

The Cornerstone Of Hospitality (4)

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Date: 12 December 2021

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- [0 : 0 0] If you could turn in your Bibles back to 1 Peter 2, that's where we're going to be this evening. Tonight is our last sermon in our short little series on biblical hospitality, which we said is showing the welcome of Christ to one another and to strangers.
- You know, the hope is, as Mrs. Butterfield said, that strangers would become neighbors, and neighbors, family of God. And the hope, too, is that in this, you know, it's been four weeks, but that you would take this with you.
- Some of us, you're great at hospitality. You should be up here giving advice on how to show hospitality. And so just it's good to be reminded of these truths.
- For others of us, we need to maybe remove some things from our schedules. For others of us, it's just going to take imagination, creativity, prayer, as what is God calling us to?
- How is he calling us to serve him and to show his welcome to others? And now in this last passage, we're looking at one that doesn't mention hospitality.
- [1 : 0 5] There's lots of other passages we could have turned to. I was thinking about Hebrews 13. 2 Samuel 9 would have been a great one, but I didn't want to say Mephibosheth that many times. So we went somewhere else.
- We're going to go to 1 Peter 2. What this passage is about is what the church is and what it means for our lives. To understand our role to be hospitable, we need to understand who we are.
- And the thing that I want us to see is that we are a community. We're a community. We're a people. Biblical hospitality loses so much if we forget what the cornerstone of hospitality is, and that is our life with Christ and our life with one another.
- So let's look at this passage, but before we do, let's go to the Lord and ask him to bless the preaching of his word. Father, we come to you trusting that by your spirit you will help us to see our cornerstone, Jesus.
- Father, we pray that in the next little while that you would crumble the towers of pride and isolation and division that we build up. And as we listen to your word, would you give us a vision of how things ought to be and how things are because of Christ?
- [2 : 1 7] We ask this in his name. Amen. I saw this YouTube video a little while ago of a marriage proposal. A group of people, they were standing on top of a five-story building.
- Some young adults, some mingling, having some food. There's tables set up on top of this building. And this one guy, he says, he stands up and he stops everybody from talking and says, Ladies and gentlemen, I've got something I want to say.
- And he turns to his girlfriend and he says, My beautiful girlfriend and I, we've been together for a while now. And I think it's time that we take it to the next level.
- And he turns to his friend and he says, Bobby, the ring, please. And Bobby tosses him the ring. And he's standing at the edge of this building. And Bobby throws it kind of to the side.
- And this guy reaches for it. And it goes past him. And he tumbles backwards off of the building. Quiet. Except for his girlfriend who screams.

- [3 : 17] And she runs to the edge. And she looks over. And he's lying on this big inflatable thing with a sign that says, Will you marry me? What do you think, ladies?
- What did you say at that moment? Why do I mention that? Silly illustration. But you see, oftentimes in life, we can feel like that girlfriend.
- Life comes fast. And it can disorient us. Often feel like we're just hanging on. It can be hard, surprising, shocking. It moves so quickly. And what we need a lot of times is to peek over the edge.
- And to see this reality. Of what we long for. The way things ought to be. Something we desperately need to see. But they could be. I want us to see a few things this evening.
- In 1 Peter, he offers us an opportunity to peek over the wall into a spiritual reality. The reality that changes our relationships. And to the degree that we grasp this in our heart of hearts, it changes our identities.
- [4 : 23] And it changes our practices. And that's what we're going to talk about in terms of community. We're not going to be sustained. We won't be successful in hospitality unless we are a true deep-knit community.
- So, outline four things about community. First is the necessity of community. Secondly, the foundation of community. Third, the purpose of community. And then lastly, the power of community.
- Changing it up. Four points tonight. So, the necessity, the foundation, the purpose, and the power. First thing, the necessity of community. Starting this as a very simple point.
- But oftentimes, because of English translations of our Bible, we overlook it. In our passage, Peter, he's speaking to, and he's describing a community.
- And the very first words that Stephen read in verse 4, it says, As you come to him. Now, let me ask you. Does it sound to you, if you're reading like that, a lot of times, because we live in individualistic cultures in the West, we hear Peter saying that you, as I, come to Jesus.
- [5 : 27] Right? But it's not, it doesn't say, as you, singular, come to Jesus. Literally, what it says is, as you all come to him.
- It's the second person plural. You know, in English language, second person plural, and first person plural, we just say you. Well, what the translation should be, if I can steal a phrase from the American South, as y'all come to him.
- I just read an article yesterday on the BBC that said the term y'all is becoming more and more popular in the UK. So deal with it. It's coming. Okay? As all y'all come to him.
- Here's the point. Why do I mention that? Community is presupposed in the Bible. It's presupposed. It's underneath everything. And a lot of times we can overlook it. A royal priesthood, right?
- That's what it said. Look, let your eyes wander through the passage. A holy nation. Once you were not a people, now you are a people. While you can certainly read 1 Peter and apply it to your life individually, the context is that it's written to a community, right?
- [6 : 31] It says at the very beginning, to the elect exiles. I did a Google search a little while ago, and I searched in quotation marks to get the exact phrase, I am lonely and have no friends.
- Fine. It was for research. And there were 164 million hits. I read a few years ago an article in the Boston Globe that was entitled, the headline was, The Biggest Threat Facing Middle-Aged Men Isn't Smoking or Obesity, It's Loneliness.
- It talks about how studies have shown that isolation has a terrible impact on one's health, and men in particular are kind of the worst at it. Like to be lone rangers.

I don't know if it's just an American problem, but so I did another Google search. Thank goodness for the internet, right? And I came across a study that said in Scotland, 38% of people surveyed said that they're lonely.

And that was two years before a pandemic. Terrible side effect of the pandemic is the rise of mental illness and suicide. People feel isolated.

[7 : 42] They feel alone. They are isolated. You see, in the church, a lot of times we can forget all of the y'all's of the Bible. There's no such thing that can be imagined anywhere in Scripture as a just you and Jesus relationship.

It doesn't exist. If you want to come to a God who does not call you also to a people and to belong in deep community to other people, you're going to have to make up a false God because the God of the Bible does not.

As y'all come to him. To come to Christ is to come to a family, a home, a temple, a community, a people, a church. Because God has created us for community.

So here is first application. It's just a question at the start. Is community, relationships with the body of Christ, is community to you nice or necessary?

Is it nice? Hey, if I have time for that, that would be great. Or is it necessary? You know, the whole idea of hospitality entails more than one person, right?

[8 : 50] It's an inherently relational task. And to understand it, we need to understand what we're inviting people into. We're inviting them to our homes, into our families. We want them to become part of the family of God.

If they don't, it's not the only reason to invite somebody into your life. But that's the idea. Is that you're inviting them into a community. And you know what the thing that shapes our desire to do this the most?

Is our experience of it with one another. So to begin, community, it's necessary. Not just nice, it's necessary. Without it, we're misreading and misapplying scripture.

Second thing to look at is the foundation of community. So Peter, in verses 4 through 6, he describes this building being built. More specifically, he's talking about a temple.

He's using temple imagery. Verse 5, it says, a spiritual house. It's a term kind of evoking the temple. And Peter, he refers to Christians as living stones, which are joined to the living stone, the cornerstone.

[9 : 54] And then Peter, he quotes in verse 6, he quotes Isaiah 28. And if you were to look at that passage in the context, Isaiah is speaking God's word to the leaders of Jerusalem.

You see, there's a big bad nation out there called Assyria. And you know what they're doing? They're not scared. Why? Because God's their cornerstone? They've just made a covenant, a treaty with the nation of Egypt.

And so they're not worried. We've got this. We can stand up against them. And Isaiah comes and he says, no, no, no, no, no. The only edifice that you can build your life on and have assurance and confidence in this life is God's cornerstone.

What makes you feel confident in life? What makes you feel confident in life? Peter says the thing that should make us feel most confident is the cornerstone.

In verse 7, Peter then quotes another Old Testament passage, Psalm 118. The stone that the builders rejected, tossed it out, has become, boom, the cornerstone.

[11 : 01] Do you know about the cornerstone? We don't talk about cornerstones in everyday life as much. Maybe if you build some buildings, you think of it more. In the ancient Near East, in Bible times, the cornerstone, it would be the largest stone in the corner of the building's foundation.

It would be the most sought-after stone for the whole building project. Why? Because all of the dimensions of the building are going to be based off of the cornerstone.

So if it was the perfect stone, then the lines of the building would be perfect. You don't think it's that big of a deal if your stone is off by that much. But all of a sudden, if you're building a big building way out, it's not going to be very steady.

It's the strongest stone. If the cornerstone is strong, the rest of the building is strong. This cornerstone, a lot of times, they would take as long to look for and to cut the lines and to find and to place this cornerstone as they would to build the entire rest of the building.

It was that important. It was such a precious stone. And verse 4 says, as you come to him. You see, all the stones in the building, no matter how far out you are, are all being joined back to the cornerstone.

[12 : 19] Do you know that your status, your identity, it depends on the status and identity of Jesus because you are joined to him.

How strong is your life? How strong is the cornerstone? How precious are you to the builder?

How precious is the cornerstone to the builder? It is God the Father. If Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, is absolutely, infinitely precious to the builder, so are the stones that are joined to him.

Jesus prays in his high priestly prayer in John 17 that this community of followers, that they would understand, that they would know that the Father loves them even as he loves the Son.

Egad. Egad. Whoa. Let's not just gloss over that. That you are loved and are infinitely precious to the builder, to the Father, because you are joined to the cornerstone.

[13 : 28] He loves you to that degree. And for Peter, the foundation of community is then Jesus. If you know anything about Peter, he used to not be called Peter. He used to be called Simon, right?

And then he comes to this guy named Jesus who said, your name's not going to be Simon anymore. We're going to call you Cephas, which means Rock. Super cool nickname, right? Like if you had to be renamed something, wouldn't Rock be really cool?

Hi, my name's Simon. I'm an apostle. You can call me Rock. But Peter doesn't say that the foundation is him. The foundation is Jesus.

And Jesus actually quotes Psalm 118 in Matthew 21. He's talking about the parable of the talents, and he says the stone that the builders rejected is going to become the cornerstone. And the disciples don't like this.

And you know who in particular doesn't like this? Peter doesn't like this idea of the cornerstone being established through rejection. That is not the way the Messiah is supposed to come into the world.

[14 : 32] Interesting. Post-Pentecost, Acts 4, you know what Peter quotes? Psalm 118. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

And then he quotes it again in his letter here in 1 Peter 2. How did he go from saying, no, no, no, that verse doesn't apply to the Messiah, to all of a sudden it's his life verse?

Because Peter knows that he should have been rejected. And that Christ was rejected in his place. He doesn't act very rock-like.

Yet Jesus bears that rejection. Peter's learned that it's through Christ's rejection that his life can actually be made sure.

I was teaching on hospitality a few years ago in St. Louis, and one of the ladies in the class, she emailed me afterwards. And I thought it was a really good point. I'm going to read her email to you. She wrote this to me.

[15 : 36] She said this. She said, there's this idea related to hospitality that keeps coming in my mind. Rejection. She said, I do a lot of inviting. The more I invite, the more rejection I face.

People are busy. People don't want to come. I get it. But it can wear you down. And a lot of times it's hard not to take it personally. Facing rejection is a major part of hospitality. Getting past all of the no's to get to a yes.

And then she said this. There is something in there about how Christ was despised and rejected. And how following him and imitating him, part of taking up the cross, is walking to a degree in rejection.

If we can draw out that fear and name it, I think it can help motivate people to reach out ready and expecting that rejection is part of hospitality, which is part of discipleship.

Listen, nobody likes to be rejected. That's not something that's fun at all. But why is it such a devastating thing for so many of us, right? If we're honest with ourselves.

[16 : 39] It can paralyze us a lot of times and it keeps us from following Christ into the hard, dark, shadowy places of life. Well, I think it's because many of us haven't grappled. We might know at a theoretical level, but deep down into our hearts that Christ facing ultimate rejection and through it becoming the cornerstone, is foundational to what it means to follow him.

I had a friend who he would walk around and he thought it was hilarious to do a trust fall without you expecting what a trust fall is, where you just fall into somebody and they're supposed to catch you. But usually everybody's like waiting for it.

He would just walk along and he would yell out, trust fall. And he would kind of fall over hoping that you would catch him. Well, what's happening is he's taking the foundation of his life, right, his literal life, his body, and he's shifting it.

So he starts to fall. And he's hoping that your foundation, or I guess he didn't really care. He didn't care if he fell. He thought it was funny. But ultimately he's hoping that your foundation is firm and it can catch and can receive him.

This is what the Bible calls us to do. It calls us to trust fall onto Jesus, right, to make him the foundation of our life. And yet, because of sin, what are we tempted to do? That foundation isn't going to be firm enough.

[17 : 56] It looks like weakness. So what do we do? We create all these different cornerstones in our life, all these different false foundations that we think will actually hold us up, like our health or our bank account or our kids' happiness or a political party.

And those things are there and are never going to sustain us through rejection. Another question. What's your functional cornerstone? What acts as the foundation of your life, the thing that makes you feel most confident, the thing that gives you surety?

If there's cracks in it, if the lines aren't true, the whole house is going to crumble. Have you tested these things? A lot of times we don't test them.

Have you tested Jesus? Yeah. To see how sure a foundation, how firm a foundation he is. So ask yourself this week maybe, what are my competing cornerstones?

And then examine how maybe they hurt your experience of community and how they get in the way of you practicing hospitality. And then in repentance, let's shift our cornerstone back to Jesus.

[19 : 01] Not wealth. Not health. Not friends. You know, community is a wonderful thing, but the foundation of community isn't community. The foundation of community, sorry, is Christ, the cornerstone.

And as we do that, what's going to happen then is you're going to notice you're going to start growing closer in community to others. You're going to notice those who've also made the foundation of their life the cornerstone.

Because see, these stones, they're not just connected back to the cornerstone, but they get joined to one another, brick upon brick. You're living like stones being built up as a spiritual house.

We're united here this evening because we've come to the same foundation. The very base of our lives, whatever your background is, whatever experiences you had, no matter how much money you've had in your bank account, no matter how much rejection you faced or have not faced, you're coming here and we're all saying, hey, the foundation of my life, if I am a Christian, is Jesus.

And that joins us to one another. So community, it's necessary, not just nice. We can't take it for granted. Also, community's foundation is Jesus and his finished work.

[20 : 12] And this kind of radically alters everything, helps us face rejection when we make him our cornerstone. Third thing, the purpose of community. I don't know if you noticed as we read, as Stephen read through it, there's all this priestly language in our passage.

I already mentioned the temple, right? It says terms like royal priesthood, right? Peter calls Christians in verse 5 and 9 a holy, a royal priesthood. I mean, what he's doing is he's quoting in Exodus 19, how God speaks to his people.

He calls them a royal priesthood. You see, Israel, they've been called out of Egypt and they come in the covenant with God and they're in such close fellowship with the one true living God.

It's as if they are priests mediating God's presence to all of the nations surrounding Israel. There's this priestly work of being God's people.

So what do priests do? Well, lots of things. Two things that Peter mentions for the purpose of community. One, offer spiritual sacrifices. And two, proclaim God's excellencies.

[21 : 15] So to offer spiritual sacrifices. That's what Peter says in verse 5. We're like priests who offer spiritual sacrifices. Now, I don't know about you, but that sounds like the most Christianese thing I have ever heard.

Offer spiritual sacrifices. What does that mean? Am I supposed to like pray in Latin or something? Like is there some mystical thing that I'm missing? Offer a spiritual sacrifice.

What on earth is Peter talking about? Well, let me simplify it a little bit. A spiritual sacrifice is a sacrifice offered by the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

It's a spirit-led sacrifice. So it's not pointing to some mystical thing, but it's referring to all that we do by the power of the Spirit, keeping step with the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, using the gifts of the Spirit.

So this is what Paul has in mind when he says in Romans 12 that we should present our bodies as what? A living sacrifice. Meaning all that you do is aim towards worship of God.

[22 : 26] The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 13, 15, and 16 that we're to offer a sacrifice of praise to God. So you're thinking like, okay, so worship. But then he adds that the church should not neglect to do good and share what they have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

So part of the purpose of community is to worship and honor God by the way that we lay down our lives for one another. As we lay down our lives for one another, it's offering a spiritual sacrifice through worship of God and love of one another.

How do we do that? Simple. If you've got a phone or if you want to go back to the index in the back of your Bible, you look up one another. And you go and you find all the one another passages.

To love one another. To live in harmony with one another. To encourage one another. To bear one another's burdens. To serve one another. To forgive one another. To confess your sins to one another.

To welcome one another. To welcome one another. To do so. To welcome one another. To show hospitality. Is a spiritual sacrifice that is pleasing to God.

[23 : 38] And it's not a one-time thing, right? It's a continual sacrifice. We need to move towards one another continually. It's easy in life to move apart. One of the things that divides us more than anything else is this.

Think we're more connected than we've ever been? Uh-uh. Uh-uh. Your faces are looking down instead of at one another because of our phones. We need to make spiritual sacrifices of companionship.

We offer forgiveness. Costly forgiveness to us. Resisting. I'm thinking the worst about others. So the purpose of community is to offer spiritual sacrifices in our life together.

It's one another. Second thing Peter also says is to proclaim God's excellencies. C.S. Lewis, he talks about how many friendships arise because all of a sudden you realize that you're both looking at the same thing together.

I mean, just like a simple example. Like, you like that football team too? Me too. It's all these things that we're looking towards, kind of standing side by side and adoring, looking at something together, shoulder to shoulder, excited about the same thing.

[24 : 47] And part of the purpose of community is to mediate God's glory through our relationships. This is why it isn't good for Adam to be alone. Genesis 2 is not talking like Adam was a tennis player and he needed somebody else to play with.

But the idea is that to give glory, to proclaim God's glory is a relational task. Even when sin enters the world, God promises to show his glory so that the nations might stream to his glory.

How's he going to do that? He says, through a person. No! He says, through a people. This is why the prophets are so frustrated all the time. Because these communities, they're not doing justice.

They're not loving mercy. They're not walking humbly with God. They're failing to proclaim his excellencies and mediate his glory to the world. So what has to happen?

The true Israel comes in Jesus. He proclaims God's excellencies perfectly. In fact, he is God's excellencies embodied. And what does Jesus do?

[25 : 49] He gathers a new community. A new Israel around him starts with 12 disciples, like 12 tribes of Israel. And now we get to take up this vocation that Adam and Eve failed in, that Israel failed in.

But we get to do upheld by the power of the Holy Spirit. Proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into the marvelous light. How do we do this?

Primarily, one of the ways we do it is through our life together. That's why Peter, if you were to read past our passage, he says, just a couple verses down, that it's through the life of the community of Christ, the community of the cornerstone, that others are going to see our good deeds and they're going to do what?

Glorify God. It's through our life together, our love for one another, as we proclaim the excellencies of God, that it becomes more plausible to our neighbors that there is one true living God and he is the God of the Bible.

You know, the way that a lot of our unbelieving friends come to know Jesus is not through some charismatic speaker who puts a really cool produced video together that we show to them.

[26 : 55] It's through relationships. People coming in and seeing there's something different about this. The way that they relate to one another. It might not be normal to them at first. In fact, it probably isn't.

They see that there are those who talk about their lives and their failures in a different way. You know, they're strangely humble and yet confident simultaneously.

I'm not the cornerstone of my life. If you try to do that, it would crumble immediately. I have no place to boast. But I can be confident because I am joined to the true, infinitely precious, infinitely strong cornerstone, who is Christ.

So community, it's necessary. Its foundation is Jesus and his finished work. And his purpose is priestly. We're offering spiritual sacrifices and proclaiming God's excellencies.

Last thing, last point, is the power of community. I've got to be honest in this. You know, a lot of times in our life, community can kind of feel ho-hum.

[27 : 58] Not that much like power. I don't know about power. It's nice. I know I'm supposed to be called to it. But a lot of times it feels maybe a little empty. You see, a lot of times it's because we think it's nice, not necessary.

Like I can't get by in life without other Christians, right? It's necessary. We forget the foundation. We build our foundation on a lot of other things. And then sometimes we even attempt the purpose of community.

Excuse me. We attempt the purpose detached from its power. And you know what that is? It's just moralism. I'm going to try to outdo everybody else and do all the one another passages and then, hey, look at me and you're going to get burned out.

There's not going to be a lot of power in that. What is the power of the community of the cornerstone? A couple things. One, this idea of what Peter is talking about, all these living stones in the diaspora coming to the cornerstone and basing their lives on them and being this holy temple to the Lord.

He is saying that this radically brings people together. The world wants that so much. We're one. Let's be unified. There is nothing more uniting than this.

[29 : 12] Because it's saying no matter your background, no matter anything, no matter the color of your eyes, this is the most fundamental, important thing about you. It radically brings people together.

That's the story of the early church. The potential for Christian community is deeper than any other community the world has ever seen because it brings people united to the cornerstone.

I remember my first ever overseas missions trip was to Peru. And we went to worship one Sunday morning. I was watching this guy. He had this orange electric guitar that he was playing to the praise songs.

And he was just like, I mean, he was doing all the solos to it. And I was Presbyterian. So I was wondering what was going on. And then it hit me as we're singing these songs. I was like, orange guitar guy over there.

If I have Christ in common with him, then I share more in common with him because I share eternity with him than any of my high school friends back home who we all speak the same language and love the same sports team and tell the same jokes and identify in so many ways and have the same dreams in life.

[30 : 19] There's a power to our hospitality when we realize this. The second secret to the power of community is how Jesus became the cornerstone.

We already mentioned this. But it's through rejection. You see, part of why we hesitate a lot of times in community and we keep our relationships surface level is because we ask, what if they reject me?

We keep our prayer requests nice and tame, usually even not about ourselves, but it's about somebody else because what would they do if they heard my shame?

We're content for these superficial acquaintances and we miss deep community. But you see, in calling Christians a priesthood, Peter, he is basing that on Jesus being our high priest.

It's because our high priest has done so much. Because he's given us so much, his very life, because he has taken our shame, because he has received our rejection that we can actually take risks in community.

[31 : 19] Yes, it's hard. But if Jesus took my shame, maybe I can start to talk about it. Someone may make me feel my shame at times and while it stings, it does not define me.

It's not the cornerstone of my life. When I reach out and they reject me, rejected my Savior too. And this changes the world. So what do you do?

I don't know. City groups start back up, join one. And start to talk as if you need a high priest. You see, we can have safe lessons and share safe details and pray safe prayers.

That's a good starting point. It's better than nothing. But what if we said, I'm not a together person with Jesus as the icing on the cake. He's not this little brick on the top of this building that I've built myself.

He is the foundation. I'm constantly confronted by my own sin, selfishness, and ingratitude. And unless Christ is my cornerstone, I have no hope. I bet if you did that, someone else would go, yep, me too.

[32 : 22] And it would bring you together. So you allow yourself to be known. This is the power of Christian community. Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, rejected and yet established.

Us joined to him and joined to one another. It's like peeking over the wall the way things really are. And you've always hoped that they could be. This is the hope that we get to extend.

This is the love and the welcome that we get to extend to one another. And as we do that, let me tell you, that will encourage us towards hospitality. I'll close with this. In the nation of China, where there used to be almost no Christians, modern missiologists are calling it one of the greatest missionary movements, church-planting movements in modern times.

In fact, some have estimated it's kind of hard to tell exact numbers because of the situation there. But they say even possibly by 2050, China might have the most Christians of any nation.

There's areas needed for sharing faith. There's a lot of people there. There's a lot of need for discipleship. But Christianity is actually growing there. And what's happening in the midst of that? The government is cracking down.

[33 : 32] Why? Because communist leaders in China realize something that a lot of Western Christians forget.

The power of a new community that doesn't mind rejection and has based their life on something that cannot be taken away.

They understand that, and they're coming after the church. Why? Do you know who you are? You're a stone, a living stone, not a dead stone. You're a living stone connected to the cornerstone, infinitely precious.

Do you know what family you belong to? A living stone joined to other stones, basing their lives and futures off of their faith in the strength of the cornerstone.

Do you know what you're called to do? To offer spiritual sacrifice, proclaim the excellencies of the one who called you out of darkness into the marvelous light. So what are you going to do? What are you going to do this week?

[34 : 37] What are you going to do with your life? Let's welcome one another. Let's welcome strangers. Let's pray that the Lord would grow us as a family once we were not a people.

Now we're God's people. Thanks be to the Lord. Let's pray. Father, would you help us to believe in the necessity of our life together?

Would you make it so that Glasgow sees the power of the gospel through the community of believers in this room? For the lonely, would you help them to find welcome?

For the wandering, would you help them to find their way home? For the disillusioned, would you help them to find their purpose? For the hurting, would you help them to find care? For the estranged, would you help them to find peace in community?

Oh, Father, would you help sinners to come home? From pastors to prostitutes, help sinners to join to you and join to one another.

[35 : 38] Would you use this church, this community, this people, this gathering, this temple to that end? We pray this in the name of our great, sure foundation, our cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

Amen.