

Encourage: Loving God and Loving People | 1

Thessalonians 5:11

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Preacher: Pastor Patrick Dailey

[0 : 00] All right well good morning everyone. Let's go ahead and find our way back to our seats. And I hope and I trust that you have been warmly greeted here at Ontario Community Church.

My name is Patrick Daly and I am the pastor here at Ontario Community Church. It is a privilege. It is an honour to have the opportunity to serve here as pastor.

And today we are going to do our second week where we are going over the 3E pathway. It is our mission, it is our vision, it is our discipleship framework that we use known as the 3E pathway.

We are learning about what it means to encourage people to love God and to love others. That's what we're going over this week. We're going over encouraging, encouragement.

Next week we're going over equipping and the final week we'll be going over engaging the community for Christ. When we think about church, when we think about the body of Christ, us here together, we have to remember that we're doing all of this for Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.

[1 : 19] Jesus Christ was sent by God to provide this free gift of salvation for all who believe. That should be the greatest encouragement that we have my friends, that God sent his only son.

We are all, we should all be on this spiritual journey together going towards Jesus Christ and not running away from Christ. We should all be heading towards Christ.

This first week of our series we did that overview of what it means to have vision for this church.

We're going deeper into this framework, we're going over that first E.

But before we go further what I'd like us to do, I'd like us to take time to pray and we'll delve right into it. So let's pray together. Father God, as we continue going over the 3E pathway, we ask that you encourage us, that you equip us, and that you inspire us to be engaged in the community for Christ.

We ask that you are with us here on this journey as we're going over many different verses in Scripture. We wish to be a church that follows in your footsteps, that goes on a trajectory towards you and not away from you.

[2 : 36] May we realize that we are made in your image, designed to have that relationship with you. For your way is truth and your way is life and your way is higher than my way or man's way for that matter.

You have provided this free gift of salvation, this free gift. And we thank you and we thank your Son Jesus Christ for dying on that cross and being raised on the third day.

We love you so much for that. We thank you so much once again for this time and for this opportunity to be here today as a community of believers.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray. And we all say together, Amen. So I want us to reflect on this question as we begin our time here today. Let's go ahead and put it up there.

Can you think of a time when you were loved or you loved someone unconditionally even when it wasn't deserved? That's, you know, we all need love in our life, don't we?

[3 : 46] Can you think of that time? Maybe it was a time where you did something wrong and your mom or your dad or your brother or your sister was there for you. Maybe you did something you shouldn't have been doing, but you were shown forgiveness.

You were shown love. There's something about love that comes from God, something that is very powerful and we're going to go into that. We all need love in our lives.

And as people, sometimes it's easy to love other people. Other times it's more difficult. God calls us to love one another as he has loved us.

God shows us his love in a way that is beyond what many of us can understand. How can God love me despite all the terrible things that I've done?

How can God forgive me? But God does forgive you. God loves you. We're given this gift of life.

We're given every moment to cherish, to honor God.

[4 : 55] God has blessed each and every one of us in so many different ways. For God is perfect and he gives us so many gifts, talents and abilities.

It is up to you to decide what you're going to do with these gifts, what you're going to do with these talents, what you're going to do with your very life. God is perfect. Are we?

No. We're not perfect, but here's the thing. We worship the God who saves. We worship the God who is perfect, who is light, life and truth.

We ourselves, though, are human. We make our mistakes. We fall short. And quite honestly, I'm not perfect in any way, shape or form.

And neither are you when we think about it, right? But you know what's interesting is that in the Bible, there are many stories about human imperfection. You learn about the Israelites. You learn about Jonah.

[5 : 59] You learn about the people of God who they just don't get it at times. Sometimes they turn away from God and they have to learn their lesson to turn back to God.

But it's much like how we are at times. Sometimes we don't get it. But despite the fact that we don't get it, my friends, God is still there for us.

No matter what our mistakes are, no matter how much we have sinned, God is there for us. God is faithful.

God is that constant in this ever-changing world. God is always available for us to turn to Him, to make a decision to have Jesus Christ at the center of your life.

God is patient. God is slow to anger. God is gracious. He is merciful. And He abounds in steadfast love.

[7 : 02] I love that word, steadfast love. He abounds in Him. Our God shows us this agape love, which is defined as the highest form, the highest type of love.

The love that God has for us is selfless. It is sacrificial. It is unconditional. That is the kind of love that I want in my life.

That is the kind of love that we, as people, need in our life. And we'll explore more about this today. You know, in Scripture, we learn of many prodigals, right?

When we went over Jonah, we learned about the prodigal prophet. We learned about Nineveh, the prodigal city. And there's many other stories of people who turn away from God.

They realize the wrong that they do. They repent and they get restored with God. This is much like how we are. Aren't there times where we turn away from God?

[8 : 03] Aren't there times where we get angry at God? Or sometimes we feel distanced from God? It is in those times where we need to realize that we can turn back to God.

Sometimes it's from our own neglect. Sometimes it's from our own sin. Sometimes it's from our own action. Remember, Jonah tried to physically run away, right? He tried to spiritually separate himself, but he also tried to run away 2,500 miles.

There are times where we too are prodigals. We need God, though, because here's the thing. Just because we think that we don't need God, we do need God in our life.

I have found in my own personal life that people who are the most separated from God are the most angry. They are the most bitter of people.

Flip it on its head. You find that very often the people who are close with God, they read Scripture, they have that relationship with God.

[9 : 07] They pray. They are present with the people of God. Are they angry? Are they upset? Quite honestly, they are some of the most calm and peaceful people who are filled with the joy of the Lord.

It's like how Scripture says there is peace that is beyond understanding. I don't understand how you're so peaceful. I don't understand how you're filled with joy.

Well, that comes from the Lord. You see, a life without God is meaningless. We can live for our work. We can live for money. We can live for knowledge.

We can live for pleasure. We can live for many different things. We can chase the wind if you will. But a life without having God at the center of your life, a life without having Jesus Christ as your

Lord and Savior is a meaningless life.

Because God gives us direction. God gives us purpose. God gives us wisdom. He gives us everything. If you're living a life without God, I encourage you to come to Him. If you feel distant from God, I encourage you to return to Him.

[10:22] Like many protocols in Scripture, we realize that we need God. Maybe you are at that point in your life where you need to repent. Maybe you're okay. Maybe you're doing fine with God. And that's great. Keep it up.

But if you ever do get separated, which we all do, be encouraged. Stay on that trajectory towards God and not away. Despite our silly and quite honestly our stupid actions, God is always there for us, waiting for us to turn to Him or to turn back to Him.

Let us be encouraged. Encouraged to love God and to love people. In 1 Thessalonians, if you turn your Bibles, I'd like you to go, it's going to be in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 11.

It's going to be on page 1174 in your Pubible. If you're not using the Pubible, it's 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 11.

And it says in here, follow along with me. Therefore, it's also going to be on the screen, but it's nice to open your Bible.

[11:43] Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. You know that word encourage, it means to comfort. It means to invite. It literally means to encourage.

It also means to call near, call near to one's side. And contextually speaking, what we're seeing here is the Apostle Paul is talking about the day of the Lord.

And that believers are to live in the light of truth. Now the day of the Lord for you Bible scholars out there, we know that's the day of judgment. It's the final judgment.

And Paul is reminding the Thessalonians to encourage one another and to build each other up just as they have been doing. We do not know the time in which the final judgment will happen. We do not know when Jesus Christ will return.

But what we can do is be encouraged to build each other up in the same manner and in the same way that Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians.

[12:55] This is but an encouragement for us as Christians. We are to encourage people to love God and to love people. So the question then comes up, well, who are we supposed to? Who are we supposed to love? Who specifically?

So I'm going to put that next slide up. You're going to see this list here of loving God and loving people. And the Greek word that in many of these verses is *agape* or *agapeo*. And we're going to go over that in just a moment here.

You know, the scripture tells us that we are to love the Lord. We are to love our neighbor. We're to love one another. We're to love our enemies. That's a difficult one. Love our enemies. What are you talking about?

We're also to have love and compassion for families as well as the stranger people that we do not know. The love that we are commanded to exhibit, I think you can build a case that it's for all people, for strangers, for enemies, for your neighbor, for one another.

And if you think about it, look, the concept of neighbor, for example, it goes beyond who lives next door to you. It goes beyond who's across the street or maybe who's right down the road. It goes beyond that.

[14:18] You know, I think of when you visit many different towns where someone says, howdy neighbor? Is it your next door neighbor? Well, no, it means neighbor. Like, how are you doing?

Could be in the same town and it's a gesture that's used of saying, like, how are you? I like that example because it conveys that neighbor can be someone we don't know.

It's certainly an interesting thing to think about. The type of love that I'm speaking about when we're looking at these verses is *agape* love. It is making the conscious decision to follow the Lord, to be in a relationship with Him, and a conscious decision to love the Lord with everything that you are.

In the same manner and in the same way that God loves us unconditionally, we're to love and return to God. And we are to love each other in the same way. Now, that's not an easy thing to do if you think about it.

A case can be made that this is part of one of the central themes of Christianity. We find that God loves us so much with that *agape* love that he sent his son, Jesus Christ, for us.

[15 : 37] This is the agape love that he has for us sending his son as the atoning sacrifice, as the sacrificial lamb, if you will.

To think that if a human person were to sacrifice their own child for you, let alone their own life for you, that's remarkable on a human's standpoint.

You're talking about the Creator God, who loves us so much that he's giving his only son. Can you imagine giving up your only child or giving up a child, let alone your own life, let's say?

That's not an easy thing to do. And I'll be honest, I don't know if I could do it. And the fact that God could do it, that is next level type of love.

So I want us to go over these verses here. We're to love the Lord and our neighbors. In Matthew 22, that passage it says, you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind.

[16 : 46] This is the great end of the first commandment, right? Loving the Lord with everything that we are. When we think of our hearts, we think of our mind, we think of the essence of who we are.

Love God in the same way that God loves us. That's an encouragement for us to show that love.

The interesting thing is, it almost seems like you don't have as many verses as loving people.

That's because loving people can be more difficult, especially when you think of loving your enemies, loving strangers, people you don't know.

It's easier said than done. John 13, 34, a new commandment I give you that you love one another just as I have loved you. You are to love one another.

Contextually, this is where Jesus is saying, Christians, disciples, love each other. I certainly hope that we are going to get along with one another in the same way that Christ commanded his disciples to.

[17 : 59] But it's good that it is in there nonetheless. Loving our enemies, that's a different one. Culture tells us to love our enemies, right?

Culture tells us to forgive our enemies, right? If someone does wrong and we think of worldly people, a secular world, how quick are they to say, hey, you know, they did you wrong, just forgive them, move on?

I don't think so. Quite honestly, what you find very often is, do people love their enemies? No, they like to hate their enemies, dislike or try to cancel or block or delete if you will.

Anybody that has an opposing view, love, that can't be right, but it says in here, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

If you're online and you have people who, let's say you're sharing in a Bible verse and someone's saying, oh, you Christian, you pray for them. Pray for people who oppose you. They very well may have a hardened heart.

[19 : 13] And you praying for them? It's asking God to soften their heart. Maybe there's a reason why they're so angry or aggressive, if you will.

Maybe they need prayer. The next time someone opposes your faith, pray for them. Pray that God will move in their life and in their hearts.

In the Ephesians passage, we talk about families where husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In the same ways, husbands should love their wives as their own body. He who loves his wife, love himself.

This is where we're finding about husbands loving their wives. It is the same type of love that we're seeing in the family unit. Now, specifically, it's talking about husbands to love their wife.

A case can be made that we are to love our families with this same agape love. Love your children. Do you love your wife? Do you love your husband? Do you love your children?

[20 : 16] Share in that love. And next one is strangers from Deuteronomy. The reason why I put an asterisk there, it's not specifically saying agape or agapeo, but it is implied in here.

So it says in Deuteronomy, you shall love the foreigner or the sordriner. You were foreigners in the land of Egypt. In James 1.27, it says, religion is pure and undefiled before God.

The Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world. We're talking about acts of charity, right?

When you're looking at the Deuteronomy passage, it's loving foreigners, just as you were once a foreigner yourself. Now, this is in the Old Testament, so it's not specifically using agape.

When you're using James, when it's talking about visiting orphans and widows in their affliction, this is, it is part of the encouragement verse.

[21 : 20] You could also say it's part of engaging community for Christ, where to love other people through service, where to be encouraging to people when they're down.

So this is just another verse, and then finally, love in action. Now, we could do a whole study on 1 Corinthians chapter 13, but what's interesting about that passage is saying you could have all the knowledge in the world.

You could have all of the, you could have faith to move mountains, you could speak in tongues. You could, you could have all these gifts and abilities, but if you have love, you are nothing. That's a very hard passage, but it's an encouraging one, because it goes on to say that what love is, that love is patient, that love is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast.

It is not arrogant or rude. Love bears all things, believes all things. Love never ends. You see, we're created in the image of God, and we are encouraged to love God and to love people in the same manner and in the same way that God has shown to us.

Where to do that to God? When we come together in the church, we are to worship the Lord. We're to sing psalms to Him. We're saying, thank you God for creating me.

[22 : 41] Thank you Jesus Christ for dying on the cross and being raised on the third day. Thank you. Every time you sing a hymn of the faith or a brand new worship song, a Twila Paris piece or a Chris Tomlin piece, or you're doing a Martin Luther hymn, whatever it is.

The idea is lyrically, melodically, you're praising God. And we as the body of Christ, we are praising God.

Next time you sing a song, think about how you're thanking God, appreciating God for what He has done and what He continues to do.

That He loves us despite our how much we mess things up. That is an encouragement.

God knew us before we were born, and despite the fact we sin, God still loves us. How often when human interactions, when someone messes something up, do we get angry?

[23 : 56] How often do we get frustrated? Are we quick to love? Are we quick to forgive? It's a challenge. Certainly it is. But be encouraged to love like God.

God calls us to come to Him and to be in relationship with Him. God forgives us of all of our sins. That God is holy and He is that constant.

How much is culture changing? You don't have to answer this. How much is culture changing? A lot or a little? If you say a little, then, alright, maybe you're just seeing a little bit.

Culture is changing a lot, though. I don't need to go into all of the intricacies of how the world is changing, the technological advances, the social movements that are happening in our culture. Many of us already know what's going on. Despite the fact that culture may change, may go on a path that's completely separate from God, we have a constant in God.

[25 : 01] And I don't know about you. I don't know where culture is going. I don't want to know where culture is going. Well, I kind of know where culture is going.

If a ship is sinking, don't you want to get on that lifeboat? Alright, God's like that lifeboat. Get on the life raft, if you will.

Don't stay on the sinking ship. So this is the idea of encouragement. I'm speaking with, we as a church, we're to love the Lord our God first and foremost.

And we are encouraged to share in that same love to other people. And so the question then comes, well, what does that encouragement look like then? How does that look practically to the everyday Christian?

So let's go to our next, I have a few verses to share with you. Encouragement in action, welcoming people, inviting people, bearing one another's burdens, comforting those in need, uplifting words, showing kindness.

[26 : 10] This should be obvious, but it's in Scripture. It may be obvious, but we need to be reminded. And for some of us who don't know that, we should learn it.

Romans 15, there's a lot of verses in here. We're not going to go through, well, we are going to go through every verse, but we're not going to, we could go in depth for a lot of these. In Romans 15-7, it says, therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.

This verse is saying that we are to welcome one another, right? Contextually speaking, it's talking about how the apostle Paul is wanting the church to welcome fellow Christians for the glory of God.

And in the same manner that that welcoming spirit is exhibited in Rome, it's the same way that we can welcome people who come through the doors.

Certainly we are to welcome fellow Christians who come and visit, but when we're talking about loving God and loving people and inviting people, we should be welcoming to those.

[27 : 18] You don't know what their story is like. You don't know if they're a Christian. You don't know what their background is, but that same welcoming spirit needs to exist, whether it's a believer or someone who is yet to believe.

It's having that personal connection with each other. It's an encouragement to have this sense of authenticity, genuineness, the sense of warmth. We are encouraged as a church to be a welcoming people for anyone who goes through those doors.

We certainly have that encouragement. In Hebrews 13, chapter 13, verse 2, it says, do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, and thereby, I always love this verse, some have entertained angels unaware.

That's a very interesting one. We see that certainly there's the encouragement that we should show hospitality to others, to strangers. And I have always found it very interesting that it's saying, you may have entertained an angel, but you won't know.

Now to me, that's an encouragement. I don't know if one of you are an angel, welcome, welcome to church. But certainly, look, the idea is that you may have entertained angels unaware.

[28 : 41] It's just kind of a nice thing, like, wow, it'd be someone you completely unexpected. Maybe it's someone who comes in who's dressed ruggedly and has tattoos or whatever.

Maybe that's the angel. I don't know, but the idea is having that sense of hospitality. As people come through the doors, let us welcome them. Let us show that sense of hospitality, creating that sense of community.

It's like how we are called Ontario Community Church. We are a community, a community, the body of Christ, of fellow believers who love God and certainly love others.

That same word is also shown in Romans 13, 2, which is talking about contributing to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Now hospitality, when you think of someone who's hospitable, someone who's warm, someone who's welcome, let's be encouraged to be a church like that.

Let's keep the trajectory going. Galatians 6, verse 2, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. This verse says to fulfill the law of Christ.

[29 : 59] It's going beyond empathy. It's showing active care for others. We are to support those who are hurting, those who are in need.

We are to guide those who may have fallen into sin. We are to work to restore people. There's a lot of people, and it's very difficult to ignore.

There's a lot of people who've walked away from the church and have walked away from Christianity. We are encouraged to work with them, to be present with them and exhibit that love. In the same way you would help someone who's hurting or working with someone who has sinned. Work with them. Help them on the path to restoration in Christ. Again, we may not always know what someone is going through.

It's almost as though, could you imagine if we had a little sign above our heads and said what you're struggling with? What a crazy world that would be, right? If our world's not crazy enough.

[31 : 08] But the thing is, you couldn't meet someone, and they may say they're okay, but really they're not. Or other people who may look like the world's crumbling, but they're really okay.

The point is, we don't know what someone is going through. That is why we are to be present with our brothers and sisters in Christ and those who come through the door.

Let us be a church that exhibits that love, embodies this love, and genuinely cares for others. A church is a place where we can celebrate the birth of a child.

We celebrate marriages. We celebrate families. It's also a place in times of trials and tribulations where we can help one another.

That is but a part of showing, exhibiting love, the same kind of love that God has for us. And in Corinthians chapter one, verses three to four, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.

[32 : 38] With the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. What that verse is saying, we receive comfort from God, and we're to show that same comfort, comforting those in need.

There's, again, there's that peace that comes from God. There's that love that comes from God. I like to think of myself as a loving person, but the love that I have is nothing compared to what the love that God has for me and the love that God has for you.

And I want to be like Jesus. I want to love like how Jesus loves others. And that is, it's a challenge, but it's an encouragement for us.

We are the hands and feet of God. We should comfort those who are going through those difficult days. We're reminded to comfort those who are grieving, whereas that scripture says any affliction. In Proverbs chapter 12 verse 25, that verse says, Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. Doesn't anxiety wear us down?

[33 : 49] And that's a good word from Proverbs, right? Proverbs full of such wisdom that we can use in our everyday lives. Anxiety weighs him down.

So many things can weigh us down, right? In our everyday lives. How many of us are anxious? You don't have to raise your hand. How many of us have been anxious before, right?

That sense of anxiety in us. It says here, a good word makes him glad. The words that we speak, the words that we say, it talks about the power of words.

This verse tells us how a good word makes someone glad. It's a reminder that we need to be intentional. We need to be mindful, cautious, careful, if you will, of the words that we say to people. It's just like how many of us know that verse that says, Death and life are in the power of the tongue. This verse is an echo of that, of how powerful the words that we say to people, how powerful it is.

[34 : 56] We can express God's love when we choose to encourage and to lift up people. Now, certainly, I want to remind all of us, we stand firm on the word of God, but we deal in love.

I've mentioned it a couple of times before, and I'll mention it again. We love because God loved us, and we stand firm on the truth of God.

We don't waver. We don't change our beliefs. We stand firm on the constant that is in God. We stand firm, but you can still deal in love. That's a challenge.

Because so often you have, let's just say, people. They may stand firm on the word of God, but do they deal in love? What happens is sometimes you're standing firm, maybe you're not exhibiting love.

On the other side, you have people who are dealing in love, but are they standing firm? There's this balance between the two, on standing firm in the truth of the word of God, standing in that constant, and dealing in love.

[36 : 09] Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 says, be kind to one another. That's a great encouragement. Can we all get along? That's not a problem here at this church, but certainly it can be a problem at any church, though.

It could be a problem here, and I hope it never becomes a problem here. We need to be kind to each other. This verse is a reminder that, or it says here, be kind to one another, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

It's showing that love. It's forgiving each other, being kind. Show kindness and compassion and forgiveness to others as we have received from Christ.

This is how we encourage through kindness, acts of kindness, words of kindness. We show compassion. Showing compassion can do so much for them somewhere.

Imagine growing up in a world where there's no compassion and there's no love, and if you say the wrong thing, you're completely blocked and removed from society. That doesn't sound anything like the world that we live in today, right?

[37 : 16] Can you imagine such a world like that? Wait a minute. It sounds awfully a lot like the world that we live in. This world needs love. It certainly needs forgiveness.

It's kind of crazy to think that Christ is more forgiving than culture ever will be. You say one wrong thing. Someone quotes you out of context.

He says, see, this person's a terrible person. We need to shut him down. Even if you'd said the right thing, they'll take it out of context.

Does God do that? If you made a mistake, if you sinned, God forgives you. We're encouraged and I think there is...

I don't think there's a better time for us to share in forgiveness and compassion and kindness and love, because the world that we're dealing with now is not forgiving. It's not loving.

[38 : 15] And anything that speaks against whatever the culture is teaching, you're out of there. You're gone. But here's the thing.

Instead of removing people, God invites us. And what a great opportunity for us as Christians to realize that. God invites us despite our mistakes, despite our sins.

So what are you going to do about that? How can we... How can we show kindness in our daily actions with others?

I want to challenge you with that question. It's a question that we should think about. How can we share in kindness to other people?

A few years ago, I knew a woman who never had been a Christian before. She was raised in a, you would call it a secular home, or a non-believing home.

[39 : 17] She was invited to church by her friends. Her friends said, hey, why don't you come to church and we have these Bible studies and stuff. And this woman was hesitant. This is someone that I know.

She came to church and she started to attend and she had many questions. Who's this Jesus guy? Isn't he just a good teacher?

This person, the church welcomed her. The church helped her. And certainly, when they didn't have all the answers, they were like, I don't know, but we'll find out. Let's explore scripture.

As time went on, this woman, she began to see the love that the church had for her. She was anxious and full of anxiety and struggled with depression.

She kept coming and she was encouraged by the community. She was shown the love that Jesus had for her. And I'm proud to say that this woman made a decision for Christ.

[40 : 31] She became baptized and she became an active member of her church. Now this is just one story. A story about a woman who grew up in a worldly home, if you will, came to church and was shown the love of Christ through other people.

And because of that love, she made the decision to have Jesus Christ in her life. What's your story? You may have a similar story. You may have a completely different story. But I want you to think about as we're coming to a close today, I want you to think of a story that's yet to happen, a story that's yet to come.

Think of how you came to Christ. Think of how you can be an example of how you can share in that love and be encouragement for people. We all need Christ. It doesn't matter the age.

What matters is that we share in that love with other people. Jesus Christ showed that agape love to everyone, even the outcasts of society.

[41 : 43] Think of the tax collectors, think of the lepers. Think of the, well, the scum of the earth and society, there to be welcomed as well.

It doesn't matter what you look like. It doesn't matter what you've been through. It doesn't matter what you're going through or what you are going to go through. What matters is that God is constant and God loves you.

We are loved by God. We are saved by grace through faith and it is up to us to make that decision for Jesus Christ. The love that God has for us, it changes lives.

Christ died for all so that we can have new life in him. We should all come to Christ and live for Christ and not the fleeting things of this earth.

Not for status, not for wealth, not for money, not for pleasure. Remember the verse we began with? Let's put that verse back on.

[42 : 44] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. I want you to think of just one person that you know that you can share in that love this week.

I want you to think of someone that you can encourage this week. Let us ask God to give us direction for encouraging people. May God give us the eyes to see people through the lens of love through him.

May we stand firm on the truth of the Word of God in doing so. How can you be encouraging to your neighbor today?

With that, let's close in prayer. Father God, we thank you for this time and this opportunity for us to gather today. You God, you are a loving God.

You are truth and you are life. You are love. May we learn to stand firm on your word. May we learn to love like Jesus does.

[43 : 51] You knew us before we were born. You've done so much for us. And I pray that this church will be an encouraging church. That we as the body of Christ, that we will love God and love other people.

May we learn what it means to show that agape love, that unconditional, that forgiving, that kindness, that compassionate love to others. We pray that we may realize that we are loved by you. You love us. May we love you in the same way. You love us. May we love others in the same way. You comfort us when we are weak. You give us strength. You give us new life.

You give us identity and purpose. Give us divine direction so that we may not perish as Proverbs chapter 29 verse 18 says, May we have divine direction that comes from you.

For without divine direction, we will perish. May you, may your son be at the center of our lives. Be with us as we go this week.

[44 : 55] It is in Jesus' name that we pray and we all say together, Amen.