

# A Blueprint for a Thriving Church | Acts 20:28-35 | Bible-Centred Ministry

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[0:00] Good morning again. We're going to go to the Word of God now, to Acts chapter 20. And you could say this is really a kind of blueprint for the church, a blueprint for ministry, talking about how we can stand together as a church of God, as a thriving church, God helping us.

And in the context here we see that Paul is effecting really a handover. Now when you might be in a job situation, it's always good to have a good handover from the person who's done the job before. Sometimes that doesn't always happen, but you can imagine in a job context that there's ideally a fulsome handover of the work that has been done as you're left now in charge.

And Paul is doing that here. He's giving a charge to the elders at Ephesus. He's ministered at Ephesus for two to three years. And he's giving them a charge now for the overseers, the elders, to carry on the work.

And you could say he's summing up here his model for ministry. He's wanting to lead the church in good hands. And we see in his parting words this kind of charge, this blueprint for ministry.

[1:15] And we could consider why does the church matter and how can the church thrive? Three things you could say that matter about the church. Three truths that are important.

Three things that make a church great. And we need these three things as a church. Every church needs these things. So he wants the church to go forward and thrive.

And he gives this charge. We go to Acts 20 from verse 28. And it reads there, Paul tells the elders at Ephesus, Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made your overseers to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears.

[2:35] We see there firstly this theme of watch. Paul says take heed. Be on the alert. Be vigilant. Now we could think of the modern context.

There's lots of dangers in the church world. There's lots of dangers out there that we need to have warning of, of protection from. In any ministry we have need of vigilance to watch in every church. Fact is, every ministry, every church is under attack, under threat. And there's dangers that we must take heed of. Notice we see Paul says, Acts 20, 28, take heed therefore unto yourselves.

Notice he says firstly, as guardians, as watchmen, we must guard our own selves first. We fight the flesh, everyone who serves, and we all serve.

We must fight the flesh. We're up against sin, against complacency, pride. Paul urges Timothy, likewise he says, take heed unto thyself.

[3:39] So number one, unto thyself and unto the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. Paul tells the Ephesus elders of this charge, of this need to watch, this sacred charge, of the watch of a shepherd over a flock.

Now I know we've got some sheep in the backyard. I keep saying now and again I refer to my bar lambs, my sheep. And Julie says, have we still got the same number?

I look out there and I count, one, two, three, four, yeah, nine. There's nine of them at the moment. They used to be ten. They used to be twelve. But some have passed away.

Some have died. Some have jumped the fence. But we see that the shepherd must keep charge and watch over the flock and make sure everyone's accounted for.

And Paul's telling here of these overseers, these shepherds in Ephesus. He tells them of this sacred charge. He says that they should look after the flock, the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

[4:48] Now some false Bible translations dilute that. But it's very clear. It's the flock that God has purchased with his own blood. God's blood.

There's something we ought to take seriously about the flock. This is not some social club or some human institution, some organisation of men. It's God's church.

It's God's flock. He's the shepherd, the ultimate shepherd. And we as under shepherds in various departments, we could be those godly shepherds that must keep watch with tender care.

And Paul tells of a compassionate warning in the context it reads of how he says, I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.

The shepherd must have a compassion, a care for souls. We must warn and watch out of love.

That's our motive. We warn tenderly, prayerfully and with compassion.

[5:44] You know, when I hear of someone on some idea, some doctrine, some teaching, I try to warn them lovingly, gently, respectfully, prayerfully. There's dangers. There's lots of false doctrines.

Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine. We need to protect the flock, the church of God, as a shepherd would guard his sheep. And I know sometimes we look out in the backyard and we spotted the odd fox out there.

And when you've got little lambs, they're in danger of those foxes. And, of course, in Paul's time, he talks about this analogy of shepherds, of sheep and of wolves.

He says there's some that are grievous wolves, verse 29 of Acts 20. He tells of false teachers, verse 30. Some people are dangerous, toxic, predators who can harm and scatter the flock.

We must guard against them as the reality of that, these grievous wolves. And Paul faced false teachings many times. In Galatians 1, he talks of some pushing another gospel.

[6:48] It's very dangerous stuff. And so we must be on guard. The church must be a safe haven. That's God's plan for it, that the flock will be in the fold. They'd be guarded. They'd be protected.

It'd be a place of protection where the sheep are safe and are cared for. But the enemy will want to stir up strife and distract us from our godly purpose.

So we must be on guard. Paul says watch. Watch as a shepherd would watch. Watch out for danger. We need vigilance, people of God, don't we? And we know in the current world, the modern media, the various social influences and preachers, so-called, across all the means of media.

There's a lot of danger out there, a lot of voices. And some are discordant. And some are downright unorthodox and not biblical. So we have need of vigilance.

It tells of the church's protection. That's why we care about that as a church. And the enemy is against the people of God. We think of it, brothers and sisters, even in our own context, the dangers of divisiveness, of a critical spirit, of sowing discord.

[7:56] These are dangers that face every church. The danger of division, of factions over preferences, of personalities, of procedures. The church is under threat.

And God wants a godly unity, an interdependence, where we're a family joined together in harmony. But sometimes people are contentious, pushing their own personal agendas or preferences.

And that's something we must guard against prayerfully. And watch out for. Take heed to yourself. Don't get it wrong yourself. And make sure the doctrine, the teaching is rightful.

We must watch out for murmuring, for gossip. These are all dangers that every church has to face. Basically, it's the flesh at work, isn't it?

Pride, unforgiveness, a critical spirit. But the devil would use any means at his disposal to try and hinder the work, to disrupt Christ's mission. So in our teaching as a church, we want to be guarding the flock, preaching truth, making sure it's biblical, it's sound, confronting error.

[9:01] There's the danger of biblical truth being abandoned, of doctrinal compromise. But we want rather to uphold Bible truth and sound doctrine in these days of drifting.

And we must guard, I must guard myself against toxic leadership, shepherds who lord over rather than serve. We need accountability. I need to be accountable to you.

God commands lowliness of mind, Acts 20 verse 19. None of us would get high-minded or are prideful. And we must watch out again for the dangers of apathy.

It's easy to lose our focus of worldly distractions coming in, the pressure to compromise and sacrifice biblical faithfulness to conform to worldly thinking and values and norms.

But rather that we'd be a spiritual, Christ-centered church. That would be our focus. And that's my heart for us as a church. And that was Paul's heart for the church at Ephesus.

[10:02] As he waved them goodbye, he wanted to make sure these things were looked after. We want to watch over the flock with love and care. That's our motive. And this goes through every department of our church too.

That even, for example, in the youth group, that our youth program would be mindful of the pressures that face our young people. Young adults too.

We think of the pressures. We want to watch over our younger age set and nurture them in the faith to see them grow and thrive and be blessed. We think of the watching ministry of the prayer team, of those who are praying.

Hopefully it's all of us praying. That ministry of intercession is a watching ministry, isn't it? We're watching out for each other. We're praying for one another. We're interceding. We're standing in the gap.

Ezekiel 22 verse 30. That there's a watching ministry there. And really every believer, we need to cultivate this discernment, to look out for one another. Hey, we hear someone talking about they're going over and following this doctrine, this preacher, this ministry, and it might be a questionable one.

[11:09] Hey, we want to look out for each other and lovingly guide and be watchful. Test teachings yourself. Discern everything. Weigh it all up. Make sure it's scriptural. Refuse gossip.

And promote reconciliation. The Bible talks about some that their words will eat like a canker. That's 2 Timothy 2:17. Like a cancer. You know, toxic words.

People moaning and whinging or murmuring. Disputing. Contending. In that contentious spirit.

That's going to tear down the church. But rather, let's have conversations that build up one another. Amen? Let's have a focus that words that we say are going to be words that edify. Words that build up. So may we be watchful, brothers and sisters. Watch out. And care.

The motive for us is to care, isn't it? That is what drives us. So when we notice another one's distress, we'll offer prayer for them. When we see someone struggling, we get wind of someone struggling.

[12:10] Maybe struggling with doubt. We gently guide them to the truth. We look out for one another. We watch out for one another. It's not just the shepherd, as in the under-shepherd, the pastor, doing all the watching.

We're watching out for one another, aren't we? Watching out, looking out for one another. And so we can create that safe haven. That this fold, this fold for the flock, will be a safe place.

And, you know, brothers and sisters, we've always got to be guarding that. Someone was telling me about someone who was talking about coming to our church. And they were an abuser. Literally an abuser.

And so, as a shepherd, I want to guard against that. I want to be very mindful about that. Some people come to church with not the right motive. And that's, you know, naturally, we want everyone to be safe.

We want this to be a safe zone. A place where everyone can feel that they're sheltered, they're shepherded, they're supported. There's care here. There's a watchfulness. That's a good watch. Keeping out that which is going to harm.

[13:09] And keeping in that which is good. Upbuilding, edifying the church. That we can be as God's family. Where all can grow. And we can shelter. Find the strength in the church.

That we can shelter from the storm. From any storm. And so, we must maintain a vigilance. Watch. Watch. That faithfulness of watching. The second thing is that Paul talks about the word of God. When he issues this charge to the elders at Ephesus, he says these words in Acts 20, verse 32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. What does Paul emphasize here? He emphasizes the word of God. And here's how a church can grow strong. When he's issuing this charge, when he's passing the baton to the elders at Ephesus, he's spent two, three years ministry there. He wants to leave them in good hands. He says, hey, make sure that the word has the rightful place. The word of God. I commend you to God and to the word, to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up.

[14:18] Here's how a church can grow strong. It's a Bible-centered church. When people ask what kind of church are we, I say we're a Bible-believing church. We're a Bible-believing Baptist church.

Okay, we believe the Bible. We believe the word of God. We're word-centered. And Paul calls on the preachers here, in verse 28, he says to feed the church of God. Well, this word feed, it means to shepherd.

It includes shepherding. It's not just a teaching per se, but there's more to it. There's a nurturing. There's a guiding, a protecting. And here's how a church gets nourished. It's by the word. It's by the word that we're building up the church. He says the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. And so here's how a church gets nourished. Paul says he fed the flock with the whole counsel of God, verse 27.

Now, sometimes my sheep get hungry in the backyard. And Julie says, oh, the sheep are whinging again. And you can hear them, it's tea time.

[15:22] And I've got to go down to the back paddock and go to the grain store and get the pellets and throw them in the trough for the sheep to get a feed. Hungry sheep want to get fed, all right?

I hope you're hungry this morning. You want to get fed with the word of God. You're in the right place, God helping you. That we can be where the word is. We'll get fed. We'll get nourished. And this is what makes a church strong.

That's why we care about the Bible in this church. That's why we've got a teaching emphasis on our Bible school night, for example. There's no reason for any of us to be malnourished.

If we get to where the word is, you know, if we're hungry enough, we'll go to where the word is. If we're hungry enough, we'll want to get fed, all right? We'll want to get nourished by the word of God.

So don't miss out on the feeding times, if at all possible, all right? If at all possible, the fellowship times, it's where we get fed. It's where you can be nurtured and nourished up in your faith.

[16:21] And this is how we can thrive and grow as a church. When we get where the word is, when we get nourished, we can be like those hungry sheep and we want to be where the shepherd is. We want to be where his hand is giving forth the food, the feed that we need.

And the church is precious, brothers and sisters, and we count it important. And this is not some social club, as we say. This is the flock of God, the people of God that he's purchased his sheep, his precious sheep.

And he's purchased, it says, with his own blood. Every person we serve has an infinite worth. And so we need to get this mindset amongst all of us, too, all right?

Even the people that we might have some angst with, they're the precious souls that God has purchased, blood-bought saints of God.

And even when some people might rub us up the wrong way, we need to believe that they are blood-bought saints of God. They're part of the flock. And let's learn to forbear one another.

[17:28] Every person has a value, an infinite worth. Some we might look on and discount. We have our own personal prejudices about. But when we

get this concept that we're a blood-bought people, then it makes us see people differently.

Amen? It makes us see beyond, oh, I don't like what they look like or what they act like or where they, you know, the connotations of that person. We look past that.

We take that off and we see them like Jesus would see them. Hey, that's a precious blood-bought soul. That's someone for whom Christ died. And so I should love them and be forbearing.

It's a sacred privilege, really, and it should transform any ministry we deliver, that we look at people like Jesus looks at them. All right? And as a church, we stand on the authority of the precious word of God, the power of the word of God.

We have a perfect Bible, a perfect Bible, and we stand unashamed in that confession. The devil hates that. The devil doesn't want you to believe in the Bible.

[18:33] He wants you to doubt God, to believe the skeptics, the so-called scholars. But, brothers and sisters, we need the word. We're a Bible-believing church. We believe this book. We believe it's true.

We believe it's authority. We believe the word of God edifies. It sanctifies. It strengthens. It's got an enduring quality. It says that the word of the Lord endureth forever.

And the word of God is able. It's able to build you up. It's powerful. It's got power. It's alive. It's living. It's powerful. It's transforming. And so we believe the Bible.

We want to get that very clear. If someone stands against the Bible, then we stand against them.

We want to stand for the word of God resolutely. The word of God that builds up the believer in hope, in heavenly mindedness, in holiness.

And the word for build up, it has the idea of constructing a house, of layer upon layer. The word of God is able to build you up. As that scripture is the blueprint, we can be built up.

[19:32] As a tree pictured here, growing, nourished, fed by the word of God. Well, Psalm 119, 130 says, The entrance of thy words giveth light.

It giveth understanding unto the simple. We need to learn to think biblically, people of God, don't we? To be led by the word of God. It says the word of his grace is able to build you up.

Not only build you up, but give you an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified. So there's spiritual riches here. There's a sure heavenly hope. There's an inheritance here.

It says it's able to give you an inheritance. There's, by faith, we can see eternity. We can see the finished work, as we heard about. We can see that there is a purchase price paid.

We see spiritual riches assured for us, a heavenly hope. And so here's what makes a strong church. The entrance of thy words. It opens our eyes. We see things, truly see things.

[20:32] There's a spiritual nourishment for God's people every time we can fellowship. Where every ministry, every service is Bible-centred, Bible-based, founded upon God's word.

And as a church, we care about imparting biblical truth. We could put it that we have a high view of scripture, a high view of scripture. This term, you could define it as we believe in the Bible.

It's inspired, authoritative, inerrant, infallible. The source of truth for faith and practice. In contrast to those who would view the Bible as some human document subject to error or scholarly criticism.

We've got a high view of scripture. We believe the Bible. Amen. This is the authority. This is the authority. Not the Pope in Rome. Not any man or woman. No school of theology.

The Bible. That is our authority. So don't miss out on the feeding times where you can get that authority of God's word, the teaching of his word. And to have that imparting, that feeding time around the word.

[21:40] We all want that. We want each one of everyone who serves to have the Bible-centred focus, that Bible-based focus. So that in every ministry of our church, in our youth and children's works, in our young adults programs, we want to teach biblical truth.

We want it to be Bible-based truth. Bible teaching. Grounding them in the faith. Even the songs that we sing. I know that our music ministers are very conscious of this.

That the songs that we sing are scriptural. They are true to scripture. They're leading hearts to truth. As Colossians 3.16. Teaching and admonishing one another. There's truth here.

Even as you're singing. There's truth. There's Bible truth there. In our outreach too, that it's faithfully declaring the gospel. The sound preaching of the gospel.

And we saw a soul call on the Savior yesterday. This is happening as we're reaching out. Faithfully reaching out. Souls are calling on the Savior. And the entrance of thy words giveth light.

[22:45] Our outreach is Bible-centred. On the home front too, God helping us as families. That you're teaching the word of God to your children. Listen diligently, Deuteronomy 6.6-7.

May we be such a church, people of God. The flock of God. That we care about the word of God. That we stand for the word of God. Unashamedly stand. Resolutely stand. Stand firmly. Aggressively. For the word of God. And here's how we will grow. As we're united in the truth of God.

That will be a strength for what we do. Will be anchored against the shifting cultural tides of our world. The third thing that Paul emphasises is work.

He says, Acts 20.33. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities.

[23:42] And to them that were with me. I have showed you all things how that so labouring you ought to support the weak. And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus. How he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul says, do the work. Paul says, do the work. Put your hands to the plough. Work and give. As he himself demonstrated.

Here's what makes a church strong. Work. Now of course we as a church we don't say good works get you to heaven. But hey, if you're on the way to heaven. The natural consequence is, hey, something will happen.

There'll be some action. And here's what makes a church strong. In Nehemiah's day it said the people had a mind to work. That's Nehemiah 4 verse 6. To get things done.

Alright. I know sometimes I get frustrated. I've got some work that needs doing in my garden. I've had to be put off now and again. Someone was sick and they didn't come.

[24:45] And there's work that needs to be done. We're crying out for work that needs to be done. There's work that needs to be done in this church. By this church. And in Nehemiah's day the people had a mind to work.

Paul talks about labouring in the context. He talks about how he's ministered unto his own necessities. How he's labouring. And labouring we ought to support the weak.

Paul talks about labouring. He's the living demonstration of it. And he's saying to these elders at Ephesus. Hey, I'm leaving you in charge. I'm passing the battle on. There's some work to be done. And Paul talks about his own labour. As that living example. He talks of selfless labour. Of giving of himself. This must be our heart. People of God. People of God.

And saying, Know this, That your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Paul wants to foster this vibrant, United church.

[25:42] And brother, sister, Can I leave you this challenge? Just this thought to kind of take home with you today. Find your place to serve.

These truths apply to every ministry. Paul says we ought to shoulder the load. And it's true for us. There's work to do. So may our work be sacrificial.

May our work be marked by sacrifice. Sacrifice. And humility. It's interesting. Where it talks there. This is verse 35. So labouring. The word for labouring.

It tells of toiling to a point of exhaustion. Okay. This is not just, Oh, I'll do a little bit. You're in boots and all. You're in all in.

All in. It's talking about a toiling to exhaustion. And Paul's not putting this as some kind of yoke. But it's a glad service, isn't it?

[26:43] To serve the saviour is a glad thing. This is not something that, Oh, the pastor's forcing us to go to every meeting. The pastor's forcing us to do this and do that.

And if we don't, we're going to be in big trouble. We serve out of love. Out of grace. Out of glad service. Out of joyful service.

Paul talks about how he gladly will spend and be spent. That's a glad service. The precious people of God.

The blood-bought people of God. We want to be there when they gather. And see them grow. And encourage one another. And spend and be spent. What better thing can we spend ourselves upon or for?

And Paul's a living example here of how we're to give freely, sacrificially, of time, of talent, of treasure. Paul shows his generous heart. As our Lord, he quotes, tells us, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

[27:47] It's not an irksome thing to give. It's a blessed thing. And this word blessed, it's got the meaning of a deep, abiding happiness that circumstances cannot alter.

There's a blessing beyond that human dimension of happiness. And Paul lived out this truth of labouring, of loving, of giving, of his tears, of his testimony, of his time.

Friendly giving. There's a joy, brother, sister, in pouring yourself out at the Saviour's feet. Paul talks about, in Philippians 2.17, you could put it, what he says, that he's pouring himself out like a drink offering.

That's the sense of it there. He's offering himself like an offering of a drink that's poured out on the altar. As we know, our Lord's blood was poured out, freely poured out.

In 2 Timothy 4.7, likewise, he uses this Greek word, which has got the sense of a vessel poured out. That's the picture of ministry.

[28:49] That you're pouring yourself out. That you're expending yourself. That you're absolutely exhausting yourself, pouring yourself out. How can you pour yourself out into another soul?

How can you pour yourself out into the flock of God? How can you pour yourself out such that you're expending yourself? And Paul demonstrated that. And he says there's a joy in pouring himself out.

There's a joy there. It's more blessed to give. Paul says we are to support the weak as well.

Interesting that. You know, we could think, well, I'll give ministry, I'll serve God, but don't ask me to serve that one.

Don't ask me to serve that one. Support the weak. Who are the weak? Probably the people we don't maybe appreciate.

No one should be neglected. Sit in the church. The word for support. It means to lift up. Support the weak. Help someone carry their load. Maybe the weak have got addictions.

[30:00] Maybe the weak have got hang-ups. Maybe the weak are pretty weak in their Christian walk. They're not much of a testimony. Maybe the weak are the people you kind of don't want to sit next to.

The people that might smell a bit. Or whatever it be. I'm just using my imagination. All the connotations. All the human connotations that can come to your mind of your prejudice.

Let's face it. Your pride. Your pride. Your pridefulness. Your vanity. Oh, don't let me mix with such a person as that. Paul says support the weak.

Support the weak. Lift them up. The ones who need help. Carrying a load. That's why we try to care. God helping us. And there's a true joy in giving. And it's a true joy.

It doesn't come from accumulation. But from contribution. Think how you can give. God wants his church to be working. So in this sense of functioning. Of operative. And each and every one of us.

[30:59] Think of it, brother, sister, as the flock of God. Every one of us is called in some capacity to serve. To minister. Paul says to the Ephesus elders. He says support the weak.

Don't overlook them. Support them. Don't overlook them. Support and serve. And we all have areas of responsibility. We've all got areas. Now, of course, the Ephesus elders had oversight.

They were overseers. Bishops. But there's a sense in some regards. Where we've all got something we've got oversight of. Areas that we've got oversight of. For example. Every believer is called to serve.

May we all be energized. To work. To labor. Really, there's no greater calling for you. Than to serve the Lord. And his church. So, for example. I know some of you are minded to come and pray.

Before the meeting. Good on you. Those that take the mind to say. Hey, I'm going to labor in prayer. For this time of fellowship to come. The son that are greeters.

[32:00] That are serving in hospitality areas. Offering warm welcomes. I know they had a whole band of them there this morning. And it's like. Oh, I can't get through the door.

There's too many people wanting to shake my hand. They're offering that warm welcome. They're offering that invitation. That receptivity. There's a joyfulness.

They're welcoming. They're giving their time to welcome newcomers. Strangers. To make people feel at home. To show them a scene. That's part of service. Maybe volunteering.

Serving in the nursery. Hey, we could do with that sometimes. Cleaning the church. I know some take the initiative to grab the vacuum cleaner. Good on you. Good on you, brother.

Sister. Use some initiatives. Use some holy spiritual initiative. To pick up the vacuum cleaner. To give without applause.

[32:54] All the unsung services of the church. You that invest in young believers. That's service. That's a labor in the Lord. That's a good thing.

You're investing in the next generation. You're sharing your wisdom and encouragement. The quiet intercessors. Who may not even be present. But they're watching. And praying for us.

Even now. Interceding. Quietly, faithfully praying. There's a labor for all to do. And we can all serve. We think of ushers. Of musicians. Of the kitchen team.

The tech team. Hey, there's people that sit in that booth there. That no one says hello to. Because they're too busy. Beaver away. Pressing the buttons. And making everything working. And you know, there's a blessing there in serving.

Whatever your capacity. We're talking about a new choir. There's opportunity. If you're fine in voice. Or you want to be. To volunteer. All right. There might be some. There might be some selection criteria there.

[33:54] But. And also like serving in the music department. Of the church. Hey. There's certain ministries. Hey. Be there. And serve where you can. And join in.

Serve with joy. In every way you can. We think of care ministries. Of the church. I know. Sister Margaret. We've got a team. Of people. Just going out. And just going and visiting those. That are maybe a bit disconnected. Maybe through illness. Bereavement. Crisis. Offering practical help. It's Christ-centered hope. Isn't it? It's more blessed to give than to receive.

Think of the youth team. The children's workers. The Sunday school. And those that have kind of covered the Sunday school. In recent times too. There's a blessing there. As you serve. You build the church.

And you minister to the Lord. And so. Friends. Think of it today. Every believer. We can ask. What can I give? What can I give? Rather than. What can I get?

[34:51] Think of it. Do we have that heart? What can I give? Rather than. What can I get? Sometimes people come to a church. And they think. Well what can I get out of it? But it's rather. What can we give?

Isn't it? And so. We can make. Maybe some thoughts about. What can I give? What can I give? It talks in 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 3. About. A work of faith.

And a labor of love. A work of faith. And a labor of love. Hey just to think. To make it practical just now. Maybe for yourself. Make an inventory.

If you like. I know there's. Worldly concepts of that too. And there's a spiritual dimension. I think. Make an inventory. What am I good at? What are the things that I like to do?

What are the skills that I've got? My skills. My abilities. My knowledge. What can I do? What have I got? That I can give. And then maybe think. Hey yeah. Maybe I could volunteer in this ministry.

[35:47] Because that matches my skill set. That matches what I can do. And a great church. When you think about it. Is where everyone sees a work that they can do. A work that they can do.

And they jump in. They work joyfully. Not grudgingly. Unto the Lord. So we can be a church. God helping us. Where every member gives. Usher serve with joy.

Cooks prepare meals. Quiet intercessors pray faithfully behind the scenes. Here's what builds a strong church. And don't ever feel like. Oh I can't do anything. You can do something.

Just got to think. Look at what you can do. Look at what your skills and abilities are. And what you're feeling God's calling. And jump in. There's a sense where in a church.

There's a synergy. It means a working together. It is a Greek word. Not in the Bible per se. But there's some extrapolations. Of working together. Or synergy.

[36:45] That is in the Bible. And we think how the church. Is really where everyone ministers together. When you think this concept. This term of synergy. Where there's greater combined effect.

Than each of us working individually. One by one. So when we work together. More gets done. Is the point. As a greater result. And when we work together.

We can make a greater kingdom impact. It tells us in Ephesians 4. Of this analogy. Of the body. Of the body of Christ. It says from whom?

From Christ. The whole body. Fittedly joined together. Compacted by that which every joint supplieth. According to the effectual working. In the measure of every part. Make an increase of the body.

Unto the edifying of itself. In love. So there's a picture here. Of a body. Of your functioning. Human body. Every part doing its part. Playing its function.

[37:40] Operating. Supplying something. And it's the picture of the church. What can we give? Every member can supply something. Whether it be prayer. Service. Encouragement. This phrase.

Fittedly joined. It's got this idea of this harmonious. Knitting together. Like living organs in a body. That's the picture. Of a great church. Isn't it? As we watch. As we feed.

As we labour. The church is going to thrive. In that love and unity. The tech team. And the tea server. Are equally vital. And no role is above another. We've all got a role to play.

It's like in the body. Every part. It's required. Every part. Is essential. So when every member functions. The whole body grows. So we could say.

As it reads. That every member. Even the ones that we might consider. More feeble. The weak parts. The maybe less obvious. The kind of hidden parts. They're still necessary.

[38:36] And it's the same in the church. So what makes a church great? What makes a great church? The right spirit. I think. The right spirit.

Grace. Harmony. We can have. The right doctrine. And the wrong spirit. Rather have the right spirit. The right spirit.

Grace. Harmony. The spirit of service. Of humility. Of love. Of mutual submission. Ephesians 4. Submitting yourselves. One to another. In the fear of God. Hey.

The spirit. That counters the flesh. And I can have pride. I can have flesh. I can have apathy. God helping us. We don't want that.

Do we? We want unity. Not division. We want that mindset. Everyone has value. And no task is too small. No role. Insignificant. So when you might be. You know.

[39:29] Quietly. Washing the dishes. After the church service. Or tidying up. Here and there. That's important. You have value. And every role.

Has value. How can we play our part? Get involved. Get involved. Please. Join. A ministry.

Sign up. To serve. Whether in music. Some of you can play things. And you're not playing. Now of course there's. Requirements. Not every volunteer can serve.

But. If you have some way to serve. Offer yourself. Maintenance. There's work that needs doing. The children's work.

Mercy ministries. There's lots you can be a part of. And start. Start. Small. But start. Encourage one another. Write some notes of encouragement.

[40:25] Of thanks. Hey we could do with a phone team. To do some telemarketing. As in. Following up people. Alright. Honestly. To. Quietly. Reach out.

To pray. Pray together. To share burdens. To offer help. The struggling members. Some might need. A meal even. Some. A help.

Practically. Discover your gift. That inventory. Hey. Yeah. I could do. I could use that skill that I have. I could put my hand up to serve.

Seek God's guidance. To deploy. Your spiritual gifts. For the body's. Edification. And. Everyone contributes. You all can. And here's what makes the church a family.

It makes the church strong. Against the enemy. Against the storm. When we've got that unity. See we've got the right spirit. Hey. We're not wanting to be. Up and. In the face of people.

[41:21] Because there's a pridefulness. But because. We've got the right spirit. To be humble. To be holy. To serve. And be willing to serve.

Humbly. God commands. Godly labor. And he talks about the labor of love. You see that there. Of Hebrews 6.10. The work.

Your labor of love. You've ministered to people. You've served people. You've got a heart for the saints. There's a diligence there too. You're not slothful.

So think of it. As we. Wrap it up. We think. Paul. Says. Take heed to the flock. They're purchased with the blood. Of God. He says. Keep watch.

Care for souls. We need spiritual protection. Against doctrinal error. May we serve together. May we labor. With the right spirit. May we not be.

[42:19] Reticent. May we not be. Unwilling. To serve. Ask God. How can I pour out my life. How can I pour out my life.

Like Paul. To labor. Even to the point of exhaustion. To labor selflessly. Hey. I'm not going to limit. Within my own. Human frame.

I'm going to. Pour myself out. Like a drink offering. To serve God freely. With joy. With gladness. Pour out your life.

Serve. Love. Give. We don't know how many days. We've got to do the pouring out. Pour out now. Don't wait. And ask God to help you. To watch over your heart.

With vigilance. And prayer. That as a church. We'll be a great church. That will love souls. We'll watch. And we'll warn. And the motive is love.

[43:15] We're not watching. Because we want to pick on people. Oh.

They've got this wrong with them. We're watching. Because we want to protect. The flock. There's a watchfulness. Because of love. We want protection.

We're warned. We watch. With love. And care. As our motivation. And we want to see others feeding. Around the word. That everything that we do. Every ministry of the church.

Is bible based. We love the word of God. And we stand firm on it. We won't be deviating from that. We won't be budged from the authority. Of the word of God. We believe it from cover to cover.

And we labour. In love too. Not for applause. But for Christ. So. We watch. Because we love souls. We feed on the word.

Because we love the word of God. And we labour. Because we are labouring in love. For Christ. And Paul tells. How we can serve joyfully. In whatever that we do.

[44:11] He says. To the Colossians. The ministry. That you've received of the Lord. He says. Fulfill it. Fulfill it. Don't let it be. When you get to glory.

And the Lord. Welcomes you. Well done. That. Something was missing. Oh. I could have done that. But I never did. Will there be regret in heaven? That would be a shame. Wouldn't it? Sure you're saved. It's all the work of God. The finished work.

But to miss out. Hey. I could have fulfilled my ministry. But I didn't. Let's be that church. Brother. Sister. That watches for souls. With vigilance. Watch out for one another.

Speak the truth in love. Serve with sacrifice. Be unified in love. God wants this church to be thriving. Alive. And so we will watch and warn.

[45:05] Because we love and care for souls. And God's truth. We'll want the word of God. We'll care about it. Because we stand for sound doctrine. And Bible centric service.

In everything that we do. And we'll care about work. Because we want to function and operate biblically. With everyone fulfilling their roles. So think of it friends.

Perhaps there's a ministry need. That you've hesitated to embrace. Some of you. You know what to do. You've been trained. You've got the training. What's stopping you?

Brother. Sister. Be encouraged. And this is not to condemn. But just to think. Have I got a gift.

That's lying dormant. Is there a brother or sister.

That needs my ministry. And I'm not giving it to them. The church needs your watch. Your word.

And your work. Ask. How can I serve? How can I serve?

[46:03] Let us pray. Lord we thank you for your blood bought people. We pray that we would have that thought of souls. And Lord. If there's any here present.

They've yet to trust you. They've yet to know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. They've yet to trust you as their saviour. Lord let it be today that they will say.

Lord Jesus thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. Rising again. And Lord that I can trust you to forgive me. Fully. Of all my sin. All my guilt and shame.

That you've paid for my sin. And I receive that gift of your salvation. That you can forgive me my sin. And cleanse my heart. Lord we pray that each one might know the saving grace of God today. And Lord help us to be as it were stewards of that grace. That we'll have a mind to how you can use us Lord. That we'll have a mind to work.

[47:01] A mind to serve. Lord give us wisdom that you will lead us so. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.