

Core Values: Covenantal Community - 1

Corinthians 12:12-26

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[0 : 00] Well, amen. Good morning, church. My name is Josh. I'm one of the pastors here at Lampstand. I'm not typically the one who does the preaching, but I'm thankful for the opportunity to preach this morning. This morning, we are continuing our series called The Church on Track, Our Core Values as a Church. And our core values are designed to tether us together towards the glory of Jesus Christ. They're values that we share to glorify Christ together in this local church. And this morning, our core value that we're going to be talking about is covenantal community. What is covenantal community? Well, hopefully we're going to get to the bottom of that this morning. Let's begin by just reading. I'll read our core value for us aloud, and then we'll unpack it. It's a long one, so bear with me here. We believe that God intends his people to live in devoted community and intimate connection with one another. As the church, every member is united together through one common faith into the collective body of Christ.

As such, the church is a covenant people that embraces a responsibility and commitment to submit to one another, be accountable to one another, serve one another, and be dependent on one another in grace and love. As a covenant people, we also commit to upholding and regularly partaking in the church ordinances, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Now, I'm excited for this core value this morning because it's all about the local church, and I love the local church. God has designed the local church in such a beautiful way, and he didn't have to design the church this way, but he did.

And covenantal community is what makes the church tick. It's what helps us live together on a day-to-day basis as the church. Well, here's my big idea, if you guys are note-takers, my big idea for this morning.

And we'll unpack this together. In the new covenant, we are bound to Christ and to one another. In the new covenant, we are bound to Christ and to one another.

All right, what is a covenant? Well, put simply, it's a binding promise made between two parties, each party having obligations or expectations of the other one. Covenants were very common in the ancient world. A strong king might come and conquer a weaker king or intimidate that weaker king with his powerful army or his wealth, and those two kings would make a covenant together, where the mighty king would say, I'll protect you, take care of you, where the weaker king would then give tribute and respect this higher king. That was an ancient world covenant, kind of like an alliance.

[3 : 04] Well, God made covenants in the Old Testament also. God made covenants with man, binding promises with his people that he would be their God and that they would be his people. The Bible tells us about lots of covenants. There's the Noahic covenant, which took place after the great flood, where God made a covenant with Noah saying, I will never again destroy the world in this way. There's the Abrahamic covenant, where God promised to Abraham that he would make him a great nation and that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed and that he would have many sons and that many sons would have father Abraham.

That's right. There's the Mosaic covenant, given at Mount Sinai, where God established his law and called Israel to live holy lives and be obedient. There's the Davidic covenant, where God promised to David that from his line would come a king who would reign forever. These covenants were God's chosen, structured ways to relate to and bind himself to his people. They were assurances based on the unchanging character of God, the faithfulness of God, that he would always be their God and that they would always be his people. And interestingly, all of those covenants, except for one, were set up by God to be one-sided covenants. God was the one making the binding promises and his people simply received those blessings. The one exception is the Mosaic covenant, which did have a requirement from the people, but as we look at our Old Testament, we know that they failed pretty utterly. Well, beautifully, both the one-sided covenants that showed God's faithfulness and his amazing plan to save his people and the one-sided Mosaic covenant, which showed that man has a sin problem and can't save themselves, they point to something greater. They point to a new and final covenant, a covenant that would save God's people from their sins once and for all and unite them with him forever. They all lead up to the new covenant, which is found in the blood of Christ.

Our first main point this morning, we are people of the new covenant. We are people of the new covenant. I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians chapter 11, which is the chapter before our passage.

It should be on the screen. Hear these words. Paul writes, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also, he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Brothers and sisters, we are people of the new covenant. If you have repented of your sin and put your trust in Jesus, then you are a member of the new covenant. God is your God, and you are among his people, a covenantal people. Through his shed blood, his death on the cross, and his resurrection, Jesus established a perfect covenant, one with a better promise and a better binding agreement than all of the Old Testament covenants had. In this covenant, God promises that through Christ, our sins have been forgiven, and we can be united with God forever.

[7 : 08] All of us are born in sin, and in our sin, we justly deserve death and eternal separation from God and hell. But Jesus shed his blood and had his body broken on the cross in our place, and in doing so, he paid the price of death and hell that we never could have paid. When we partake in the Lord's Supper together like we do every single Sunday, we proclaim this truth that in Christ's blood, we have found forgiveness once and for all. God's wrath has been fully satisfied in Jesus, our atoning sacrifice. This is our covenant promise as a covenant people. And it's a promise that's open to all who repent and trust in Jesus. Well, that leads us to our main passage that Levi read earlier this morning. Let's read again 1 Corinthians 12, 12 through 13.

Here's my second point this morning. In the new covenant, we are bound to Christ. In the new covenant, we are bound to Christ.

You see, in the mystery of salvation, the regeneration that happens through the work of the Holy Spirit when we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus, something happens. Our position shifts.

We who once were far off, deserving of God's wrath, far from his blessing, are brought nearer. Nearer than we could ever dare hope. We are united with Christ, bound with him in a miraculous but true way. Verse 13 speaks of this when it says, First of all, whose body have we been baptized into? Into Christ's. Through the washing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit that happens in salvation, we are quite literally baptized spiritually into Christ, joined with him spiritually. And by which spirit do we drink? And which spirit are we filled with and empowered by? None other than the spirit of Christ. The spirit who glorifies Christ and speaks of Christ and honors Christ and binds us to Christ. A helpful picture of this binding, I think, is the picture of marriage.

Marriage is one of the clearest pictures we have of our unity with Christ. In Ephesians 5, verse 31 through 32, Paul says this, he says, A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

[10:20] Then he adds this, This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. When a man and woman are joined in marriage, they are no longer two separate individuals living for themselves. They are bound together as one. In the same way, when we are saved, we are no longer our own. We belong to and are joined with Christ. And this truth is everywhere in Scripture. A common phrase we read in the New Testament is that believers are in Christ. And that's not just a way of speaking.

It's the very reality of our salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says it this way, For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Did you hear that? In him. We have been bound to Jesus, tied with a knot that can never be untied. Our identity is wrapped up in him. This means that when God the Father looks at us, he does not see our sin, which would lead to death. He does not even see our own attempts at righteousness. Instead, he sees the righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ. We are bound to Christ in such a way that his perfect obedience, his atoning sacrifice, and his righteousness are ours. They belong to us.

Another verse which shows this is Galatians 2:20, which says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Christ did what we could never do. In our place, he bore the cross. He rose again, crushing the power of sin and death. And in doing so, he has forged a path to heaven. And we can go there too, because we are bound with him. We can stand before the throne of the Father with confidence, not relying on our own righteousness, but on the righteousness of Christ. This is our great hope. This is our assurance as believers. We are bound to Christ forever. And if we truly understand that truth, I think it transforms everything in our lives. We don't have to strive for acceptance from God or from other people, because we found it perfectly in Christ. We don't have to fear judgment. Our debt has been fully paid. We don't have to wonder if we belong. We are intimately Christ's and belong to him. And we don't have to walk alone either. We are bound with his church, which is my third point this morning. In the new covenant, we are bound to one another. In the new covenant, we're bound to Christ, but we're also bound to one another.

If I'm bound to Christ and you're bound to Christ, then we are bound to one another. We belong to Christ and to his church, his body, whether you like it or not. This is true of all believers. 1 Peter 2:10 speaks of this reality. It says, once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Now, we often think about the second half of that verse, that once we were dead in our sins and received the mercy of God, right? That's true of salvation. But the first part is just as essential. Once we were far off, not among God's people, but now we have been joined with God's people. And Paul makes this even clearer in our passage this morning.

[14 : 20] Look again at 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 and 13. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit, we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves were free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. Do you hear that corporate language, that corporate identity that we have? The Bible uses many examples in Scripture to talk about this identity that we have together. It talks about us being a building, a temple that's built up together.

It talks about us being the bride of Christ. It talks about us being a holy nation set apart for God. It talks about us being a household, a family, a race together. And it talks about us being a flock.

All of those descriptors speak toward our unified corporate identity in Christ. This is what it means when we say that we are a covenantal community. Because of the new covenant, because we're bound to Christ, we are bound to one another in this covenantal community.

What does that mean? What does that look like? How does that affect how we live with one another? If this is true of us, how should we then live? Well, I have three sub points now to kind of dive into that idea.

Firstly, in the body of Christ, we are all different. We're all different. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 12, 14 through 20. It says this, If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

[16 : 43] This passage highlights for us the needed differences within the body of Christ. Take a moment and look around at the congregation here at Lampstand. We're all pretty different. Some of us are pretty weird looking, right?

But we're all very different, aren't we? Yes, we have been saved by the same gospel. We cling to the same truth in Christ. But we are unique. We are not the same.

We've been given different spiritual gifts, roles in the church, personalities, and backgrounds. The one in Christ, we are not the same. But imagine this morning, if we were all exactly the same.

If we had the same giftings, the same strengths, the same abilities, this church wouldn't be a body. We can't all be eyes. We can't all be hands, right?

If we were all eyes, we would just be a pile of eyes, right? Not a body. Think of it this way. What if we were all exactly like Eric? What if we were all preachers, right?

[17 : 50] Sure, the sermons on Sunday would be pretty good, but we would be lacking in so many other ways. No offense, Eric. We would be lacking in so many other ways. For the body to function properly, we need our differences.

We need the diversity of our spiritual gifts and our personalities. And that's exactly Paul's point in verse 19. He says, If all were a single member, where would the body be? Our next sub point.

In the body of Christ, we are all needed. We are all needed. Every member is essential in the body of Christ. If the church were only made up of Eric's preaching pastors, this church would fall apart.

But every member is needed. We need deacons like Matthew Townsend who serve in practical ways and set up the Lord's Supper every week and manage the finances. We need team leaders like Tina Hill who rally people together and help organize and plan things while still having a welcoming face.

We need teachers like Kat and Isaac Dunmore who sacrificially miss the worship service in order to instruct our children in the back. We need the army of young guys who run around carrying boxes and setting up TVs every week.

[19 : 04] We need encouragers like Marty Gwynn who'll build up the body and ask how you're doing. Whatever your gift, whatever your role, however God has made you, you are needed.

You are essential. The body of Christ is incomplete without you. And this isn't accidental. God has intentionally designed his church to be this way.

We might be tempted to think that we don't need the rest of the body or that the body doesn't need you but that is simply untrue.

Look again at verses 21 and 22. Paul says, The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Lower again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. Did you catch that? The weaker parts are indispensable.

[20 : 08] Yes, maybe your role in the body isn't as glamorous as something else. Maybe you're not an eye. An eye is sparkly and is the source of many love songs, right?

It's very visibly seen. Maybe you're not an eye. Maybe you're a spleen. Working behind the scenes, not as visible as the eye, right?

But you are essential. If we didn't have a spleen, we would get sick. This body would fall apart. This church body would fall apart without the spleens in this body.

Verse 18 says this. I love this verse. But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

God has placed you exactly where he wants you to be in his body with the gifts that this body needs in order to be healthy and glorify him.

[21 : 09] So do not believe the lie that you are dispensable. This church needs you and you need the church. My third sub-point is that in the body of Christ, we are all valued.

All valued. Every member of the body of Christ is precious. Verses 23 through 25 say this. On those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor.

And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Every single member in the body of Christ is precious. The world often assigns value on things like status or talent or visibility.

But in the church, God flips that paradigm upside down. Those who seem unnoticed or less significant in the world's eyes are given greater honor by God.

[22 : 23] How is that so? Well, the beautiful truth is God has determined our value. Not the world, not even yourself. God has determined your value.

All of us were once dead in sin, completely unable to save ourselves, but God, in his mercy, sent his son, Jesus Christ, to give us new life, to save us from our sins.

We didn't earn that salvation. Therefore, we cannot boast. All of us have received the same grace and the same righteousness in Christ and are equally precious in the eyes of God.

God looks at you in Christ and declares you are righteous. You are precious. You are valuable. Well, what does this mean for us as a covenantal community?

Verse 25 says this, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. In the body of Christ, there is no room for division.

[23 : 35] There is no room for cliques, favoritism, or hierarchy of importance. Every member of this body is equally valuable and should be equally cared for.

James 2.1 warns us in this same vein. It says this, my brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

Brothers and sisters, I urge us, let us not show partiality here at Lampstand. May our value of one another be based on God's declarative value of one another, not our own subjective opinions.

Let's reject any temptation to form exclusive groups in this body or only associate with those who are like us, same age, economic status or stage of life.

I urge you, step outside your comfort zone. Engage with those in this body that you wouldn't normally engage with. Love the whole body, not just your inner circle.

[24 : 36] As hard as it may be sometimes to reach out, I promise you, you will be blessed if you interact with the full scope of what this body is. I have learned equally much from Dennis Gwynn as I have from Waylon Bendewald.

Different things that I've learned, but I've learned from both of those men in this body and we need both. All right, let's look at our final verse and I have four applications to end us with.

Our final verse is verse 26. It says this, My first application is this, see yourself as bound.

See yourself as bound to Christ and to his church. This verse in particular, but really this entire passage, challenges us to shift our mindset to not simply see ourselves as individuals, but to see ourselves as a part of a whole.

We are not isolated believers walking separate paths. We are bound together in Christ. This means that when one of us suffers, we don't suffer alone.

[25 : 59] We bear one another's burdens. We weep together. We feel the pain of the body as if it were our very own. And when one of us is honored in this church, we don't grow envious.

We celebrate together. We rejoice in what God has done in our lives. But let's be honest this morning, that is not how our culture typically thinks, isn't it? Here in the U.S., we value individualism.

We admire self-sufficiency, independence, the idea of pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Aspects of that mindset can be good in the right amounts, but it can become dangerous when it blinds us to our true identity in Christ.

It may lead some of us to withdraw from the church, thinking that we can grow spiritually on our own. Some of us might refuse to serve, believing our gifts are insignificant in the body.

Some of us might resist accountability, becoming unwilling to receive correction or encouragement. but no believer is meant to live in isolation.

[27 : 08] We are designed to do life together. And if we refuse to recognize the truth that we are bound, then we will miss out on the richness of true biblical community.

And furthermore, we will neglect those in the body that truly need us. We won't be the body that we are called to be. So let's see ourselves as bound.

Not in the sense of chains that restrict us, but as a people who are securely connected, as those who belong here at this church, as those who are a family.

My second application is let us honor Christ. Let us honor Christ. Since we are bound to Christ, we must honor Christ.

Our lives should declare His greatness and His goodness. As His body here on earth, we have the sacred responsibility of representing Him to the world around us.

- [28 : 14] Let's do so in a way that radiates His glory and showcases His greatness. Paul writes this in Ephesians 3, verses 8-10. To me, though I'm in the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

The church is designed to display the radiant wisdom of God. But how do we do that? How do we display the wisdom of God?

By being the body. By being the body that God has designed us to be. Think for a moment of an orchestra.

One instrument on its own is beautiful. But when all the instruments come together harmonizing in their differences that is a powerful beautiful thing.

The orchestra needs all of the different instruments. But it's not just the orchestra that is on display in a performance like that. When an orchestra plays beautifully together when all the parts are doing their piece the brilliance of the composer who designed that music who wrote that music and the conductor who is leading that orchestra is put on display.

- [29 : 52] And in the church God plays both roles. We are the orchestra of God. He's written the music. He is the conductor. Let us play our parts together and glorify him.

If someone were to come up to us and ask what is Christ like? What is Jesus Christ like? They should be able to look at us look at the church and see the answer.

As Christ served so we serve one another. As Christ forgave so we forgive one another. As Christ wept for those he loved so we weep for one another.

as Christ loved so we love one another. My third application is love the body. Love the body.

The church is filled with imperfect people and at times that can be frustrating but Christ loves his body. So much so that he lived and died and rose again for his body.

- [30 : 56] This means that we shouldn't just tolerate the church. We should cherish the church. Strive to love the church in the same way that Christ has. Paul speaks of this in Romans 12.15 which says 12.15 says rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

That kind of love is far more than just words. It means meaningfully engaging with people walking alongside them in the messy areas of life especially when it's hard.

It means sometimes taking the punches that were meant for other people binding their wounds and bearing their burdens. It means having hard conversations calling out sin in one another and allowing sin to be called out in our own lives.

It means being vulnerable allowing others to see our hurts so they can feel safe to share theirs as well. But do we often do this?

Is that our instinct as a body? When one of us is suffering do we notice? When someone's burdened do we come alongside them? Or do we often remain detached wrapped up in our own lives?

- [32 : 09] In Romans 12 Paul also says let love be genuine abhor what is evil hold fast to what is good love one another with brotherly affection outdo one another in showing honor.

I don't know about you but that is convicting for me. Is my love in the body of Christ always genuine? Is it internally true or is it just an external act at times?

Christ has loved us with an undeserved and sacrificial love. We didn't earn his love. And since we are bound to Christ and bound to one another let us love one another in the same way.

Not loving out of selectiveness or any expectation of reward but loving sacrificially. Even if the brother and sister in Christ is undeserving of that love in the moment let us love one another.

And if you lack this kind of love if you struggle to love the body the call this morning is to repent of that mindset. Repent of your indifference. Ask God to soften your heart and give you the same kind of love for the church that he has.

[33 : 24] I believe he will answer that prayer. Our final application is minister to the body. Minister to the body. What does it actually mean to live in covenantal community?

If it's true that we are covenantal community what does it mean for us to actually live in that way? Well every member of the church has been placed here for a reason and one of those big reasons is to minister to one another.

Paul tells us about this in Ephesians 4 verse 11. Speaking of the church Paul says this, and he Jesus gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints that's you and me for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The job of the body, the job that we have as a covenantal community is to minister to one another. Minister to one another so that we would be built up into the image of Christ.

[35 : 12] We aid one another in becoming like Jesus. That is our role. And we do this by simply being the body members that God has made us to be.

By serving one another. By praying for one another. By teaching one another. Encouraging one another. Through setting up TVs on Sunday morning.

Through serving the kids in the back. Through being intentional to check in on somebody when they walk in the doors on Sunday morning. Through doing meal trains throughout the week if someone needs meals.

simply by being the body we help each other become more like Jesus Christ. This is a beautiful responsibility that we share with one another.

And we need every part of the body to take part in that. Well how do we do that practically in some more firm ways? I have three things.

[36 : 11] There are many ways that we encourage one another to be more Christ-like but there's three ways that I want to point to this morning as we close. Firstly, through church membership. Church membership is the formal way that we express the reality of our being bound to one another.

But more than that, it's our commitment to live out that reality in this local church. If we are bound together, we want to commit to saying yes, we are bound together in this local church.

This is how we commit to being a covenantal community here at Lampstand. And then secondly, through our church covenant. Our church covenant is one of the two documents that we ask all members to affirm when they become members here at Lampstand.

What is a church covenant? A church covenant is a summary of how we have committed to live together as a covenantal community. The New Testament is filled with commands and teachings about how the body is to live and minister to one another.

And our church covenant puts all those things or most of those things in one place so we can commit to them together. Nathan, go ahead and put that list of... Ah, perfect.

[37 : 24] Thank you. These are the first words and all the commitments in our church covenant that we would unite, discern, love, minister, gather, respond in worship, pray, nurture, give, submit, uphold, and welcome.

We think that these are helpful ways to know what does it mean to be a covenantal community. We strive to do these things together. And then lastly this morning, and this is very applicable for us today, we minister to one another through the ordinances, through baptism, and through the Lord's Supper.

These are not just empty rituals or tasks that we do together. They proclaim the very reality of who we are in Christ, that we are a covenantal community together.

And I truly believe that as we do the ordinances together, that binds us even closer together through that doing. Baptism, which we're going to celebrate this morning, marks our entrance into the family of God, into the new covenant people.

It's a public declaration that you belong to Christ and to his church. But you guys, baptism isn't just for the person being baptized.

[38 : 40] It's for all of us. When someone is baptized, they're identifying with Christ in his body and we, as the body, welcome them and affirm them.

We say, yes, you are a member of Christ's body. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, is a continual reminder. And we take the Lord's Supper weekly.

It's a continual reminder of our membership in the new covenant. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 17, because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

This simple act that we're going to take part in now, eating bread and drinking the cup, has been practiced continually since Christ instituted it in the upper room.

And when we partake in these elements together, we proclaim the glory of the reality of the new covenant. That our sins have been forgiven, that we have been bound to Christ, and that we are bound to one another.

[39 : 49] Let's see the truth of that covenantal community and live in light of that every single day. Join me in prayer. Father, Lord God Almighty, this morning we give thanks and we proclaim the praises of your name.

Thank you, Father, that you did not leave us dead in our sins, separated from you, deserving of your punishment, of your justice and your wrath, Lord, but that in mercy and grace you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, who bore our sins on the cross, was buried and rose again in newness of life.

Thank you for the goodness of the gospel. And Lord, I pray that this morning if there is anyone in this room who has not repented of their sins and put their trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins, may they do so this morning.

May the truth of your word be clear in their hearts and minds, we ask. Thank you that you have bound us to Christ so that his righteousness belongs to us. Thank you that you have bound us together so that we can be a body who walks and does life together.

Help us to take that reality seriously, to aid one another in our walk. Be glorified now, we pray, as we celebrate these ordinances and proclaim your goodness.

[41 : 17] In Christ's name we pray and all God's people said, amen.