

We Will... Encourage (Galatians 3:25-29)

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you, Ed and Brendan and worship team, leading us in worship and bringing us before the throne of grace this morning.
- If you are a guest with us today, we find ourselves in the middle of a sermon series where we are looking through our church covenant, our member covenant.
- What is that document about? It's how every church, but how we specifically as a church are instructed in scripture, as to how do we relate to one another and what our responsibilities are to one another.
- We find ourselves today in a commitment that reads this in our member covenant. It reads this way, we will encourage singles in the ministry to the Lord and nurture godly families by protecting our marriages and raising our children in the knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- We're going to commit to encouraging singles in their ministry, but also commit to nurturing godly families.
- [1 : 0 4] This is an odd or it's a difficult topic to find one specific passage that addresses with all of these things.
- I've chosen three passages today, so I hope you have a copy of your God's Word with you. If not, there's a pew Bible in front of you that I encourage you to look at.
- But I want to talk about today and where I want to start may seem odd, because I'm not going to talk initially about singleness or singles in the church or married in the church, because I want us to understand who we are in Christ.
- Ed read the passage where we're going to begin in Galatians 3. Verses 25 through 29, I'm going to hop down into verse 26 that says, For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith.
- We are all sons of God through faith. That in Christ, we have been brought into this family of God. And so then we're next verse says, So as many as you are were baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.
- [2 : 1 5] And then there's this unifying, because we are one in Christ, there is in verse 28, neither Jew nor Greek.
- There is neither slave nor free. There is no male or female. We are all one in Christ Jesus. And this is where I want to begin. And so I want to say it this way, there are no second class citizens in the church because we are one in Christ.
- There is neither Jew nor Greek. The church has always struggled with superior thinking that led to discriminating actions from its very inception.
- We see in Acts chapter 6 that the Hellenistic Jewish widows were being neglected, the daily distribution over the Hebrew widows.
- So in the church, you have this neglect of one group or the other. Classism, racism, discrimination has been a struggle for the church from the very beginning.

[3 : 24] But I love that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. So I love that as these things, as one group may think of themselves as more important than the other, injustice is not far away.

Injustice is not far away. We can just look throughout human history, through world history, and see when one group thinks of themselves as superior to another, injustice is not far away at all.

I had an unfortunate meeting years ago with Melissa in the office. There was a lady in the church that rose concern for me.

And so I asked to meet with her. She is not a member of the church. She was just a guest for a while. But there were enough things that this guest had done and said that rose some concern significant enough for me to ask for a meeting.

And she voiced in that meeting an attitude of superiority over another group of people. And I asked her then, I said, ma'am, you have two options.

[4 : 31] You can either repent of that sin, or you'll have to no longer be welcome here. And the choice is yours. So let it be very clear.

There is racism should not exist in the church of Jesus Christ. There is neither. We are one in Christ.

And Christ has broken down those walls and let us never resurrect them in the church. Conversely, two weeks ago, I had a pastor call me here at the church.

He has a Micronesian population here in Spokane. So I asked, I had no idea how many people are there in your congregation. And he said, oh, there's about 20. Pressing a little further, I was like, great, welcome to Spokane.

And I'm so thankful you're here. And so he is a church of 20 or so people who are looking for a facility to use to worship the Lord. So I pressed in a little further.

[5 : 32] And I said, well, tell me about these families. And I said, there's about four or five families. And I said, oh, and by the way, we're all genuinely biological families. They're all sons and daughters of mine. And I was like, oh, so this is a father figure, a grandfather figure who is pastoring his family.

So I said, sir, it would be a delight of ours. And so I asked him how old he is and if he's getting tired. And he said, yes.

And so I said, it would be a delight of ours as forth for your family to join us and worship the Lord together as a church body. I would love that. And if afterward you want to meet as a family, you're welcome to do that as well.

And then we're in other conversations about possibly using the facility. But would you pray for this Micronesian group, a family group here in Spokane, who are looking for a church to worship the Lord in, a facility to worship the Lord in.

And I pray that they may join us or we may be able to provide a space. But those conversations are ongoing. But would you pray for this Micronesian group? There's neither Jew nor Greek nor slave nor free nor male or female.

[6 : 44] We are all one in Christ Jesus. Jews were preferred over Greeks. Free men were preferred over slaves. Men were esteemed over women. But not so in Christ.

The gospel destroys all proud thinking. The most important aspect of one's identity is that we are in Christ. The gospel destroys racial prejudices thinking.

It destroys all biases over social distinctions of wealth disparity or social economics disparity. Slaves are free men. It also destroys whether someone is, the thinking of one is superior over one is wealthy and over one is poor.

It destroys all forms of sexism over. Thinking male or female is better than the other. The church has no second class citizens because we are one in Christ.

And I want to begin there before we talk about singles and marries. So now though then, if you could turn to 1 Corinthians, we will find our next passage.

[7 : 49] As we turn our attention towards singles. 1 Corinthians chapter 7, first of all the whole book of Corinthians is, the church in Corinth has difficulties on many different fronts.

And there's sinful patterns and behaviors that Paul writes. And so each almost every chapter is addressing a new issue that is in the church at Corinth.

Well here we find sexual immorality is a concern. And so he writes and in this one chapter, you will see him writing to singles.

You will see him writing to husbands. You will see him writing to wives. You will see him writing to widows. You will see him writing to different groups of people. But I'm going to hone in on in this chapter, the sections in which he speaks to singles specifically.

And if we drop down into verse 6, we see this. Because our commitment here at 4th is to encourage singles.

[8 : 52] And the work that the Lord may have for them. And so how are we to do this? Well let's take our cue here from Paul writing in chapter 7 verse 6. Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

I wish you were all as I am, but each has a command. I wish you were all as I am, but each has his own gift from the Lord.

One of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and to the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.

For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. So how are we? I love in verse 7. It says that one has one gift of one kind and one has another.

One thing I want to say is this gift is a grace gift from God. And so we have a gift from God that is singleness.

[9 : 54] And one of another kind, that of marriage. And what we're not supposed to do is look down upon the other. Or look up or think one is more envious than the other.

A single person is not to look at those married and think that that state is envious. Or a married to look at a single person and say that state of being is to be envious of.

We're also not to disparage another. A married person is not to disparage someone who is single. A single person not to disparage one who is married. That both of these are gifts from the Lord.

I also want to say about this gift, some call it the gift of singleness. I don't believe that that is a perpetual state of being. That it is ongoing.

Like one has to take a vow of chastity or something like this that is common. Maybe perhaps in the Catholic church today. That being said, even the Protestant church had many people throughout the ages who were a part of a monastic movement who took a vow of chastity.

[10 : 58] However, I don't believe that that's what this is speaking to. If you currently are single, you have the gift of singleness. If you currently are married, you have the gift of marriage.

If a single person becomes married, then now you are in one state and now you get to enjoy the other gift as well. So I'm not saying these are perpetual states of being. How are we to encourage singles?

I want us to drop down to verses 32 through 35. Paul hones in a little bit more and helps us know how it is that we are to encourage singles.

I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord and how to please the Lord.

But the married man is anxious about worldly things and how to please his wife. And his interests are divided. The unmarried and the betrothed is anxious about the things of the Lord and how to be holy in body and spirit.

[12 : 10] But the married man is anxious about worldly things and how to please her husband. Verse 35, I say this to your own benefit, not to lay any restraint on you, but to promote good order to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

So look with me in verse 32. You can see Paul's rationale. He wishes all that to be married as he is. And he says verse 32, he says that they may be only concerned on how they could please the Lord.

That is your only concern because if you're a married, he says, oh yeah, if you're a married man, you have to be also concerned about how to please one's wife. And if you're a married woman, yes, I have to be concerned about how to please your husband.

It says, but a single person can be only concerned about how to please the Lord solely in an undivided way. And looked down in verse 35, the bottom of 35, but promote good order and secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

So how is it as a church that we are to encourage singles is to say to them, please give your whole and undivided devotion to the Lord.

[13 : 21] In your single state, you are free from other concerns that married individuals have. You're more free and you have more liberty than those who are married.

You don't have many constraints on your life. Use it for the glory of God. Do not misuse the freedom and the independence that you have.

Don't waste your life on trivialities, social media, gaming. I know too many young singles who give themselves to these things. And they're wasting their life on trivialities.

Married people can do this as well. What does it take to be a difference maker? Oftentimes, and please know, I recognize there are many reasons why and how someone finds themselves in a single state.

Some have maybe never married. Others may have lost a spouse and they are currently married. Others are divorced and are currently single.

[14 : 27] But what is it to be a difference maker? I think all of us want to be, especially when you are younger. You think, I want to make a difference.

And oftentimes we think, I want to be like a Renaissance man. I want to be a master of many different things. However, I would rather you be mastered by a very few things, namely Jesus Christ.

To be mastered by a very few things that are very great would be the key. And I would love for you to be mastered, all of us in this church, to be mastered by the unmatched majesty, sovereign, beautiful, King of kings and Lord of lords, and his name is Jesus.

So I want to ask the question to a single person, to those single, who are you gripped by? That question also applies to the married. Who are you gripped by?

What are you gripped by? And do not by the lie that society is foisting on all of us, that the greatest achievement in life is to be liked by the most amount of people.

[15 : 49] You'll wind up in the hospital over that. But it is being foisted upon all of us all the time.

And think about how social media even plays into that. We write a post and we think the value of the post is by the responses that we get to it.

And therefore, my significance is wrapped up into the significance of the post. Therefore, my significance is wrapped up into the significance of this post that is perceived by others.

The lie that the most important thing in this world is to be liked. Don't buy it. We turn now to Ephesians.

There are no second-class citizens because we are one in Christ. There are no second-class citizens, so we encourage singles. And there are no second-class citizens, and so we nurture godly families.

[16 : 54] Turn to Ephesians chapter 5 with me. Ephesians chapter 5, I'm going to just pick up in verse 31 and read through 6 verse 4.

Therefore, quoting from Genesis 2, 24, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, by the way, in context.

Paul is writing previous to this about how a husband ought to sacrificially love his wife. He concludes, he gets to the bottom of that, and then he says, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ in the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the husband see that she respects her husband.

Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go away. It may go well with you, that you will live long in the land.

[18 : 19] And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline of the Lord. So how is it that we are going to nurture godly families, and what is our responsibility to and for one another with regard to this responsibility?

To nurture godly families, because there are no second-class citizens. So we need to protect our marriages by first thinking rightly about what marriage is.

Genesis chapter 2, 24, God's word opens with this same line that is repeated here by Jesus, or this is repeated here by Paul, but other places in Matthew chapter 19, it's repeated by Jesus.

This is a common phrase, it is used over and over, and it says, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

We need to think rightly about a biblical definition of marriage. Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman for a lifetime. More can be said for the sake of displaying his glory, for about mutual joy, but for about protection.

[19 : 39] But minimally we need to say this is a good starting point for a definition of marriage, that it is between a man and a woman for a lifetime in a covenant relationship.

And we need to be careful about this, or we need to think rightly about this, because whoever controls language in our culture controls the argument and often wins.

So let me share with you how this happens. We can first talk about the abortion topic, and I recognize, and I want to do this very carefully, because I recognize in a room this size and in the church there are ladies who have regrettably had an abortion, and that is a sensitive spot for them, a place. And so I want you to recognize, before I speak any further, that I recognize that to be true.

But how is it that we have lost the discussion about abortion in our culture is because we use terms like abortion, we use terms like pro-choice and pro-life, and that's where the discussion is being had. And so you might find someone when you speak for a pro-life position, you may find someone and say, so you don't believe in a woman's right to choose?

And so we have all these arguments, but here's what I want to say. We believe life begins at its conception, and at that moment, a child has infinite worth created in his image. And so God condemns the premeditated murder of an innocent human life. If we talk about partial birth abortion, God condemns a barbaric, in utero, dismemberment of innocent children who are created in his image.

[21 : 41] All of a sudden now the language changes. All of a sudden now how we think about things changes. So how does that relate to marriage? Why am I beginning to protect marriages by defining marriage? Because it is under attack. We have well in our state the right to marry as a homosexual.

The world will call that a gay marriage, but the biblical definition of marriage will not allow for that. It is between one woman, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and then two shall become one flesh, one man, one woman for life. Since the biblical definition of marriage is between one man and one woman, any homosexual relationship will never meet the biblical criteria of marriage, even if our culture says so. Why this isn't so important is this. I remember years ago, a gentleman asking me, he had come out of a homosexual lifestyle, he got saved, the Lord saved him and now wanted to marry a lady. However, he was married as a gay person, right? So he's in a homosexual relationship, married because our culture allows for it, he's married. And then he comes to me and he says, would you marry me if I marry this gal?

So I said, first of all, sir, I need you to think rightly and biblically about what that was. I said, when you are over here in this relationship, married as a man to another man culturally, that is a sinful homosexual relationship, that is not a marriage. Therefore, you are never really divorced in God's sight, you just broke off a homosexual relationship. So you're not, you are never really married in God's sight, nor were you ever really divorced in God's sight, even though our culture would say that's so. So if you're over here now, this side in Christ, and you are a new creation, and now you want to marry this, you're going to be married for the first time in your life.

Yes, I would marry, officiate a wedding in that state. You're one man committing to one woman for life, and he understood that. Some things happened that relationship did not go through and I never officiated that marriage, that wedding, but I want, I wanted to share this with you to illustrate how important it is to protect our marriages that we think rightly, biblically, about what marriage is. Second, I love this definition. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. That word hold fast, the word sometimes in English translation says to cleave to your spouse, is like cement or glued together. We have a whole generation hopped up on romance, one can fall in and out of love, and so people can fall in and out of marriages. I heard wedding vows, my wife and I were reported, a friend of ours went to California, attended a wedding, this is over 10 years ago now, and they were appalled at the wedding vows because they had the traditional wedding vows up to the last line. Here's the, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, and sickness and health, and instead of saying until death do us part, the vows read at that wedding until we choose to part. That marriage is over before it began, and it breaks the definition of marriage. Therefore, a man shall leave his father, how do we protect our marriages? How do we have to define it? We have to define it carefully, and we also have to understand what it is, part of the definition between one man, one one for life. Why do we say that and hold fast to his wife? They are cemented together for a lifetime, for a lifetime. Divorce was given to little Moses, was permitted as a concession by Moses because of the hardness of the hearts of the people.

We read that in Matthew 19. Divorce was never God's design. God's design for marriage was to last a lifetime, and that's why it's very important. If I ever have the privilege to officiate a wedding, I ask the bride and groom, you must end your vows with one of two phrases, either till death do us part, or so long as we both shall live. You have to say one of those.

[26 : 37] I don't care which one you choose, but you will be saying one of those where I'm not officiating your wedding. Your choice. That's why I don't get very officiate, very many weddings. No, that's not true.

It's interesting to go further on this point. I mentioned that Jesus also used this definition in Matthew 19. Speaking on the topic of divorce and remarriage, you can go back and look at Matthew 19 and find the context. He's talking, and he's debating with people, and he uses this line.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. But then, Jesus does something that should be like a thunderclap to us, because it wasn't found in the book of Genesis. He's adding now, he's adding a line of understanding to us, and then he says, and what therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

That should be like a thunderclap. He just added to this definition of marriage, and he shares with us something very unique about marriage. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate. There is a one flesh uniting that only God can do, and it is to be for a lifetime. Try to undo the one flesh uniting that God does. I don't know how you do that.

So, we protect our marriages by understanding what marriage is by definition, and for what purpose? You leave your father and mother.

[28 : 22] You become a new family unit when one gets married. You leave your father and mother. I want to appeal to parents to understand when you get married, and you have this privilege of bringing children into this world what you're doing. Now, I want to say it this way.

Parents, you are not merely raising children. You are raising God willing, future Christ-glorifying adults who one day be someone else's spouse, who should be equipped with the essential elements to begin disciple-making when the Lord may give them children, either biological or through adoption, because disciple-making begins in the home whose heart beats to glorify the Lord, whose lives are devoted to Him, and whose heart breaks for those who have not heard His name.

Those are your children. That is your task. It's a beautiful privilege. Parents have a high, sober calling, a holy calling to raise children who are wholly devoted to the Lord. Fathers, I want to appeal to you. I've shared this before. My father is a first-generation Christian. He did not have the benefit of growing up in a Christian home. Neither of his parents knew the Lord, nor his sibling. About the age of 21, my father working in a refinery with a foreman who knew the Lord in California. The foreman invited him over to his home. All the co-workers who worked at the oil refinery said to my dad, oh, he's going to share Jesus with you, because they all had been invited to his home. But my father went, and with his wife, they shared the gospel, and my dad was intrigued by this good news. And so he would return to that home, and upon like the fourth visit or so, he accepted the Lord in their living room at the age of 21. I came along,

I'm the second son of my father. I came along when my father was 28 years old. My dad only had seven years of faith under his belt by the time I came along. But my father, all he did, and with us growing up, is he would like three times during the week, and my encouragement to your, the fathers in here, is to have a family devotion time. Three times during the week, he would simply would read the scripture to us. We would have a conversation about the scriptures, and we would pray. It was very simple, and my father didn't know what else to do, but I love that he did that.

And that's sufficient to pour his children into God's word, direct him the children to the Lord. That's what my father did. But outside of devotion times, parents, you are discipling your children every moment of the day. Do your children see you spending time with the Lord? Do they see you praying? Do they see you living out your faith in the home?

[32 : 01] When you lose your temper or things have gone wrong, do you ask for your children's forgiveness? Are you thoughtful? Are you kind? Are you rich in mercy? Is prayer normative? Do you only pray when you share a meal, or do you lift up matters before the Lord? Often, when things come up in the home.

When you arrive home, you are not off duty. The most glorious work you could be about is just beginning, loving your wife sacrificially and raising children who are devoted to the Lord.

Church has no second-class citizens, so we want to be a people who nurture Godly families. Pastor Jay encouraged me to share a little bit of my testimony today, and I fought him on it, and I went home and I asked for my wife's permission to share, and she permitted, so I share this with my wife's permission. I've shared a bit about this in the past, but I will be a little more specific today. I was an odd fellow in college, having recently come to faith in Christ, and I remember being a single college young man in the church that I was attending there in Pullman, the Harvard of the Palouse, is the school I went to.

I was there in Pullman, and the church I was attending was hosting some parenting seminars, and so one year I went to a parenting seminar. I'm a single guy, I'm not dating, I didn't date in college, but I looked forward to the prospect of being a father, and I realized I didn't know what I'm doing, and so I could use as much input as possible, and so I went to another one another year. I moved to Spokane after graduating, met Wendy, and we were soon married. Years went by without children. More years went by without children. I sought scriptures, and I see that barrenness in scripture. I see many different people, some of them ultimately had children, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, Samson's mother, the Shunamite woman, and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, and I see that often barrenness was perceived as a curse from the Lord for disobedience and a lack of God's blessing, and so these things were weighing on me as I was a young married man, and you see Elizabeth's relief when she finds out she is going to have a child, John the Baptist would be her child, and Elizabeth goes into hiding for five months, scripture tells us, and then she says this after five months of hiding, and perhaps she is wanting to make sure she doesn't miss carry, perhaps she wants to make sure that she doesn't want to announce a pregnancy and be shamed because she loses another child or whatever, but she's carrying this child and she says this, thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among the people. She felt it. Years of longing go by, years of tears go by, years of shame, uncomfortable conversations with others are had, rigid emails are received, difficult conversations between my wife and I are shared, many prayers are uttered together and separately, years feel like they go by and I feel like an inadequate husband, they pass, all the while trusting the Lord is the one who holds the keys to open and close one's womb, I grew to understand God's sovereignty and providence much in those years, why is it that the Lord God's sovereignty is like the most beautiful thing to me, it's because of these years of what I learned in scripture and from the Lord.

We have no children today, we can feel as second-class citizens of the church, Mother's Day rolls around, many are celebrated, Father's Day rolls around, many are celebrated, these are two cultural holidays that just happened to land on Sunday and I happen to be in a profession where attendance may be required. Invitations to baby showers are received and we could go and sincerely rejoice with others but with an inner ache, conversations with peers around topics of their children are had and we delight in them but at times ache. To understand this next illustration you need to understand this, I grew up in a church context where I had never heard of a church going to camp together like we do and so I come here on staff and I hear oh we have a family camp, second thing we need to know before I hear say anything is I have some of those rigid things that I've heard in the past, I heard one man say to me years ago not here but he said you're not a family until you have children Scott. So couple that with going to family camp and so I'm listening attentively to what family camp is and I hear the word family and I think you don't have you're not a family until you have children that's in my head and I say okay we're going to go to and and so there's some they're instantly in me I think well we're not invited because we're not a family and I didn't understand so I would listen to that staff meeting very attentively to go what in the world is family camp turns out it's just church camp when the whole church goes to camp and so just so you know when we talk about church camp or family camp that's what it is you're all welcome but in my perception I instantly felt like I'm not welcome but here's what I want you to hear here's where conviction of the Lord came and comes to be if it's true and we're going to talk about this here in a second that there are no second-class citizens in the church here's the problem I find myself to be the primary reasons of why I think I'm not welcome here who is the who is who has been my focus in years past on why I don't want to attend church on

[38 : 45] Father's Day I am my chief focused as to why I don't want to be here on Father's Day I lost sight that oh we gather together not for Scott Liddell we gather that the name of the Lord can be praised and we gather to bless one another oh I had that out of order yes men get invited to baby showers why why would I not want to go to a baby shower what would be my chief concern what would prohibit me not feeling welcome at a baby shower me when I make me the biggest concern so so here's my thinking here's where I'm going with this and this is what I want to close with I encourage all of us to get over ourselves you are your biggest obstacle to not feeling welcome perhaps you grew up and not going to church and so your Bible knowledge isn't as what others are and so you think going to that group you'll be exposed and they'll just be kind of uh go go welcome perhaps you feel like you have sinned too deeply if you knew my past Scott I wouldn't be welcome at your church so I'm going to keep that quiet share you may just happen to be warmly received and welcomed just like all the rest of the sinners in this room who have been deeply forgiven by the blood of Jesus perhaps you share a story of not being or not able to have children perhaps you had a child out of wedlock perhaps you have some addiction and perhaps you have a skin tone that is a little lighter or darker than others and you feel like I wouldn't be welcome perhaps English is your second language perhaps you had a failed marriage perhaps you you're without a home you know what is in your heart as to why you feel like I would not be received by these group of people the best part of my study this week was in Romans chapter 15 verse 7 if we could turn there and I have two challenges to conclude

Romans chapter 15 verse 7 Paul is kind of wrapping up his letter to the the church at Rome and he concludes with this therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God the standard of welcoming each other is the standard by which Christ has welcomed you and me this word for welcoming is to to receive someone with special concern so this this word can be used negatively in the negative context or positively for example when Jesus was speaking to Peter or the disciples and he was talking about hey by the way guys I'm gonna die I'm gonna be rejected by the chief priest and and I'm gonna die and three days later I'm gonna raise him dead Peter takes him aside and that word takes him aside is to take special interest right so he takes him aside is that same word for welcome here and he takes him aside and and rebukes Jesus for saying he's gonna die in three days really really just leave him it's the same word so that's in the negative sense but what is Peter doing he's taking Jesus aside with a special interest so then positively we see Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos aside after they heard him preach and taught him the full more fully the scriptures they take him aside with special interest so church here's our job and here's our responsibility with each other when we welcome people into our fellowship we take them aside as a special interest and we say I receive you just as Christ has received me as I was as a full-blown horrible sinner he died for me he drew me to himself that I might believe in the life death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin he received me warmly and welcomed me into the family and just that way we are to warmly receive anyone with special interest welcome let me introduce you to my friends and my family so church that's how we're going to welcome people but here's again what I want to say if that's the way church welcomes people and I pray that be true of us my concern is this sometimes we ourselves are our greatest hindrance to feeling accepted because like me perhaps you struggle with a lot of self-focus and your focus is on yourself not the Lord or the benefit of others I plead with us to be a welcoming church and to get over ourselves let me pray father please forgive us first your name is to be glorified thank you Jesus for receiving us the way in which you did you forgave us you welcomed us into the family of God you intercede for us at the right hand of the father you continue to love us oh so well with special interest I pray that we would be a people who would welcome individuals into any church family with special concern with special interest we would warmly receive your people I pray that you would forgive us for any self motivations of why we feel like I won't be accepted into this family I won't be accepted into this group forgive us for the ways in which we have our attention turned on ourselves and not on you and not for the benefit of your body love you lord and thank you for this day and it's in your name we pray amen