

Called to be...Together

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[0 : 00] skill skill All right, if you've got your Bible, go to 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1 is where we're going to be this evening, and we will get there eventually. We're actually starting a new series, as I talked about at the beginning of the service, kind of talking about the vision that we have here at Faith Family and taking a few weeks to kind of unpack that. Most of you, I think, know Faith Family is just a little over three years old, and it's been an interesting journey. Literally, the first several months of our existence was during the pandemic, and so what a great way to start, you know?

But we've been around for a little over three years, and we've tried very, very intentionally to keep things simple. I don't know if you know this. Notice this on the screen.

But I found this, and it's hard to be simple in a complex world. Amen? I mean, most of us feel like this. We're stretched in so many different directions. I mean, this looks like our calendar and our life, and it's just like everything is demanding for our time.

[1 : 44] And certainly, I've been around church all my life, and I have found that even church tends to demand all your time.

Now, don't misunderstand me. Christ demands your life. Amen? Christ demands your life. But oftentimes, the church wants to demand your life as well. And you can spend like 80% of your week and time in programs and events and meetings and services, and just trust me, Faith Family, I have lived this for years.

And so when Faith Family started, we kind of drew a line in the sand and just said, listen, we're going to be simple. We're going to be simple and focused on what's most important.

And so if you want enormous praise bands and church musicals and endless buffets of ministries to attend, we're not that church. We're not criticizing those churches.

We're just saying there's a lot of those that people could go to, but we are intentionally at Faith Family simple. And we want to focus on the important things biblically and not assume that activity equals spirituality, right?

[2 : 56] That just because I'm really busy in church, I must be really living for the Lord. That's a very dangerous way of thinking. And one of the things that really stuck out to me, this has been some time ago that I read this.

It's a book. I recommend it to you. By the way, long introduction tonight, so just bear with me. But you're going to stand in just a moment, so don't get too comfortable. It's called *The Simple Life*. It was written by one of the professors that I had in seminary.

Just a short little excerpt here. It says, Americans are rediscovering simple. At least they are aware they need to rediscover simple. People are hungry for simple because the world has become so complex.

The technology revolution has really become an overwhelming information revolution. We have access to more information, more products, more research, and more ideas than at any point in history.

We can plan an entire trip to another country in the punch of a few buttons. We can research the most complex topics without even leaving our laptop. But the information revolution and the material abundance of Americans have made life more complex.

[4 : 02] Would you agree? You're living that, and so am I. In the midst of the harried world of complexity, in the midst of the uncontrollable complex lives, people want to find simple.

They long for it. They seek it. They pay for it. They dream about it. The simple life revolution has begun. And as Christians, we're amazed at Jesus' earthly life.

Now please listen to this. Despite the demands of the entire world on His life and time, Jesus found time to spend with His closest friends, His disciples.

He found time to greet and hug little children. He found time to give one-on-one attention to those in need. He found time to listen patiently to those who desperately needed someone to hear their deepest longings.

We know that we cannot replicate all that Jesus did, but we can pattern our life after His. Listen. His life was many things, but it was clearly simple.

[5 : 06] He kept His focus and managed His time on what really mattered. And so should we.

And that's really the vision and the culture that we breathe here at Faith Family. Listen, I know we're not for everybody, and I know we don't offer what everybody else offers, but we have made an intentional decision to be simple.

Christ demands your life. The church doesn't have to demand your life so that you can actually have time, here's a thought, to live on mission for Jesus.

And so we've structured things here at Faith Family in a very, very simple way. And again, we've done that intentionally. Our vision statement, what we want to accomplish is simply this, is that we want people to encounter God and to experience His transforming grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's what we want. We want you to encounter God and to experience the life-changing grace of God. And how do you do that? You do that through the gospel. That's what 2 Corinthians 4 teaches.

[6 : 17] That it's through the gospel that we encounter God and we experience His grace. And we do that through a very simple strategy, and we're going to unpack that over the next few weeks.

The first is, this is what we're asking of you. Be at a gathering, be in a group, and be living out the gospel. It's so simple, right? Intentionally so.

We want you to be at a gathering. We want you to be in a group. And we want you to be living out the gospel to pattern the simple life of Jesus and actually have time not to serve on 15 committees. Gross! And all God's people said, Amen. Who wants to serve on 15 committees? I mean, I grew up in a tradition that had a committee on committees. And I'm not even making that up.

And we spend so much of our time in religious activity rather than talking to that child, sharing the gospel with that neighbor, spending time with closest friends, and focusing our life on what really matters.

[7 : 18] What a concept. And so that's what we're about. Be in a gathering, be in a group, and be living out the gospel. And I'm going to show you that from God's Word over the next few weeks.

You promise to come back? You better, because I'll hunt you down. Here we go. 1 Corinthians 1. Please stand if you're able to do so. 1 Corinthians 1. And let's pick up in verse 2.

1 Corinthians 1 and verse 2. Paul writes, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together, with all those who in every place called upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Pray with me. God, help me tonight to teach Your Word.

[8 : 47] Help us catch this vision that Your Word gives us. And Lord, we want Your Spirit to convict us, to conform us, and to bring us to understanding to the things You've called us to, the things that really matter.

And we give You this time and pray that Christ is exalted. And I ask this in Jesus' name, and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. It was a Sunday morning in Plain City, Utah, when the police were called about a reckless driver.

The caller reported a white Dodge Intrepid that was running stop signs, swerving lanes, and traveling up to speeds, get this, of 40 miles per hour.

Really fast. And so when the police kind of caught the car and found the car, they pulled up to it, flashed their lights, didn't stop, turned on the sirens, didn't stop, pulled up alongside the car, still

didn't stop.

In fact, here is the actual video of the incident that took place, and I want you to watch it very carefully and see if you notice anything really strange that happens at the end. So here's the police footage, here's the video, where they come along behind this white Dodge Intrepid that's traveling at this overwhelming speed of 40 miles per hour, and then when they get to the end of this road, you'll notice that it kind of darts into this gravel driveway, and I want you to watch really closely to what happens at the end and see if it's what you would expect.

[10:24] Look at this. That's not what you expected, is it, right? The driver of that car was a seven-year-old boy.

A seven-year-old by the name of Preston Scarborough, and young Preston stole his parents' car, obviously without their permission, and you might be wondering, what would lead a seven-year-old to steal his parents' automobile?

Well, as you can imagine, the police questioned him as to why he did this, and his answer was not what you would expect it to be. He didn't steal the car because he was mad at his parents. He didn't steal the car because he was trying to run away from home.

He didn't steal the car because he just wanted to experience the thrill of the open road. This is what he told the police. Quote, I stole my parents' car because it was Sunday, and I didn't want to go to church.

Now, be honest. Have you ever felt like Preston? Be honest.

[11:36] Now, most of you have not resorted to grand theft auto to avoid church, but every one of us knows that feeling of just not wanting to go.

And listen, please understand me. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying tonight. I'm not talking about legitimate reasons why you might not go. Sometimes you're sick. Sometimes you're traveling. Of course, there are legitimate reasons why you might not be at church. I'm talking about those reasons when you just really don't want to go. You're making up excuses like, you know, the Vikings are on TV.

Don't you know? Yeah, yeah, this is opening weekend of NFL season. I can skip. Or Pastor Unison, I was up so late last night.

I'm just so tired to which I would say, that's why we offer Saturday night. You have no excuse, alright? Or I just don't have anybody to go with me and I don't really want to go by myself.

[12:31] Or, you know, Pastor, I heard the walleye are really biting right now. And the excuses just go on and on and on. Be honest. You're just like Preston.

And if your pastor's honest, so am I. There's sometimes I don't want to be here to hear me. So I get it. Many of us frequently, if we're honest, will make excuses why not to gather with the people of God for the worship of God.

And we're not alone. We're not alone. In preparation for this sermon this week, I read a study by Gallup Poll that came out just a few months ago. And it said this, quote, U.S. church attendance has shown a small but noticeable decline compared to what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the four years before the pandemic, 2016 through 19, an average of 34% of U.S. adults attended some type of church or synagogue within the past seven days.

From 2020 to the present, the average has been 30%, including a 31% back in May of this year. The recent church attendance levels are about 10 percentage points lower than what the Gallup measured back in 2012 and the prior years.

[13:52] The pandemic has had a profound effect on the U.S. society and it continues to have an impact. Americans have been less likely to attend religious services over the past three years and at this point, it doesn't appear that church attendance will revert to pre-pandemic levels.

So there's a lot of people like Preston. And again, there are legitimate reasons. Sometimes not to gather. But I'm talking about finding a reason to not gather with the people of God for the worship of God.

And here's what I want to say to you. Are you with me tonight? Are you listening? This is foreign to the Old and New Testament. This idea of, you know what, I just don't really know if I want to go today.

I don't really know if I'm feeling up to it. It is a foreign idea. Let's take just for a moment, we're going to get to 1 Corinthians in a moment, but look at some Old Testament passages like Psalm 122, verse 1.

It says, I was... We try that again. Act glad. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

[14:58] Man, when they said it was time to go to the temple and worship, I couldn't wait. My heart was overflowing. I was so glad when they said, let's go to the house of the Lord.

Does that sound like your Saturday? Or your Sunday? You can't wait to get to church? It's the highlight of your week? Listen to Psalm 84, verse 1. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Psalm 95, verse 1. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise.

For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all gods. And that's just a sample of the Old Testament. And I know what some of you wannabe theologians will do.

[15:58] That's the Old Testament, right? We're not under the Old Testament. Well, I love what Derek Kidner in his commentary on the Psalms writes. He says, quote, what Jerusalem was for the Jew, the church is for the Christian.

What Jerusalem was for the Jew, the church is for the Christian. In fact, he goes on to say, how much more full of joy we should be that we gather in Christ.

The fullness of worship has come in Christ and we get to gather in His name. It continues in the New Testament just quickly. Colossians 3.16 Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing what?

One another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with what? Thanksgiving in your hearts to God. Hebrews 10.24 Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Here's the point I'm making. Are you with me, Faith Family? One of the constant themes whether it's the Old Testament or the New Testament is this, notice it on the screen, it's that the people of God love to gather for the worship of God.

[17:13] The people of God love to gather for the worship of God. They can't wait to get to church. They can't wait to get to that community that is gathered in Christ where together they praise His name.

And the Apostle Paul loved the local gathering. The Apostle Paul gave his life to the local gathering. He planted churches, watered churches, nurtured churches, and here in 1 Corinthians 1 we see just how passionate and why Paul is so passionate for the church gathered together.

Notice first in verse 2. Verse 2, to the church of God that is in Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, say this with me, called to be saints together.

Say it again. Called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. Here's the first thing we need to see is that our gathering, and this goes so against the American mindset, but our gathering is an expression of our salvation.

Our gathering is an expression of our salvation. In fact, notice the two phrases in verse 2 that Paul connects together. First, to those who are sanctified in Christ, that is he's talking to believers, to those who are in Christ, and the fact that those believers in Christ are also called to be saints alone.

[18:51] That's not what it says, is it? Those Christians are called to be saints, say it, together. In other words, he connects their faith in Christ and their participation in the body of Christ.

He connects their faith in Christ and their participation in the body of Christ. Now don't misunderstand Paul's point or the point that I'm trying to make. Notice this on the screen. He's not saying that belonging to a church makes you a Christian.

But that belonging to a church is what you do as a Christian. You can't disconnect yourself if you're in Christ from His body.

And as I mentioned, people will push back on this. They don't like this idea. I have had so many people tell me over the years, I can worship just fine all by myself in the fishing boat.

I bet you're not. If you're not catching anything, you ain't worshiping them. But that's beside the point. Of course you can, but the Bible specifically calls you to do it in the fellowship of one another.

[20 : 00] There is no isolated worship that takes the place of doing this together. This is what Paul is talking about here. And this is why we push back. Notice it on the screen.

And it's because we see the church as an organization or an institution to join rather than the family to which you were born. See, we don't think about church the right way.

It's like, it's an institution. They just want my money. I just want a little frame on the wall so I can say I'm a member. No, no, no. That's not church.

Church is the family you were born into when you were born again. The Bible says that for by one spirit you were baptized into one body.

That means that when you got Jesus, you got His people whether you like it or not. Whether you like them or not. Amen?

[20 : 59] You don't get one without the other. To say, I want to be born again, I want to be a Christian, but I don't want the church. That is, I don't want the body of Christ. It's like saying, I want to be born, but I don't want a family.

Well, hello, McFly. That's not how it works. It doesn't work that way. And I realize you may be here tonight and you may not know your family.

You may not like your family. You may never see your family, but I know this. You have a family.

And why I know you have a family is because you were born. And you are not born without having a family.

And the same is true when it comes to our faith. When we were born again, we were placed into the family of God and to the body of Christ.

This is why the New Testament will not allow you, regardless of if you think so or not, it will not allow you to speak of your relationship with Christ as though it is somehow disconnected from His gathered body.

[22 : 00] Try this out. Report back to me and tell me how it goes. Husbands, look at your spouse or girlfriend or whatever and just say this.

I love you. I want a relationship with you. I just can't stand your face. Can't do that. Report back next week on how that went.

Okay? And finish it out this way. Like, listen, baby, baby, baby, listen, being around your body makes me want to jump in all 10,000 lakes.

Right? Like, get used to the couch because that's where you're going to be for a really, really long time. Amen? I mean, she is going to be madder than a piano player in a marching band.

You'll figure that out later. Right? Because you are essentially saying, I don't love you. You're essentially saying, I don't love you. When you say, I love Jesus, I just can't stand your body.

[23 : 03] You are essentially saying to Jesus, I don't love you. Because you do not get Him without all of Him, which includes the very body He died to save.

Paul says, those that are sanctified are called to be saints again together. And again, people will push back and they will say, well, yeah, yeah, yeah.

I belong to the universal church. And if you don't understand that terminology, the universal church is all Christians everywhere. Right? Like, the church isn't just right here in Apple Valley.

Amen? The church is all over the globe. And I belong and I love that universal church. I just don't want to be a part of a local gathering.

Look at verse 2 again. To the church of God that is in, say it, Corinth. Paul is writing to a local church.

[24 : 02] He's not writing to the universal church. Oh, it certainly applies to those who are, verse 2, in every place called upon His name. But he's writing specifically in terms of the saints that are called to be together to those saints in Corinth.

in a local gathered place. In fact, the Bible does not separate the universal church from the local gathering because the universal church is nothing more than the sum of all the local gatherings.

There is no gathering of the universal church. There'll be one one day in heaven. Amen? But until then, the only gatherings of the church happen in local communities.

And of course, all the things that the Scripture teaches in terms of the church make sense only with this understanding. Right? When Jesus talks about taking an issue of reconciliation to the church in Matthew 18, He's not saying take it to every Christian everywhere throughout the world.

No. He's saying you take it to where you are gathered. When it talks about submission to church leaders in 1 Timothy 5, He's talking about submitting to the church leaders where you belong.

[25 : 15] He's not saying you must submit to every church leader all throughout the world. It's not the point. Or when Paul tells pastors to shepherd the flock in 1 Peter 5, that doesn't mean my responsibility is to shepherd every Christian throughout the world, but to shepherd those who gather here at Faith Family.

So the point is, notice this on the screen, genuine salvation, those that are sanctified, expresses itself through church participation, called to be saints together, through a local congregation, Corinth.

Do you see that in verse 2? Let me say that again. Genuine salvation, sanctification, expresses itself in church participation, called to be saints together, in a local congregation, Corinth.

Apple Valley, Rosemount, Egon, and on and on we would go. Here's the second thing we should see. Pick it up in verse 4. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking any spiritual gift.

Here's the second thing I want you to see, is that our gathering encourages our spiritual growth. Our gathering encourages our spiritual growth. Paul gives thanks to these Corinthians and what does he give thanks for?

[26 : 52] He gives thanks because in their gathering together, what has happened? Listen, they have, quote, been enriched in Christ in speech and knowledge and they are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

In other words, Paul is saying that one of the reasons I'm so thankful that you are gathered and that you're being saints together is that I'm seeing spiritual growth happen among you.

I'm so excited as I planted you and birthed you and was a part of nurturing you and spent, I actually got to go to Corinth last year, I spent like a year and a half with you.

I'm so thankful because I'm seeing growth and that growth is happening as you're called together.

The late R.C. Sproul, got to love R.C. Sproul, right? R.C. Sproul wrote this, it is both foolish and wicked to suppose that we will make much progress in sanctification if we isolate ourselves from the visible church.

[27 : 57] Indeed, it's the commonplace to hear people declare that they don't need to unite with a church to be a Christian. They claim that their devotion is personal and private, not corporate.

This is not the testimony of the great saints of history. It is the confession of fools. Tell us how you really think, R.C. Sproul. And I know people will always say, yeah, but listen, the reason why I don't go, the reason why I don't go to church, you ever heard this one, is because the church is full of hypocrites.

You ever heard that? Some of you remember my response to that. My response when somebody tells me the church is full of hypocrites is this, there's always room for one more. We've got a few empty chairs and all hypocrites are welcome here.

In other words, listen, notice this on the screen, Faith Family, the church is messy. Amen. Trust me, from 25 years of experience, the church is messy. And why is that?

Because it's filled with messed up people. So if your life is inconsistent, we'll join a group of others whose lives are inconsistent. All right? All hypocrites are welcome here.

[29 : 05] Except the true definition of hypocrites is not somebody whose life is inconsistent. A true definition of hypocrite is someone who doesn't acknowledge their life is inconsistent. When we come together and say, my life is a mess, it doesn't always line up.

Man, it's the Lord who's going to finish this work in me. Not me. That's not hypocrisy. That's just truth. And so listen, Paul is saying here this is messy.

But I've seen growth. In fact, I have a hard time reading the first few verses of 1 Corinthians 1 because I know what's coming the rest of the book.

Like what's coming the rest of the book is a church that's drifted from the truth into human philosophy, is divided over sexual immorality, they have lawsuits against one another in the church of Corinth.

They have mocked the Lord's Supper to the fact that some are ill, some have sick, and some have even died. They're misusing their spiritual gifts by saying, my spiritual gift is greater than yours.

[30 : 04] I'm better than you are. And Paul just says 1 Corinthians 13, shut up! If you don't have love, I don't give a rip what your gift is. You could have the ability to speak with the tongues of

angels.

But if you don't have love, you're a noisy, you're a noisy sound, a noisy drum. Like love is what's most important, not what gift you have.

But here's the point I'm making. This is a messed up church. But Paul sees spiritual growth. Paul sees that they are being enriched in him, in speech and knowledge and not lacking in spiritual gifts. In other words, Paul sees that in their gathering they are growing. Notice this on the screen. Listen, our gathering is not because we figured it out that is the Christian life.

It's because we haven't. And we realize that we need one another to continue to grow into the image of Christ. Listen, the church is where you have to deal with the lady that gets on your nerves. [31 : 17] Don't point. In fact, I am keeping intentionally my eyeballs down because as soon as I look at somebody I thought that he's talking about me. The 30 year old that still wears his 8th grade Star Wars shirt.

Packer fans. It's where you have to deal with the person that makes you want to jump in the nearest classroom when they're coming down the hall. That kid, you know that kid?

You know that kid. That kid? That you would love to be their parent for 5 seconds. Just give me 5 seconds. And I'd straighten that out, right? The guy who's fighting alcohol, the leader who will disappoint you, the teenager struggling with anxiety and identity.

In other words, the church is flesh and blood. And in the church, guess what you're going to deal with? Flesh and blood for the purpose of our growth in Jesus.

And you can't do that alone. You can't do that alone. This will preach right here. This is worth your price of admission and I'll move on. Notice it on the screen. Listen. It's often the reasons we leave a church that are the reasons we need the church.

[32 : 33] I want you to think on that. It's often the reasons we leave a church, that person gets on my nerves. I'm leaving. I know. And that thorn was put there to grow you.

To learn how to love somebody that's hard to love. Because if you just go find some place that's just like you, well, that's easy to love. Often the reasons we leave a church are the very reasons we need the church.

And in people's American search for perfect music, I want a praise band and fog machines and I want a perfect preacher and I want the perfect class and I want a church that's close to my home and it better have good coffee.

And here's the point. Notice it on the screen. In the search for the perfect church, you've actually failed to see it's you that needs to be perfected. The search isn't for a perfect church.

The church is here to help us be perfected in Christ. that we would be enriched in knowledge and speech, not lacking in spiritual gifts.

[33 : 42] Charles Spurgeon wrote, All who have given themselves to the Lord should as speedily as possible give themselves to the Lord's people. You that are members of the church have not found it perfect and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not.

If I had never joined a church until I found one that was perfect, I would have never joined one at all. And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I would have spoiled it.

For it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it, but still, as imperfect as it is, the church is the dearest place on earth.

Our gathering is an expression of our salvation. Our gathering is a means of our spiritual growth. And then finally, finally this evening, verse 7. The last part of verse 7.

As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 8, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[34 : 50] God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord. Last point is that our gathering is how we endure in our faith. Our gathering is how we endure in our faith.

It talks about He will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The flow of thought in this is that we are called to be saints together.

We are being enriched. That is, we are growing in Him together. And we will do that until the end. Listen, dear family, I love you dearly, faith family.

The Christian life, the Christian life is not a decision that you make and then you're done. The Christian life biblically described is a race that gets really hard to run.

I mean really hard to run. And there are days you're just like, I'm out. Or a war, a battle that is being fought. These are biblical imagery talking about the Christian life.

[35 : 51] Running the race and fighting the war like a good soldier, Paul tells Timothy. That is, there is a daily and weekly battle to continue to believe. And so, what has God done?

By His grace, He's given us a community of other Christians to help us persevere to the end. So that when you start limping, someone says, you ain't going out. You're not giving up.

You're not falling back. I will carry you to the finish line if I have to. I don't care if we're all limping across the line. We're getting there together.

together. And how is that done? But through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not our strength that's getting us to the finish line. It's He that's sustaining us. But how is He sustaining us?

Through one another. That is why the author of Hebrews says, Hebrews 10.24, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

[36 : 56] That is a plea to continue to gather, to continue to be together because without that you might give up. And God has ordained not only the ends to get us to the end, but the means to get us there.

And the means to get us there while you're looking at them. It's the body of Christ called to be saints together. A few quotes and I'm done.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, many of you may have heard of him. He was a German pastor. He was a professor also in Berlin back in the 30s and 40s. And after the school was closed by the Nazi police, he was arrested, faced enormous trials as a Christian.

He wrote an incredible book. Many of you have read it. If not, you should read it. And it's simply called Life Together. Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In it he writes this, God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother in the mouth of a man.

Therefore the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged for by himself he cannot help himself without a blameworthy truth.

[38 : 07] He needs his brother, a man, as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine Word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ, this is the known quote, the Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the Word of his brother.

His own heart is uncertain. His brother's is sure. Martin Luther said this, at home in my house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but at church when the multitude is gathered together, the fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.

You ever come to church cold? I don't mean like temperature wise, like your heart's cold and you left softened because of being with the people of God and the worship of God. And then finally, Charles Spurgeon, he was visiting a man one day on a cold winter day and they were sitting together by the fire and Spurgeon said, my dear friend, I've noticed you haven't been at church in a while and the man said, I don't think it's important.

It's not necessary. And Spurgeon walked over, many of you may remember this, not that you were there, you remember the story, Spurgeon walked over to the coals that were in the fire and he spread them all out and slowly watched them go cold, burn out.

And Spurgeon simply said this, that's what happens when you isolate yourself from the people of God. Together we keep the fire burning.

[39 : 33] I do everything I can to get in your beautiful face every, you paid me to say that, right? In your beautiful face every single week to fire you up.

Don't quit. Don't give up. Keep going. It's worth it. Jesus will get you there. I know it's hard. That keeps us going, sustains us to the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith family, we need one another. We need one another. God has designed the local church through the preaching of His Word, through relationship with other believers, through accountability with one another to keep the faith until Christ comes.

And that is why in our simple strategy at Faith Family, one of the things, we don't ask you to do a lot, but one of the things we ask you to do is be at a gathering. Be at a gathering.

We're called to be saints together. Gather together. Be at a gathering. And at the very end of our service, I'll share just a few things about our gathering, but that's what we ask you to do is to be at a gathering that you might express your salvation, that you might grow spiritually, and that you might

endure to the end.

[40 : 51] I know you can relate to Preston. I know you can. That lack of desire of wanting to gather with the people of God for the worship of God.

And my prayer is that today you'll be reminded as to just how important our gathering is. It's an expression of your salvation, a means of your spiritual growth, and a weekly encouragement to keep enduring in the faith.

And listen to me, listen to me. If that's not enough to remind you of the importance of this gathering, listen to this final verse. Acts 20.28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God.

Watch. Which He obtained with His own blood. Look at this on the screen, Faith Family. Our gathering is more than a privilege.

Our gathering was a purchase. It's more than a privilege. It's a purchase. For the church was purchased through the blood of Christ.

[42 : 06] And that is why it is worth gathering together. Not just because we belong together, but because we were bought by Him. And all God's people said, Amen.

Let's pray. God, thank You for Your Word to us this evening because we can all be like Preston. We've all been there. I've been there. That all the excuses of I just don't feel like it, I just don't want to go.

And help us catch this vision of the importance of being together. Of gathered together for congregational worship.

Of singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving in our hearts with one another.

Not neglecting to gather as some have, but encouraging one another, stirring one another up to love and good works.

Oh God, inflame in us, burn in us this desire of I was glad when it was said of me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

[43 : 15] I couldn't wait. As imperfect as she is, as messy as we are, as messed up, just like the Corinthians, as faith family is.

This is the dearest place on earth. Because you purchased us with your own blood. God. And that's now what we will remember as we enter into a time of communion.

And so God, help us as we tend to think when we come into communion about what the cross did for our individual salvation. Help us also remember today what the cross did for our fellowship together.

That it was the cross that purchased the body of Christ. Christ. So be with us now as we take this time to remember and reflect on the gospel and the elements of communion.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.