

The Exiled Life: 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Good morning, church. And I want to welcome those that are watching us online.! It's good to be here to begin our week seeking the Lord, seeking to encourage one another.

! Thankful that the Lord uses ordinary people. Amen? And the Lord wants to use each of us today, I believe, to have ministry with somebody, to encourage them, to listen, to pray for them, to remind them that they're not alone.

Amen? Go ahead and turn open to 1 Peter. We're going to be looking at 1 Peter 22, and then we're going to skip into chapter 2 and go through verse 3.

So we're going to bridge a couple chapters this morning. I don't know how I feel about that, but that's what we're doing. And before we study God's Word, let me pray for us. So join me. Lord, I was just thinking about this morning in our neighborhood groups, our discussion just about suffering and suffering unjustly and how difficult that is.

And we're so thankful that we serve a God that did not avert Himself from suffering. In fact, the psalmist writes that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted, saves the crushed in spirit.

[1 : 2 2] And Lord, You understand that experientially, and we're so thankful. I pray, Lord Jesus, that You would use our time this morning to build up the body, to build up Your people.

Lord, I pray that we would hear from You. We would each leave with more than we came with. And Lord, we would have Your words on the tip of our tongue this week, kind of stirring in our hearts.

And Lord, You would refresh us today. We're thankful, Jesus, that You sit on Your throne and You've promised to return. In your name we pray. Amen. So last week, we considered a couple of distinguishing characteristics that really ought to be true of every believer.

And I like to think of these characteristics as family characteristics, right? Families are known for certain things. Our family, we're known for just having lots of children.

And we love the holidays, and we like to celebrate. In fact, I got in an argument with Hannah Klein this week because we were competing for Who Loved Christmas More. And I already have my tree set up in my office if you've been by, so I felt like I won.

[2 : 3 5] And then she's like, well, my nickname growing up was Hannah Claus. I'm like, she wins. She wins. At any rate. Family characteristics. What defines a family?

And so we looked at these characteristics last week, and there were two kind of primary characteristics. And the first one is we really ought to be a hopeful people. We should be a hopeful people.

In fact, Peter wrote in verse 13, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We should be a hopeful people. Not a wishful type, I hope this sort of thing occurs.

I hope my team wins the game. No, this is assured hope. That Jesus said, I have left to prepare a place for you. I will return.

It's a guaranteed hope. And because of this assured hope, our faith placed in the finished work of Jesus, we hold a ticket in the pocket of our heart to heaven.

[3 : 32] It should grow as we move through the seasons, the difficulties of life. That yes, indeed, we're going to be reunited with the Lord. And I think of this image of there's a Christmas animation movie, the Polar Express, where the children are on their way to the North Pole.

And the enthusiasm, the excitement, the joy, it just builds as they're just about to arrive. And I think the closer we get to heaven in this life, it should grow our anticipation.

We should be a hopeful people. We're also called to be a holy people. Peter wrote in verse 16, chapter 1, You shall be holy, for I am holy.

We should look something more like Jesus every single day. And I love, as Scott shared with us, that the context of holiness is really about devotion. It's devotion to the Lord.

Our devotion to the Lord should grow each and every day. And so this morning, as we transition into this next section, Peter drills down on how this devotion to the Lord should actually lead to devotion towards one another.

[4 : 45] This is a characteristic of our family life. And that will be the focus of our morning today. And he begins here in verse 22. He says, Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

So first, I want us not to miss this central theological point. Holiness. It says, Purify your souls for obedience so that you can have the sincere love for the brothers.

So holiness positions us, church, for ministry. An example of holiness, of being set apart, sanctified. In the Old Testament, you have Mount Sinai.

That God chose. This is the mountain I'm going to do a work on. And it says in Exodus 19, 23, And Moses said to the Lord, The people cannot come to Mount Sinai, for you yourselves warned us, saying, Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.

Sanctify it. Set it apart. Why? Not just simply to ogle at this mountain. God says, No, I want to set it apart so that I can minister to you with the mountain. Because I'm going to deliver the law on this mountain for your benefit.

[6 : 01] So holiness positions us for ministry. Sanctification. Sanctification isn't just stop this. It's actually stop this in order to do this other thing.

Sanctification positions us to live a life of ministry. I don't take the shirt out of my closet and hang it on the hook in the bathroom just to look at. I take it out of the closet so that I can then wear it.

I set it apart in order to use. God sets us apart in order to use. I think that's the joy of following Christ in this life.

That he's fashioning us to be agents of ministry in the lives of one another. Paul said it in Ephesians 2. You're my workmanship. God says, You're my workmanship.

Created for good works. The worst Christmas present I ever received, and I know there's a lot of Christmas references this morning because we are in the holiday season, and I'm still competing with Hannah for who's more Christmassy on staff, so I must reference them.

[7 : 07] But the worst Christmas present I ever received as a middle schooler was this RC car. It was the Tamiya Grasshopper, and it was like the first era of like RC remote control cars, and it was a wonderful gift until it wasn't.

Because I assembled it, and then it was like I wanted to play with it, but my parents didn't give me the motor or the remote, and so it just, the entire life of this RC car was just on the shelf in my room.

It never ran. Ever. It's a Christmas wound. But what a waste, right? What a drag. Friends, we're set apart in order to do what Peter exhorts us to do in this section, which is be devoted to God so that you can be devoted to one another.

Love one another. And he's going to hit this from multiple angles this morning. He's going to give us a positive. He's going to give us some rationale, and then he's going to say, Hey, this is what it's not. So just buckle up because there's a lot that we're going to sort of hit this morning, and we're going to pull it all together.

Remember, we're bridging two chapters, so there's just a lot here. But he says specifically, purify your souls so that we can love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

[8 : 23] And he says here it's to be a sincere brotherly love. It's a love without hypocrisy. It's not a used carsman sale sort of love.

Right? You make the sale, and then the machine breaks, and you want help, and the guy's nowhere to be found. It's a love without hypocrisy. When we exhort one another, we don't exhort one another so that we can sort of one-up ourselves towards a brother or sister in Christ.

We actually warn, we exhort, because we want to save them from the damaging effects of sin. We love them. When we preach, when Scott or myself or others preach God's Word, the aim of our instruction, as Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1.5, the aim of our charge is love.

We do it because we love you. Like my prayer when I preach, and Scott's prayer when we preach is like, God, speak to your people. Let them hear from you. It's just too much labor to be up here to entertain.

We want you to hear from the living God. Because we love you. I want to hear from the Lord. So this loving one another sacrificially, this is the hallmark of God's people.

[9 : 39] And it's a concept that is themed throughout the New Testament. It has defined Christians from every generation.

Jesus says in John 13, by this all people will know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another. And it's a love. It's an agape love.

It's a sacrificing love. It's a love that costs us something. And maybe the question you have, well, Jay, sacrificial love, how sacrificial does it need to be?

Well, what does Peter say? He says, love one another earnestly. Now, what is this word earnestly? Earnestly could be translated at full stretch.

Now, I did some stretches for the staff earlier this week demonstrating this word. And I'm like, it's like a hamstring stretch, right? I'm being very ginger up here because I don't want to have a, you know, a malfunction with not being able to get back up.

[10 : 45] But you like, you're stretching. You remember like those two days if you played football and you're down there for 10 seconds. And then it's like, you stretch until it hurts. Isn't that a great illustration?

Love at full stretch. Like, love until you can feel it. Love until it hurts. And what I love about what Peter says here, he's actually telling us to go beyond neutrality with one another.

Let's just get along. No. God hasn't called us to get along as a church. He actually wants us to love at full stretch.

To mourn with one another. To rejoice with one another. To serve one another. To love where it costs us something.

Is Tom Doherty in the house? I heard he was going to be here. Is he here today? There you're hiding, Tom. You have, I love, Tom's back. Triple bypass.

[11 : 51] Better, faster, stronger. Yep. Well, let's not go too far. And many of you ministered to Tom.

Like, it was like, we're going to go. We're going to see. We're going to spend time. But I was thinking about, Tom, actually, this, as we're talking about love that costs. And I still remember, I think it was a Thanksgiving or an Easter.

There was a holiday. And there was somebody in need who was in crisis. And they needed to meet with somebody. And I don't know how we got. But then Tom was like, hey, I'll meet with them. And it was a holiday. And I still remember that.

I love that about you, Tom. I think, man, that's an example. I'm going to give up a right. I'm going to give up something that I had anticipated to do to serve somebody. And there was a cost. And Jesus says, man, that's beautiful.

That's beautiful. That's what Peter is telling us. This is the hallmark of the people of God. That they love one another at full stretch. They love earnestly. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it this way.

[12 : 49] When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die. And maybe now it makes sense why we actually need to walk with God in order to carry this out.

Because this doesn't happen in the flesh, friends. It starts at home. Spills over into then our church body, our church family. I think it's the hardest when we're at home.

We're tired. I guarantee you there will be like something that needs repair today in my home. I'll be called into action. There will be something.

Right? Maybe there's homework for you to engage on your children. You're thinking, well, I already went to school. Well, you're back in school. Right? It's like, oh, man. Maybe your wife will ask you to help gentlemen with a task.

Maybe she'll say, well, you come to the garden with me. And I and Scott will both have to decide what will we do. That's a little inside. Dig at our pastor who's not a gardener but has been invited to garden.

[13 : 56] And maybe will be invited again. It could happen. This type of love, church, it just runs contrary to the lifestyle choices of most Americans.

It makes us so unique that we would love in this fashion. And I think it confronts each of us in how we have determined to be a church. We're going to see a baptism this morning.

And there's a membership covenant part of being part of a body. And that's actually a significant commitment we're making to one another. And that's what Peter's talking about here.

Loving. Sacrificing. Serving. What might it look like? Well, maybe serving, discipling children. You thought, I don't know how to work with children. But maybe God wants you to work with children.

And it's like that's a way to love earnestly the families of our church. Maybe it's grabbing coffee with somebody that, man, I can encourage this person if I would take time to spend time with them.

[14 : 57] Maybe they're not even part of my normal friend circle, whatever that is. And God just burdened you. And you're like, man, I'm going to reach out. Or I'm going to invite them into a gathering where I'm with other believers. Maybe it's fixing a meal with somebody in need.

Maybe it's gathering for prayer to pray. We have a group that prays every Sunday morning at 8 o'clock down in the fireplace room. They would love more people to come and gather. Or maybe a way that you love earnestly at full stretch is you actually pray by yourself in your home for the people, the family of Fourth Memorial.

Maybe it's opening up your home to somebody in need. Financially helping someone in need. Maybe it's visiting somebody that can't get to church.

Maybe it's sending a note of encouragement that is thoughtful, true, and specific. Mark Twain said, hey, I can live for two months on a good compliment.

And I just think, man, there's power in our words. And there's ways that we can continue, all of us, to grow in terms of how we love one another earnestly. And you're like, man, Jay, I just, I can't do much.

[16 : 05] Fine, do what you can do in Christ's strength to love others well. And maybe for some of you here this morning, you're hearing this like, man, Jay, I've done that in the past and I got burned.

It's hard. Talk to the Lord about it. But at some point, that's something that you're going to have to submit to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to be back in the game of serving your people.

I don't want to just be on the shelf forever. I love how Lewis encourages us here from the four loves. He says, to love it all is to be vulnerable.

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries.

Avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo. That was Lewis. Don't email me. I didn't say that.

[17 : 11] But in the casket, safe, dark, and motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

To love is to be vulnerable. And it is a step, it is an act of courage and faith. Now, why are we to love this way?

Well, Peter moves on now and gives us three reasons why we should love at full stretch. And I'm just going to hit these quickly. But let's read here, verse 23. First reason we should love this way is because we've been rescued through radical love.

Since you've been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable. What is that imperishable seed? Well, if you go back to verse 19, it's defined as the precious blood of Christ.

God gave much to give us this new life. Us giving much to others is a lifetime of us essentially saying thank you back to the Lord.

[18 : 36] It's how we express gratitude. I love how Jesus confronts Simon the Pharisee in Luke 2.

And Simon takes issue with this sinful woman that comes in and washes Jesus' feet with her tears and perfume. And he's so disgusted by it. And then Jesus says, you know what, Simon?

He who is forgiven little, loves little. Church, you have not been forgiven little. I have not been forgiven little. So let's love much. Secondly, rationale for why we should love at full stretch.

Because life is brief. Peter quotes Isaiah 40, all flesh is like grass. All is glory like the flowers of grass. It withers, the flowers fall.

I think the leaves falling remind us, church, that life is short. Many of you who were here yesterday cleaning up our premises were like, whoa, you were reminded. There's a lot of stuff dying. And you're like, life is short.

[19 : 34] I think the seasons are a gift from the Lord to remind us that time is passing. It will not always be as it is today. And I think as we're reminded that life is brief, let's invest wisely.

Because the only two things that last ultimately are God's Word and people. So let's invest there. Thirdly, why should we love this way? Because God's Word is greater than simply a book of suggestions.

Contrary to grass and flowers that die, the Word of the Lord remains. It remains forever. And this Word is the good news that was preached to you. God's Word is the sole arbiter of how we do life.

And God calls us to be a people that care about people. That care about people a lot. God's Word gives us people to emulate.

I don't think there's a better example of love at full stretch than this woman who loves her devastated mother-in-law extravagantly.

[20 : 42] God's Word says in Ruth chapter 1 verse 15, And she, Naomi, the mother-in-law said, See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods.

Return after your sister-in-law. Leave me, Ruth. But Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you or return from following you. For wherever you go, I go.

I'm in. And where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people. Your God, my God. Where you die, I'm going to die.

I'm going to love you extravagantly. I'm in. Till the very end. So good. What a great example. And I think we read that and we're inspired and we're like moved.

Like, I want to be that sort of person. I want to be that sort of follower, disciple of Jesus that loves people that well. Well, Peter finishes this whole thought about loving one another well by painting us a picture of the contrary.

[21 : 50] What it is not. And I think there's five ways, five sins that keep us actually from loving one another. And so let's look at this final section. Peter writes, chapter 2, verse 1.

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants long for the pure milk, for the pure spiritual milk.

That by you may grow up unto salvation. That by it you may grow up unto salvation. If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

In college, I had a yellow and burgundy Naugahyde chair that was atrocious.

And it was inherited from my father. It must have been his father's. It's what we do in the Turner clan. And we passed down ugly chairs. A hallmark of our family. And when Julie and myself got married, that chair made its way into our home.

[23 : 11] And it proceeded to kind of move rooms. Would end up in the garage. Then I would bring it back in. And then Julie would upgrade our furniture where we actually looked like adults. But then the chair would sort of like mingle in.

And you could kind of, it would make an appearance here and there. And then there was a day when Julie just told me how it was going to be.

And she said, this chair does not belong in anyone's home. And she said, you have a choice. This was like a soft no.

I didn't even know what was happening. She was like, you have a choice. You can stay. Or the chair can stay. But you both can't stay. Needless to say, I stayed.

And the chair did not. Why do I share that with you? Because this list that Peter gives us, this is a great list of things to avoid.

[24 : 09] But he's actually saying, hey, I don't want this stuff to mingle with your love for one another. Okay? Don't love and then also have these pieces present within your church family.

These are very anti-love characteristics. And they can't stay in the household of God. They just have to be removed. So let's work through this. See how far we get.

First thing he says, hey, malice. This is a desire to injure someone. To bring them home. It has no place in the household of God. You can't love as this is present mingled in.

Whether you are looking to harm emotionally, physically. Maybe somebody's harmed you. And you intend to get your hunk of flesh out of them. And I think this, malice has been around from the very beginning.

Right? And we know this example in Genesis 4 of Cain and Abel. And Cain, who doesn't offer God a acceptable sacrifice, is envious. He's jealous of his brother. And in Genesis 4, it says Cain spoke to Abel, his brother.

[25 : 16] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel. And he killed him. Like, that's malice. And maybe you're thinking, Jay, I don't want to physically harm anyone.

And I would say the way this often will play out in the context of a church is we injure not with weapons, but we injure with words. Some are very skilled at this.

Some are very skilled at not even having to use words. It's just a look. Or sometimes it's a non-look. I will not look at you.

And what's at the heart of that, we're talking about malice. I'm angry with you, so I won't give you eye contact. And we become a church of avoiders.

Ugh. This doesn't completely correlate, but I do think as an aside, Scott, myself, the staff, we are prayerful on this.

[26 : 16] We want to continue to become a church not of avoiders, of waiter-arounders. We want to be a church of pursuers. You know what I mean by that? Where we're not just waiting for people to come up and approach us.

It's very, it's safer to do that. But I think there is ministry we may be missing out on by not actually being people that proactively talk to the Lord, say, Lord, give me courage today.

I don't like to be outgoing. I'm not saying you've got to change your personality, but maybe the prayer for all of us as we gather is like, Lord, give me at least one person I can approach today and offer them a greeting and see where that goes.

We want to be people that actually approach others. It's very hard if you are new coming into this gathering if we just sort of sit back and wait for you to come to us.

No. Hospitality is loving the stranger. We're going to go to you. And so I would just exhort us on that. And Scott will probably exhort you at some point again on that as well because it's something that we want to become a hallmark of our church body.

[27 : 19] Well, that's malice. Second thing, second sin that destroys love is deceit. Being deliberately dishonest.

Maybe dishonest in order to gain, preserve some advantage over another. Jacob did this with stealing of the birthright from his brother. That was deceit.

Deceit. Abraham lying to Abimelech about Sarah not being his wife. That was deceit. Why did Abraham do that? Genesis 20, 11. Abraham said, I did it because I thought there is no fear of God at all in this place and they will kill me because of my wife.

She's attractive. They will want to marry her. If they find out I'm the husband, they will take me out. And for him, in that instance, he was deceitful and it was driven by fear. Interesting.

So I'm fearful that maybe you won't accept me so I deceive. Maybe you don't think you will like me so much so I will alter the story and I will make myself out to be more of the hero.

[28 : 25] I did better things. I caught bigger fish. Whatever it happens to be, but I will alter the truth. And regardless of how small the deceit is, it will dismantle a family and a church.

Why? Because it erodes trust. One of the commitments that I have, I think I've talked to Scott about this, is when I preach, I don't want to embellish.

And I strive not to. The stories I tell, if I tell you about a conversation I had with somebody in my car, that's a conversation I had. I don't like the embellishment. And there are some pastors in history's past that have done this.

And maybe we've observed them. And I don't want you to question that. And with Scott, what you see is what you get. So we strive not to be those type of preachers because truth matters.

Even in the way that we retell a story. The chair was really that ugly. It was yellow, burgundy, naugahyde. It was awful.

[29 : 26] Okay? It's all true. All right. Moving on. Third thing that kills the love of a church body is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy.

It's the acting of a stage player. Right? To desire to be known for what you really aren't. We're projecting.

It's Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5. We want people to think we're something that we're not. We're actually quite self-absorbed and stingy. But we want the church to see us as generous.

But that's not really who we are. That's hypocrisy. And I would say when we gather, and I know there needs to be wisdom here, but if as a church when we gather and people ask how we're doing and we're always like, all good, and it's not, that is a subtle form of hypocrisy.

And I so appreciate there are people in our congregation that will ask me, Gene is one of them in particular, he'll say, Jay, how are you doing today? I'll say, I'm good. He's like, and then he'll stop.

[30 : 45] He'll usually grab me and he'll be like, no, really? How are you doing? And he'll look you in the eyes and you're like, I am doing not as well as I just projected and I'm going to tell you everything.

You know, it's like, and that's a gift to have those people in our lives. And I would just suggest like, yes, there's wisdom here. I'm not suggesting that when our greeting time, you know, just like greeting one another, you meet a new face and they're like, how are you?

And you're just like, well, let me tell you about my latest addiction right now, right? Like, let's have some wisdom. You're gathering with a brother, sister. Maybe you're having coffee, lunch. You're in a small group.

There are places, there's context for this, but let's be a church that goes beyond being adolescents that just tell everybody that it's fine all the time. How are you doing today?

Fine. How was school? Fine. How was sports? Fine. Let's not be that, okay? And I think as we begin to entrust our lives and stories with one another, God will use that for our growth, for our sanctification.

[31 : 48] It's a way to love one another. Fourth thing that kills love is envy. Envy. It's jealousy. It's resentment towards another's success.

We desire their privilege, their benefits. I think the best example of envy, at least in my mind, in the Old Testament is King Saul. 1 Samuel 18.

Saul was very angry and this saying despised him. And this saying despised him. He said, they have ascribed to David ten thousands. And to me they have, for me I've only got a thousand.

Right? I mean, it's just, you can just hear the, what more can he have but the kingdom? And Saul, I, David, from that day on. Interesting.

What do we notice about these evils thus far? All of them are relationship destroyers. All of them are community killers. Saul and David had a friendship before Saul's heart turned sour with envy.

[32 : 53] And I don't know where it shows up. But it will destroy the joy and the testimony of any church. Fifthly, the last sin that destroys our love for one another is the sin of slander.

Slander. Evil speaking. Envy expressed through our lips. Backbiting. Backbiting. Defaming character. Gossip. Whispering.

There were some women in the Ephesian church that were participating in this. Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5.13. Besides that, they learned to be idlers.

Saying, catch this, saying what they should not.

Isn't that a great phrase? They are saying what they should not say. And I would say if you dabble here, I offer you a prayer to place on your bathroom mirror.

[34 : 06] That's what I'm doing. I got some prayer cards on my mirror. Things I want to work on. Things I need to address in my own soul. This is for maybe some of you this morning. Psalm 141.3.

Put it on the mirror if you need this. If it's helpful. The psalmist writes, Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. What a wonderful prayer to pray.

Amen? For all of us. So that we are not guilty of saying what we should not. How big a deal is this to God that we avoid these evils?

Consider the exhortation that Peter gives. He says in verse 1, Put away all, and then he lists the sins. Put away. Remove.

Don't mingle it in. If you want to use the clothing metaphor, don't ever wear those garments. You know, if I work an afternoon on our property, I'm usually a sweaty, disgusting mess, and I've got to come in and shower and put on a new...

[35 : 14] My kids will be like, Dad, you just go shower. Dad, just go shower. And could you imagine, like I clean up, but then I'm like, I'm going to put on my old clothes, clothes, my dirty, sweaty, disgusting clothes, then I'm going to put on my outfit over it.

Dad, you still stink. Exactly. You don't mingle it in. You remove it. In fact, Peter says, put it away. Put it away. If in Christ, remove it all from your life.

How? Repent. Confess. It's repentance. There's a lengthy list here, and maybe you're going, Jay, do I have to remember all five of these?

No. You don't. I would suggest you just consider the one, as I was sharing, where you felt like the Spirit pricked you, and you're like, oh, oh.

Just one. Just remember one. And deal with that between you and the Lord. Well, let's finish up. Last couple verses, verses two and three.

[36 : 25] Peter says, like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. This verse seems to appear a little bit out of context at the end of this.

We're talking about loving the body, why we should love the body, what it doesn't look like, and then all of a sudden you get like, hey, like newborn infants, long for spiritual milk. You're like, how does this?

Actually, this is very much in context because this is your resource for how you love. We can't love, or anything of lasting substance for that matter, if we're not feasting on the gospel and God's word.

That's the resource, church. That's why Peter like puts it in here. And what he's telling us here is, don't be token. In fact, if you're token with God's word, your love for others is going to be thin.

You can't grow up unto salvation if you're not feasting on the word. And Peter gives us this metaphor to help us understand, feast on God's word. He's not calling us a name here.

[37 : 33] He's not saying you guys are a bunch of babies, right? He's saying, hey, be infant-like in your desire for spiritual milk. For those of you that have had children, like, how intense is an infant's desire to be fed?

He or she will rob you of sleep, perhaps for years. They want their food. They will do whatever necessary to get it.

And I love that picture. Desire God's word like this. And in fact, it's good. Taste and see that the Lord is good. It is good. And church, our spiritual health and the health of our community depends on it.

Amen? That's enough. Let's pray. Father, we do want the hallmark of our church, that we would be a people that love others well.

We know that it is part of our apologetic, part of your evangelism strategy for us, that people will recognize your disciples as they observe our love for one another.

[38 : 50] And so, Lord, if there's something this morning that as we heard these words and we need to do business with you, that we would quickly confess if there's sin, if maybe of that list of things that Peter identifies, maybe we've mingled this in and we just allow it to sort of fester.

Father, we want to be, we want to be aggressive in our pursuit of you. Lord, we want to be a people that feast on the word.

We know that our resources are thin. We act in the flesh. We, it's hard for us to want to love one another where it costs, at that full stretch, it just hurts. And, and, and, and oftentimes we're just, it's, it's because we've not really been communing with you.

The abiding's just, it's not happening and, and the fruit is small or non-existent. And so, Lord, maybe this morning as we think about love, really the call is to, to, to, to, to be more devoted to you.

Because as we are, our devotion for one another, it will just naturally occur. It will flourish. And so, Lord, I do pray too for us that we would be a people that would grow in courage.

[40 : 00] Lord, we would be a type of people that would see somebody maybe for the first time and, and not be fearful to approach, but just to, maybe it's a quick prayer.

Lord, give me courage to just greet this person in a, in a spirit of hospitality. And I pray that we would be those that seek others out, not waiting, and around.

But Lord, that you would use that and Father, that people would come to actually know you because of the love that's present here. And we know that that just simply is a reflection of, of your love for us.

And so, Lord Jesus, we say thank you. We want to celebrate now with Laura in, in, in this baptism and just pray a blessing on her, joy on her as she declares her, her love for you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.