

A blueprint for church life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 February 2018

Preacher: Benjamin Wilks

[0 : 0 0] at the first letter to Timothy and finding there a blueprint for church life. And since we're beginning a new series in a relatively short book, I thought it would do as good as we did with Habakkuk to read the whole book through. It will take us a little while, but it is good that we spend time hearing directly from God's Word, and hopefully it will help us to see more of the flow of the book and how it hangs together as we read the whole thing through. So if you've got a Bible there with you, do please turn to the first letter to Timothy. And we begin, therefore, in chapter 1 and verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, my true son in the faith, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing

God's work, which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that confirms, conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God which he entrusted to me. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our

Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you might fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

[3 : 46] This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

This has now been witnessed to at the proper time, and for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle. I am telling the truth, I am not lying, and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. I also want the women to dress modestly with decency and propriety, adorning themselves not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not the one deceived.

It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. Here is a trustworthy saying.

[5 : 02] Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

They must first be tested, and then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

[6 : 15] A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing to you with these instructions, so that if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great. He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

[7 : 36] If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

Have nothing to do with godless myths or old wives' tales. Rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

[8 : 41] Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn, first of all, to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family, and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

The widow who is really in need and left all alone, puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame. Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[9 : 55] No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over 60, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble, and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list, for when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge.

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house, and not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to.

So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes, and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them, and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

[11 : 03] The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker deserves his wages.

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. But those elders who are sinning, you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure. Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them.

The sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever. All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.

[12 : 17] Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect, just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better, because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers, and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves.

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise, and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.

They have an unhealthy interest in controversies, and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth, and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation, and are trapped, and into many foolish and harmful desires, that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[13 : 28] Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession, in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who, while testifying before Pontius Pilate, made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time.

God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal, and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and might forever.

Amen. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves, as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

[14 : 55] Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed, and in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all. Amen. Well, we're starting this new series this evening, then, as we look at this first letter to Timothy.

And in a couple of minutes, we're going to look at, or at least begin to answer, three key questions. Who the letter is from, who it's to, and why it was written.

But I thought before we dive into that ourselves, perhaps it would be helpful to have a little more of an overview of the letter, if you like.

And since I have come across this video that does an excellent job of providing us with that, I thought rather than me trying to replicate it or come up with my own version, that we would watch this video together.

[16 : 00] So, providing the technology behaves itself, we'll watch this video through, and then we'll dive in together. Well, there you go, folks.

That's what 1 Timothy is all about. That's a video from an organization called The Bible Project. You can find their website, and they've got videos like that for, I think, every book of the Bible.

Some of them get a few videos for different sections. And they've also done this book, which has those kind of posters in the book as a coffee table book.

So I'll put this out, and you can come and, you know, if you didn't get every detail of that section on 1 Timothy, as it went through, then you can have a look at that or go and find it, find the video on the website later on if that would be helpful.

I hope that was a helpful summary for you. There are one or two bits in their interpretation that I'm not 100% convinced by, and we will come to those as we go through.

[16 : 59] But in its broader outline, I think it's very helpful to see how that comes together. So as we dive in, as I said, we'll tackle these kind of introductory questions as to who this letter is from and to and why Paul wrote it in the first place.

There you go. I've given away the answer to the first question already. You probably will be thinking that this first point, who wrote the letter, is going to be pretty brief. After all, the answer is right there in the first word of the book, isn't it?

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. And you'd be right, this is a fairly brief point, but possibly not quite as brief as you might think. It might not surprise you to learn that for many people, the fact that the name is there at the beginning of the letter isn't really to be trusted, is it?

That in the past few decades, many people have questioned whether Paul really did write this letter. In fact, some people would say it was written a couple of hundred years after his death.

Now, they give three key reasons for this assertion. Firstly, they say that the letter seems to be concerned with a more formal structure of the church, with official office bearers and so on, that they say is more in keeping with the second or third century AD than with those early years of the church and with what Paul commends in other places.

[18 : 25] Secondly, they reckon that the themes, the doctrinal emphases of the letter and indeed the vocabulary it uses don't quite match up with Paul's other writings.

And thirdly, many would say that the timings just don't fit in, that we can't see when in the narrative of Acts Paul could have written these letters. I say letters because this is applied to the three letters that are kind of together referred to as the pastoral epistles 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus and these same arguments are applied to all of them.

Now, on one level, if we do believe that God inspired the words of the Bible, it should be enough for us that it says Paul right here and we can just move on. But my feeling is that it's easier for us to keep believing that the Bible is God's inspired word.

If we can see a few reasons why it does actually make logical sense to enthusiastically affirm that Paul wrote these letters. So if you're worried after this morning, don't worry.

I'm not going to leave you wondering this time in any sense at all, okay? We are very confident here. Let me just give you three brief answers to those assertions and if you want to dig in further, I can point you to other resources because if you're going to try and convince a New Testament lecturer at university, you will need a little more than we're going to get just now.

[19 : 51] But for most of us, it's helpful just to have a few quick answers. So this first accusation that it has a more structured view of the church. Well, firstly, it's true to say that this does seem to be a slightly more organized, slightly more official view of church than some other writings do give.

But we should set against that the fact that as early as Acts chapter 6, the church is appointing deacons, that there are numerous references to elders and to overseers through the book of Acts, not least the fact that Paul meets up with these Ephesian elders, the elders of this congregation in Acts chapter 20.

So whilst it's true that there is more in the way of formal structure in the pastoral epistles, it's hardly a great leap to see that development could have come about easily by sometime in the 60s AD.

as for differences of themes and vocabulary, well, different themes are essentially accounted for by the fact that Paul is writing to a different situation.

It would be fascinating to apply some of the analysis that these critical scholars like to use to writing from other contexts. Say we did an analysis of a couple of different essays that I wrote at college.

[21 : 11] If we compare the vocabulary in a 3,000 word review of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship, if we compare the vocabulary there to a 3,000 word exegetical essay on a passage from Isaiah, well, okay, there are going to be plenty of similarities, plenty of similar language, because on a very broad level the subject is the same.

But there would be plenty of differences too, wouldn't there? As differing technical concepts come in to answer different questions. In fact, other scholars have looked at the same vocabulary analyses by these critical scholars and essentially concluded there just isn't enough information to justify asserting the great divide that some will try to.

We also know that for at least some of his letters Paul used what's called an amanuensis, which as best I can tell is a fancy word for a secretary. Sometimes even to the point of referring to such a person, to this secretary as a co-author.

So it seems likely that in Colossians 1.1 when Paul writes Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the church at Colossae, that that's what's happening, that Timothy himself there is serving as Paul's amanuensis.

And the role of amanuensis, at least in that case, seems to include enough scope and therefore influence over the language that gets used for him to be referred to as a co-author.

[22 : 44] Now whether Paul is using one here to write to Timothy, whether he is in other contexts or whether some of those are different amanuensis or some of them Paul writing himself, we don't know any of that.

But there is at least the likelihood that in some of these cases a different person is involved alongside Paul in the production of the letter. And that will account for variety in the vocabulary.

As far as differing themes and doctrinal emphases, well they're accounted by the fact that Paul is dealing with different problems. It would be no good for him to just offer a quick sticking plaster to the presenting issue and then go straight into his favourite hobby horse.

That would be no more appropriate than if I'd somehow managed to make that book review and that essay on Isaiah about basically the same thing. It's also true that Paul's letters, the rest of them and these pastoral epistles are nowhere near as different as is sometimes made out.

Chris Green, one of my lecturers down in London, he points out that Titus chapter 3 is one of the most intense summaries of what presents itself as Paul's theology in the whole of the New Testament where we find key themes appearing of salvation and justification and works of righteousness that are unable to save and adoption and renewal and the work of the Spirit and hope and all leading to the obedient Christian life.

[24 : 12] That's there in Titus chapter 3 which is supposedly different to Paul's usual emphases. Something of a nonsense I think.

Finally, as for timings, well there's a few possibilities but the most likely is that actually Paul's imprisonment that's recorded at the end of the book of Acts did not result in his execution but rather that at the end of the book of Acts he was released, that he travelled further likely including out to Spain and then later he was re-arrested, re-imprisoned and then executed.

This possibility is supported by other writings from around that time including a letter called First Clement that was likely written near the end of the first century AD.

It is entirely feasible therefore for these letters to fit in. All that to say yes, Paul the Apostle wrote this letter.

It has his name, we do not need to worry about it. Second question then, who did he write to? Again the answer is pretty obvious, isn't it? Verse 2, to Timothy, my true son in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

[25 : 30] Now if Paul is writing to one solitary individual, why are we looking at it today you might wonder. Well this one isn't quite as simple as that.

He isn't really ultimately writing to just Timothy. Now I'm not saying along with these pesky critical scholars that Timothy is an entirely fictitious person made up by some third century author.

I'm not for a moment saying that. That's not an accusation we need to take that seriously. Timothy absolutely was a real person. But at the end of the letter in chapter 6 and verse 21 Grace be with you all.

That final sentence. The you there in that sentence is plural. That's why the NIV actually adds the word all there for us to clarify. The ESV just puts you a little footnote that says the you is plural but the NIV guys I guess don't trust you to read the footnotes so they thought it was better to stick all in for you.

And as we work our way through this letter what we're going to find is that the instructions that Paul gives whilst they are often directed to Timothy seem to assume that the rest of the church is at least listening in.

[26 : 53] So he does address Timothy directly. But if you've thought that that means you don't need to worry about it because you're not a young church leader worried about false teachers in your congregation well think again because Paul is expecting the whole church to be paying attention as he writes this letter.

But there is this focus on Timothy and so it's worth taking a moment to knock down a couple of misconceptions about Timothy. Clearly he is a fairly young guy 1 Timothy 4.12 don't let anyone look down on you because you are young.

But often we've ended up with a picture of Timothy as not merely young but also inexperienced and ill-equipped and wavering and doubtful and fearful we've ended up with this view of Timothy as likely to be bowled over by these experienced powerful forces that are arrayed against him.

But actually this isn't really the picture that the Bible paints us of Timothy. As that video pointed out Timothy was amongst Paul's team of co-workers. Paul was impressed enough by Timothy that he took him along on his journeys and mentored him and then started sending him out to other churches as well.

So we find in Acts 17 we find Paul leaving Berea in fact fleeing from a mob who forced them out of Thessalonica and then followed them to Berea and are inciting the crowds there.

[28 : 18] So Paul is fleeing away from these crowds and he leaves Silas and Timothy there in Berea in that difficult awkward situation. Clearly there is a level of trust there that is at odds with that idea of him as inexperienced and ill-equipped.

He also tells the Corinthians in chapter 4 of that letter that he is writing to warn them verse 14 and in order that they may imitate Paul he is sending them Timothy verse 17.

So there are issues in Corinth that need to be addressed and part of that is that Paul writes them a letter and the other part of it is he sends them Timothy. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy my son whom I love who is faithful in the Lord he will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

So there are significant problems in the church at Corinth and Paul sends Timothy to sort them out and we find the same here with Timothy in Ephesus. chapter 1 verse 3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer.

In other words what he is telling Timothy now is the same as the reason he was sent there in the first place. He is being told to command certain people not to teach false doctrines.

[29 : 43] Now that is not a job that any sensible organized institution would send just anyone to do is it? If you have watched The Apprentice some of you might remember one of Lord Sugar's aides Claude Littner he did the interview stages a few times and I think the later series he has been one of the guys that follows them around and the kind of blurb that comes up on the screen when he first appears is Claude Littner Lord Sugar's global troubleshooter.

One interview describes him as a turnaround king parachuted into ailing companies to revive their fortunes. I have an aptitude for detecting the problems then quickly resolving them he says.

That's who Timothy is. Timothy is Paul's trusted confidant his respected co-worker. Timothy is Paul's global troubleshooter maybe not with Claude's abrasive personality and somewhat autocratic style of leadership but with that same role that same trust to go anywhere to go into any situation to figure out what the issues are and get it sorted out.

Philippians chapter 2 verse 19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon that I may also be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who will show genuine concern for your welfare for everyone looks out for their own interests not those of Jesus Christ but you know that Timothy has proved himself because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me and I am confident in the Lord that I myself will soon come.

So Timothy is not inexperienced he is not ill-equipped for the task this isn't a letter that's desperately trying to equip somebody on the ground because he's there and there's nobody better now this is to encourage and strengthen somebody already well suited to the task why do that well because even the strong even the mighty can waver can have times of doubt can be unsure of how to proceed one church I know have titled their studies in Timothy when giants waver it's helpful to think this way because if we think of Timothy as young and inexperienced and ill-equipped then we can imagine the day will come when he won't be that anymore and more importantly we can imagine the day when we won't be that anymore when we'll be beyond that stage of being ill-equipped when we won't need that we can think ourselves beyond the need to listen to this letter but if

[32 : 29] Paul's global troubleshooter needs these cautions then we should be very reluctant to think that we are beyond them so why does Paul write this letter well like the assumption of Timothy's inexperience there's often a mistaken idea that this letter indeed the pastoral epistles as a whole are entirely concerned with questions of church government now to be up front a significant part of why we're embarking on a series of studies in 1st Timothy now is because we as a church need to appoint some deacons and it's helpful if we're going to do that for us to pause and think about who those men should be and what their character should be that's part of why we're looking at this book but that doesn't mean it's the only thing that this book has to say in fact across the three pastor epistles only 33 out of 242 verses are concerned with questions of church leadership in that direct sense and it's worth noticing that advocates of every form of church government from episcopacy through to the most radical congregationalism all believe that they are doing what the pastoral epistles tell them they ought to be doing so let's hope it wasn't

Paul's primary purpose in writing these letters to tell them how the church ought to be governed because if it was he did a pretty bad job of it but the broader topic of how the church ought to look well that is a significant part of the purpose of this letter and clearly the leadership of the church comes into that in that broader sense of what the church should be have a look down at chapter 3 and verse 14 although I hope to come to you soon I am writing to you with these instructions so that if I am delayed you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household which is the church of the living God the pillar and foundation of the truth so Paul explicitly says here that he is writing these things so that Timothy will know and by extension the church will know how they ought to conduct themselves linked to that how they ought to conduct themselves is to combat false teaching a second purpose of this letter as 1 verse 3 flags up there is a significant problem in

Ephesus that certain people are teaching false doctrines that's why Timothy is there that's why Paul is writing to encourage him as well as positively setting out how they ought to conduct themselves he's also doing the other side of that he's also refuting wrong teaching he's also contradicting mistaken ideas about how things should be and he does this both by encouraging Timothy in that task as we see there in 1 verse 3 verses 18 to 20 and so on so he's doing it by encouraging Timothy and he's also doing it by combating the false teachers himself because as they hear Paul's words read in this letter they will be rebuked by Paul as well as then by Timothy himself so as we dive in over the coming weeks into this letter addressed to a specific individual in a specific church many many years ago as we listen in to what Paul had to say to his trusted partner in the gospel my prayer is that we will find something of a pattern for our life as a church that we will discern together this blueprint for church life let's pray

Lord God we thank you once more that you have spoken that you are not silent as to how we ought to live as your people we thank you that you tell us that for ourselves as individuals and you tell us that for us as a community of those who love and serve you Lord as we study your word over these coming weeks would you help us to be a community of your people who behave the way you would like us to who treat one another the way we ought to who relate to the world outside the way we should we ask these things in Jesus name Amen