting people into your brokenness. And you're not letting people see the real you.

You're not letting people see, hey, I'm actually having a hard time. I know that there's something in me from my religious background that says, I have to tell people that I'm not having a hard time, even though everything within me is saying, I'm having a hard time.

And yet, I'm going to resist that. I'm going to open my heart to you. Because I know that fellowship is at the heart level. When two hearts are open, and then the love of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God is exchanged in between two open hearts.

This is fellowship. This is church. This is real life. This is distinctly Christian. And Paul's using this language. He's saying, my heart's wide open.

[40:28] Open your hearts wide also. And we should say the same. Some of you have people in this church that you have an easier, who open up to you well. And then there's some of you who have people in this church who

don't open up to you well.

And you know it, but are you talking to them like Paul's talking to them? Are you saying, hey, I feel like I want to go deeper in our relationship together. I really do. I love you.

We're in the church together. It's a small church, right? We got to get this thing. We got to get open with each other. Okay? No one else is coming. Just look around. It's us.

We got to do this, right? And you say, I feel like my heart's open to you, but I feel like you're restricted. And if it's something I did, please tell me.

Like if I make it hard for you, if I'm a little much, if I'm a little, if I'm scary to you, like please forgive me and tell me where I'm scary to you.

[41:26] I really, truly want to get this open-hearted thing right. Okay? I feel like my heart's open to you, but yours is restricted. Yours isn't open. And I'm saying, will you open your heart wide to me?

I want to have this relationship to you. I feel like I don't know you. I feel like you don't let me in. I feel like everything is always great. I know that's not true. Or I feel like everything is just shallow.

And I don't want that. I want deep. Everything is just surface. I want below the surface. I feel like sometimes you let me look in the window, but I'm asking you to open the door. Can we do this? And then he used the language of 2 Corinthians 7, 2 to 3.

Right after that, he says, make room in your hearts for us. Will you make room in your heart 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. Listen to that language. You're in our hearts to die together and to live together. This is what we're after.

[42:24] Being in one another's hearts. We have open hearts to one another. And then when the heart is open, we go into each other's hearts where we're fellowshiping. That's fellowship.

When we go into each other's hearts and we live in one another's hearts. It says, make room in your hearts for us. Sometimes you're thinking, man, you freak me out, man.

You're just like that other guy or that other woman that I had back in the past. And you remind me so much of them. Oh, I don't want to open up to you. Sometimes you got to just say that.

You just got to say, it's nothing. It's not even you. It's that you remind me of this person. Or I know it's wrong, but I have a hard time. I'm afraid. And then we have a talk.

We have real talk. We have real talk. And that's what real church is based on. Open hearts. It can't just be selective openness. And it can't just be an open heart.

[43:19] It has to also be an open home. Because what is the most natural place for people to open their hearts? Around kitchen tables and living rooms, right? Back decks and front porches.

You know, like that's where people open up. Okay? It's got to be open schedules. Okay? If I have an open home and an open schedule, but my heart is closed, what good is that?

Right? You're basically making room for shallow relationships. If you have an open home and an open schedule, but not an open heart. It's like, hey, heart's closed, but man, my schedule's wide open to relate to you in a shallow way.

You know, like nobody wants that, right? Or if you have an open heart and an open schedule, but your home isn't open, you're not providing space and comfort for people to practically open up.

Okay? You feel like my heart's open, my schedule's open. Why isn't your home open? I feel like I don't get to know. I want to see how you relate with your kids. I want to see what your house looks like. I want to see how the order or lack of order in your home.

[44:20] I want to see it all. I want to see it. Like I want to share life with you. I want to, you know, mess up the kitchen, you know, together and just enjoy real life, you know, and help clean up afterwards after the kids destroy the playroom or whatever.

Like I want to do this with you. Can we do this together? And if you have an open heart and an open home, but you don't make time for people, you don't have an open schedule for people to access your heart and home, what good is that?

It's like my home's open, my heart's open, my schedule's not. So just wasted open heart and open home. No one ever gets there because you're too busy with stuff or you've made commitments that

are working against true fellowship.

Sometimes other commitments we've made need to go. You might say, hey, the heart's open, my home's open. Yeah, but your schedule's not open. So no one's in your heart, no one's in your home because you have other things that you're not willing to give up.

All three are necessary. Open hearts, open homes, and open schedules. It's key. It's key. Last one, number five. As you wish. As you wish.

[45:23] As you wish. What's this from? You might say, that all sounds great, Josh, but people aren't doing this to me. People aren't open with me. I'm not being reached out to.

I'm not being invited over. I wish I was. Luke 6 31. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. I remember, you know, most of you know we have eight kids. I remember, you know, especially when our kids are younger.

It's weird. Barely any invites. No one wants to invite the family with eight kids over. You know, it's like, just not coming, you know? And we could have just said, man, no one invites us over.

This sucks. And kind of wallow in that. But we wish that other people would do that every once in a while. And they didn't. Happens a lot more now that our kids are older and we don't bring barely any over.

[46:17] I don't know why. Okay? But back then it was like, man, I really wish people would have us over. Then they didn't. So what did we do? As we wished that others would do to us, we did.

We had people over. We had big families over. We had eight kids and we'd have another big family with a bunch of kids. And sometimes it was chaotic and it was crazy. But it's like, that's what the Bible says. As you'd wish others would do to you, do so to them.

I got to say, we've never had a shortage of relationships because of that. We had people live with us. We had people over all the time. We had parties in our house. We celebrated other people's wins and said, use our house for the party.

And our house became, to my wife's chagrin sometimes, became the party house. She couldn't wait until one of her brothers could have the new party house. So our house wasn't the party house.

Because Noah always wants to have our house as the party house.

And it's funny now when he has a house, he complains when his house is the party house. No, it's great. But it's like those things, I can think of so many great experiences.

[47:17] You know, Mariana cried when we sold our house. We didn't cry when we sold our house, but Mariana cried when we sold our house. Why? Because of all the memories we made there. Because of all the good times we had there with so many people.

Because we opened up our home to people. And it created memories. And that's what true fellowship does. It creates meaningful memories. Those meaningful memories compound over time.

And the equation is meaningful memories plus meaningful memories equals true fellowship. Equals distinctly Christian fellowship that the world can't touch. And this is what we're after.

So let me ask you these questions in closing. Are you helping or hindering fellowship? Are you helping or hindering fellowship? Are you voluntarily open?

Not are you open when people ask you. Are you voluntarily open? That you bring stuff up even before they ask. And it helps pave the way. Are you free to be wrong?

[48:14] Are you free to confess your sins? When you do confess your sins, do you let people in? Are you selectively open? Only open with certain people, not with others?

Only open about certain things, not other things? Or are you wide open? Are you devoted to the fellowship? Are you committed to it? Are your heart, home, and schedules open?

And as you wish that others would do to you, are you doing it to them? The answer to these questions is going to make a big difference with what our experience of true fellowship is or isn't. I have every reason to believe that we as a church are going to experience this.

And I'm telling you, it's not optional. Again, we're not just getting a bunch of people in a room. Good things can happen when you get people in a room and you're focused on Jesus. And it does in

many churches all over the place.

But that's not alone what God wants to do. He just doesn't want to do good things with a group of people who are focused on Jesus in a room. He wants to assemble us. He wants us to be fit together. He wants us to be working together like a family together, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters.

[49:20] That only happens with open hearts. That only happens with true fellowship. Amen? Amen. Stand.