

# Maturity: God's Desire for Every Church

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, everyone. I know you are all thrilled to be here. Whoa, all right, maybe not. Let me tell you why you should be thrilled to be here.
- Nick, thank you. You should be thrilled to be here because you're not going to be getting a sermon this morning. You should be saying, aw.
- Aw. Instead, I am going to be giving you guys a test. It is a test. It is a test where I need you to be honest with yourselves.
- This isn't a test for you to turn around and judge your husband, your friend, your mother, your father, your kids. This is a test, and I want you to be honest with yourselves.
- But before I go any further, good morning. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of being the pastor here. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4.
- [ 1 : 0 8 ] As you all know, we are going to Ephesians and not Romans. We've been enjoying our time of Romans, but for reasons that will become self-evident, we're going to be stepping out of this series for a short period of time.
- And today, like I said, we are going to, I am going to be administering a test. A lot of people get asked, what is your favorite Bible verse?
- Anybody been asked that? Come on. Thank you, Murray. Someone. I get asked that all the time. Am I just living in a parallel universe that you guys get asked that question?
- All right. Thank you. I get some nods. Let me ask you, do you ever get asked the question, what is your most feared Bible passage? Is there a Bible passage?
- Well, let me ask you. Is there a Bible passage there that you are aware of that provokes in you a level of fear?
- [ 2 : 1 2 ] No. You don't need to be new or old to the church or been to the church for many years or decades to answer this question. Many people who've never been to church know enough about the Bible to understand that there are some fearful texts in Scripture.
- Revelation 20 is a passage that describes the great white throne of judgment. It is a place where the Apostle John tells us where God will judge the living and the dead and that we will be judged according to our deeds and the names not found written in the Lamb's book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire.
- That is a fearful passage. Matthew 24, Jesus Christ himself warns that there will be a great day of tribulation, that things will be so horrible here on earth that if the days weren't cut short, everyone would die.
- Again, in Matthew 25, Jesus describes a final judgment where nations will be separated into the unrighteous and the righteous, the goats and the sheeps.
- It is a passage to be feared. 2 Thessalonians describes the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven in blazing fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel.
- [ 3 : 5 5 ] It's another fearful passage. And Daniel 12 outlines a time when God's people will be delivered and those who are not his will not be delivered.

The fact of the matter is I could go on probably for a couple of hours reading off passages that are fearful. What's interesting is I do think these passages are fearful, but these aren't the type of passages that keep me up at night.

But these are the type of passages that make us come to church, right? When you're searching, these are the kind of passages when you come to church, you want answers. Now, there's also these other type of verses.

These are warning verses. Matthew 7, perhaps these are the type of verses that you fear. Matthew 7, Jesus warns against false disciples, where he simply says, not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of God.

In Hebrews 6, the writer of Hebrews elaborates that it would be impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened, but who have now fallen away.

[ 5 : 19 ] Hebrews 10, 26, 32 speaks of the consequences of deliberate sin. It says, if we sin deliberately, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only fearful expectation of judgment.

1 Corinthians 3, Paul speaks about the judgment of a believer's works that will be tested by fire and reveal their true quality.

And finally, in James 2, makes a statement that faith without works is dead. Now, these passages scare me more than the previous passages.

These are the passages that keep me on my knees, so to speak. But they don't keep me up at night. Here are some of the passages that get my attention.

In the book of Proverbs 29, 1, Solomon writes, He, who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

[ 6 : 45 ] What that means is God is going to dispense to you wisdom, wisdom, wisdom, until there is a time because you have stiffened your neck, it will break. And God will no longer bring wisdom to you.

For me, I never want to presume upon the Lord's wisdom and think that mine is any greater. 1 Samuel 16, I remember being a really young man, and it was the story that Saul, after disobeying the spirit of God, for time after time after time, simply says that God removed the spirit from Saul.

that tells me I never want to live outside of the Lord's favor. And many of you are familiar with the story of Samson and Delilah.

There's this really interesting verse within that story. Judges 16 and 20, after finally, Samson had revealed to Delilah what the true power of his strength is.

She had these people come in, cut his hair, and when he tried, to break free, he could not. And the text simply says, but he did not know that the Lord Yahweh had left him.

[ 8 : 09 ] For me, I never want to presume upon the Lord and try to do things in my own strength. These are indeed stirring, warning passages to all of us, but they don't keep me up at night.

right now, I'm going to read for you the passages that do keep me up at night. Acts 20, 28 to 30.

Luke writes, 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 which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

As a pastor and an elder, this is a passage that I pay attention to. 1 Peter 5, 2, 3. Peter admonishes, shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

[ 9 : 40 ] 1 Timothy 4, 16, keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by doing you will save yourself and your hearers.

Let us elders and pastors hear those words. Titus 1, 9, he, pastor and elder, must hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

And finally, 2 Timothy 4, 1-5, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. If I lose my voice, that teaching might disappear there.

He continues, for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

[ 11 : 08 ] As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. I read these passages and I think of Revelations 2-3 and if you're familiar with those passages, they were the warnings that Jesus Christ gave to the church and the most feared warning is that of Laodicea that you would be lukewarm, neither hot nor cold.

cold. Now what's interesting in 2 Timothy, he uses this word to fulfill your ministry. What is that ministry?

Well, out of these passages that I just read, we heard the word oversight of the church, the flock. There is to be examples to the flock. There is to protect the flock.

There is to teach sound doctrine. There is to hold firm to sound doctrine. There is to reprove, rebuke, exhort. And there is to endure suffering.

If I could say there was one passage that sums up everything that an elder needs to think about or what is an example of the teaching that God gives the elders, we find this in Colossians 1-28-29.

[ 12 : 35 ] This is Paul writing this church. He goes, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy, he powerfully works within me. If I could say what the task of an elder is, it's to present you mature in Christ to Jesus Christ.

It is to toil. It is to struggle. But it's to make sure everyone is mature. So let me ask you a question, the first question.

I guess this would be the second question. Are you mature in Christ? Are you mature in Christ? I'm not talking about your mom or your dad or your wife or your husband.

But do you consider yourself mature in Christ? Now, before you answer that, and now let's be honest, it's not a reflection on you, it's a reflection on us.

[ 13 : 56 ] It's kind of a pass-fail question for elders of a church, is it not? the true question is, are we fulfilling our ministry?

Now, before we answer that question, I want to define maturity how the Bible defines maturity. Using Colossians 1.28 and 2 Peter 3.18 as reference verses, we can say that Christian maturity is the process of becoming more like Christ in character and in behavior.

maturity is marked by a steady spiritual growth and increasing ability to live out one's faith in practical everyday situations.

I ask you again, are you mature? Now, you might be answering the question, why is maturity important?

Isn't enough that I simply be saved? Isn't it enough that I simply know Jesus Christ loves me and I love him and everything's okay? Well, there's three quick reasons why maturity is important.

[ 15 : 11 ] The first one is it gives us stability and faith. It gives us an assurance. It's like the rock against the ocean. When we mature, we can withstand the storms of life.

Psalms 1 talks about a tree that is planted firmly by the living streams of water and it is strong in the wind. It can withstand everything that nature throws at it.

The second reason why maturity is important is we are to be effective witnesses. If we are immature, we are not effective witnesses.

witnesses. And the third reason is why maturity is important is it deepens our relationship with God. It deepens our relationship with God.

Now, before you go to answer that question, are you mature, I'm going to give you five signs that you are a mature Christian. All right? Five signs. You can ask yourself, remember, this isn't you're looking at your husband or your wife.

[ 16 : 17 ] And I know I'm kind of going through these pretty quickly. I'm actually preaching four sermons in one today, believe it or not. Maybe six, but that's besides the point. So you can just check these off.

Five signs that you're a mature Christian. One, you love God and you love others. You love God and you love others. Your love is defined by a sacrificial love.

Two, the second sign that you're a mature Christian, you love sound doctrine and you are discerning. Which means you are skilled in knowing God's word and applying God's word.

There's plenty of people in this world who can recite you all the Bible verses in the world, but they cannot even apply it to their own lives. There's another verse we don't always talk about so much in 1 John, but it talks about are we able to test the spirits?

That when knowledge comes against us, are we able to determine whether this is from God or is this from Satan, the enemy? The third sign that you are a mature Christian is that you have a consistent prayer life.

[ 17 : 26 ] A consistent prayer life. That means you understand what it means to pray without season and to understand the power of prayer. So we have love for God, love for sound doctrine, a consistent prayer life, and four, you believe maturity is primarily serving others over self.

If you love others, you're going to primarily serve others over self. You are going to follow the example of Jesus Christ, and you are going to use your spiritual gifts. You get that?

Spiritual gifts were given to you by the Holy Spirit for you to love others. They were never meant for your own attention, your admiration. They're meant for someone else.

And the fifth one, the sign of a mature Christian is you persevere in trials. You persevere in trials. It means you keep your faith under the pressure.

So those are the signs. Now, I'm going to give you briefly five ways how do we pursue maturity. So that was just one sermon. I'm giving you sermon number three right now.

[ 18 : 35 ] Ready? It's all going to come together in the end, I promise. We're not here for four hours. All right, one, we do our daily devotions and study God's word. That's the first way we pursue maturity.

We do our daily devotions and study God's word. We understand the importance of scripture. And as Joshua 1.8 says, we study the word of God effectively. Two, commitment to prayer, right?

If we have a consistent prayer life, we mean we are commitment to prayer. It is a habit. Not only is it habit, what we trust God through prayer. Three, active participation in church life.

You're here. This is a big part of it. Big part of growing maturity. How do we pursue maturity? Daily devotions. Commit yourself to God's word. Commit yourself to prayer. Commit yourself to the participation of the local expression of Jesus Christ, which is found in the church today.

This is it. Jesus Christ doesn't say in scripture that he expresses himself anywhere else other than the church. You know that? It's here and here alone. Four, you seek accountability and mentorship.

[ 19 : 40 ] You understand that iron sharpens iron. You understand how important it is to follow godly examples. And the fifth way to pursue maturity is to be intentional in evangelism and discipleship.

So now that I have given you a comprehensive view of maturity, let me ask you, are you mature in Christ?

Are you mature in Christ? Is this you? Now, believe it or not, maturity just isn't about you.

It's about us as elders and teachers and pastors and the church. The question that I ask is is a Squamish Baptist church a place that helps you grow into maturity or a Squamish Baptist church a place that hinders your maturity?

That's the question we as elders ask ourselves. I believe every faithful church has a statement, a mission statement.

[ 21 : 01 ] You've read ours, exhort, equip, engage. Dave talked about it this morning. But it's usually a mantra that says church is a place where lost people are saved, saved people mature, and mature people multiply.

You with me on that? That's how you assess what a mature godly church is. Just with that quick mantra. So when we talk about our mantra, our statement of faith, we're telling the world what we are about.

Are we liars or are we truth tellers? Christians. Now before you answer that question, if you are a mature Christian, let me ask you in a different way.

Let's just say tomorrow the government outlaws the churches. There are no more pastors. There are no more elders.

There are no more overseers. There is no place where you can come and be instructed on how to become mature.

[ 22 : 17 ] Could you become mature? Would you be able to grow up your children in the admonition of the Lord? Husbands, can you lead your wives as Christ loved the church?

Wives, would you support, follow, and submit alongside your husband in the raising of your family? Could you answer the question right here, right now that you are equipped enough to carry on the great commission?

Could you be a person who can lead a lost person to Christ? Can lead that person to maturity and see that that person multiplies?

It's a tall order, isn't it? How are you doing on that test? Gets a little harder as we go, doesn't it? The reality is today is much different than yesterday.

Yesterday, the church was somewhat respected. We were seen as a good force in society. But today, it's changed. With the rampant changes on sexual immorality, the church is seen as divisive, mean-spirited, and prejudicial.

[ 23 : 48 ] In some states, in the US of A, they've tried to outlaw the Bible as hate speech. In fact, there was a member of parliament in Finland, if I remember the story correctly, she simply tweeted a Bible verse and was taken to court in Finland, and it was the Supreme Court finally vindicated her that she was able to post a Bible verse.

It's not going to get easier. So what can we do?

The reality is we are a hindrance to society's progression. Is your maturity a hindrance to society's progression?

Or are you simply just a little speed bump? In case you don't know, our function as a church is meant to manifest the presence of God.

The role of the church is meant to manifest the presence of God. It is to put the display of the glory of God on display. We do this by preaching the gospel, by living the gospel, by preaching the good news of Jesus Christ to discipling and to becoming mature.

[ 25 : 18 ] The reality is God is to be seen, experienced, and engaged in our church community. God needs to be seen in how we worship, we preach, we teach, we pray, we disciple, how we raise our kids, how we love our spouses, how we honor our parents.

So that's my introduction. Let's look at Ephesians 4. I'm going to answer the question, what does Christ call us to be as a church?

Verse 11, he starts, he says, And Paul, and he gave, that is God, Jesus Christ, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and 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 coming, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

We're called to be mature, amen? Now, what do we learn from this text? Now, note the offices that God provides the churches. Now, if you were to ask me what I think, I believe there is a progression of offices that exists through the history of the church.

I believe we started off with the apostles, then God brought these prophets, evangelists, and now we live in the time of shepherds and teachers. Now, apart from that, whether you agree with that or not, they still have the same goal.

[ 27 : 06 ] Notice what that goal is, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Notice it doesn't say God doesn't give apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to do the work of the ministry.

The command is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, the saints. Who are the saints? You guys were here back in Romans 1, what, four years ago, and we covered that verse, right?

But we talked about a saint. Jesus Christ identifies as saints. We're not sinners. Those of us who've been redeemed, who call on the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, are regarded as saints.

We're children of the King. We're members of the church. We're believers in Christ. Now, what is, who does the building up of the body of Christ?

It's not the apostles. It's not the prophets. It's not the evangelists, the shepherds or pastors. It's the saints, the people. You guys are the ones who do the heavy lifting.

[ 28 : 24 ] It's you guys who build in to everyone. And when do you quit? It says right here, until there's a unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and to mature manhood and womanhood.

So if you're blaming us, it's our failure to equip you to do the work that God has called you to.

See, there's two parts to this program called the church. God has called the shepherds, the elders, the pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry. And your role is to build up the body until there's unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God to maturity.

Pretty exciting, isn't it? In case you haven't noticed, our church is changing. There's new people every day. Squamish is changing.

Our world, the cherished values of our community is changing. The reality is we need a robust, strong church to counter the culture.

[ 29 : 49 ] As the church grows, we grow because we are adding new gifts to the body. We don't need to fear what's out there. Because we've got God in here. Amen?

It's not, Jesus Christ isn't coming against us. Practically speaking, as a church grows in numbers, a church needs to learn to operate differently.

As an example, if we were a church of 50, we would operate much differently than the size of a church of 150. When there's only 50 people, usually one pastor can handle all the equipping.

As a church grows, you add other men, other elders to equip. That church needs to mature. The question that is before me as a pastor, and I shared this with you as members on Wednesday.

The question that I ask myself is, if God is calling someone to the knowledge of Jesus Christ to save them, equip them, mature them, would he send them here?

[ 31 : 03 ] Are we being faithful in what he's calling us to? Would God want them to be a part of Squamish Baptist Church?

Is this a church keeping with the will of the Lord? I believe he would, and he does. However, as Squamish grows, as we grow, we need to grow as well.

And this is where my mind has gone these last few years and where many of my prayers are directed. God in his providence has brought together Chris and Dave and myself as elders, and we actually love being together.

I believe we've got very good complimentary set of gifts, and I believe we serve the church well. But as the church grows, I'm also aware that we have weaknesses.

We have deficiencies. You see, generally in a situation of church, and let's just say we're going to, everybody's our ranking in maturity, one being the newborns tend to being a mature, disciple-making Christian.

[ 32 : 21 ] In smaller churches, what happens is the pastor is desperate to get new leaders on top, so he spends a lot of his time with the eights and nines, trying to get him to a maturity of elders, and he deals with the ones and twos, because that's where young babies are fed.

You guys who are parents, young children need a lot of time. What happens is there's a lot of neglect within the three to sevens. That's generally how church life grows when we become too pastoral heavy in that way where we do that work of the ministry.

Our conviction is we need more elders, and we need more people on board to equip the saints.

My conviction is that we need to develop a stronger discipleship ministry. I believe BSF has been an absolute blessing, and it's a great ministry, and we continue to support it, and will continue to support it.

Every man a warrior, we really believe that is a great space for all men to start. And men, if you haven't taken it, I would love for you to take it.

[ 33 : 37 ] Everyone here will attest to the wonderful time it is, just in helping us get squared away of what it is to be a man of God, to be a mature man of God.

But we do understand we still need more help in equipping the saints. See, the problem is churches fail when few people do everything.

And the other thought that comes across my mind is we live in a world where the world is targeting your children. The world is targeting your children in just about absolute every single way.

In case you do not notice, the world wants your kids to think that way they do. They're trying to instill into your children while they're in public school that they have rights, and their rights supersede your wisdom, your love, and your care for them.

And the fact of the matter is, we believe we need help in preparing you for this world.

[ 34 : 51 ] So many of you know that there's an announcement in today's message, but this question has been nagging me for quite some time, and three months ago, in a conversation with Pastor David Crunty from Church on 99 over breakfast, I simply asked him the question of what he would think if we merged as churches.

If they would be welcome to come here and begin ministering with us within the joint body of Christ. What's interesting, he said that he was having the same thoughts as well, and he had been praying to them.

I had asked him if he'd speak to his leaders, his leaders being Andy King, Clayda Caudel, he went to them as well, and they were praying that same prayer as well. Then, Chris and Dave and I, and we sat down with these three men, and we met for over four hours, and we talked about what would a merger look like?

What would the leadership roles like? What would be the new staff positions? Would there be any changes to our doctrine or our ministry or philosophy of ministry or our values?

Would anybody lose out? Would there be less care for any soul that would be coming? Would this affect our affiliations or finances?

[ 36 : 09 ] Those were the lesser of our concerns. What we've decided, after we met for another two, two weeks later, we met for another four hours, and we came out 100% convinced that this was where God is leading us.

That they, we've asked them to come and join us. Nothing is changing about our name or our doctrine or any of that kind of stuff. They're already on board with that. I will remain as lead pastor, and we've asked Dave Crente how he'd feel about taking over the role of discipleship of family ministries, giving leadership over our children's ministry, our youth ministry, family ministry.

You know what other ministry is coming down the pipe? University ministry. It's coming, guys. There's a new university starting up in September. There's going to be new people here.

We want to have complete attention on these kids that are coming, our young adults. There's many blessings that I see.

I see blessings that we can have a full elder team with six men around that table, which is no small thing. To have a church of our size with six men that are qualified and have been affirmed and their giftings within that role is a great thing for the leadership of our church.

[ 37 : 41 ] I think it's a good thing that we have more oversight in developing those areas of family ministries and I'd also like to see a growth of our small group ministry.

We've affirmed in David Crente that he is a solid biblical teacher. He's wonderful in one-on-one situations. He understands and thinks in terms of what does this mean in terms of God's word and does this manifest the glory of God?

God. They're going to bring to us one of their ministries, which has been quite good, which is Grace Church on 99. That's their children's ministry.



A lot of churches where they talk about what are you doing for evangelism? What happens is they tend to look outwards rather than inwards. The greatest call to evangelism within our church is to our kids and our youth.

Amen? That's where it is. Do we not want to see our children and our youth saved? So they need help with the Grace Kids.

[ 38 : 48 ] They're needing some of our bodies to commit to that ministry because it's packed. It's going. And we want to be able to be there to support them.

We believe, and as you all know, we're having the family conference that's coming up in September because it is our belief that the priority is to equip our families for the days that are ahead.

I think we need to be stronger as mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, older sisters, older brothers. There's not a single parent that I want in this church to think that they're on their own.

that we are here for you, with you. We want to equip you, come beside you. I grew up in a single home, single parent home.

I know how wonderful it is when a church comes into our lives and gives me the father figures that I did not have. we've been blessed and I give thanks for the wonderful musicians that we have here that lead us in song.

[ 40 : 14 ] But I also believe it's an untapped ministry potential. It's going to give us an opportunity to put more time. They have some musicians that are willing to come forward as well and to help not only with our team but to equip some of the younger ones here and to grow them into using their gifts here along with worship as well.

If you read a lot of church help books, they always start with these unique ways. What are new things that we can do? I don't believe we're going to look for the unique or the new.

I believe we're called to tread the old paths that the church has treaded for 2,000 years and that means to develop mature saints.

As we mature, the church matures, the church grows. And we don't want growth for sake of growth. We want growth because we want to see the name of Jesus Christ lifted up in this community.

Amen? We want to see lost people saved, saved people mature, and mature people multiply.

[ 41 : 37 ] So tonight we have a membership meeting. We have an AGM and we're dealing with some managerial financial issues, but we're encouraging the members to be here. And if you are not a member, but you want to be here to hear the discussion, you're certainly welcome here.

We're welcoming questions about this merger. We're going to ask for a vote of affirmation. There's three things according to a bylaws that we need. I don't even know if it's three, but one, we need to affirm David Corrente as a pastor here at SBC.

I believe he's imminently qualified for that role in which we are calling to. And I want us to get to know Clay and Andy. David has putting them through an elder program which is actually far more rigorous than ours is.

But they have demonstrated complete humility in saying they can't wait to be here just around the table with us elders as well. I can honestly say the eight hours that we've spent around that table, we could have easily spent another eight hours more and there wouldn't have been one complaint.

The plan is, so for this month, I have made myself available to that congregation. So I'll be preaching there for the next couple of weeks.

[ 42 : 59 ] I'm also going to be leading a membership class for them because our heart desires if they vote in affirming to join with us, I want them to come on as equal members.

Equal partners of ministry. Amen? I want them to know that they're loved and they're cared. So in these next couple of weeks, we're going to be planning some fellowships.

We're going to be welcoming a whole new people. We've actually had a couple of families coming that have been kind of getting to know from that church and there's going to be a few more here.

So my ask from you today is prayer for tonight. I ask for prayer for us as elders as we discern the Lord as we've been going forward. Their elders as well or their leadership.

I ask for prayer for Church of 99. It's going to be tougher for them to change coming here than for us to receive them. It's hard. Some people have been meeting in that building for over 20 years, right?

[ 44 : 02 ] And the thing is a lot of people have been thinking it's kind of a... I'll tell you kind of where this all started. Where we saw this as a possibility was the family conference last year.

Just the connection, the fellowship, the worship times that we've enjoyed on the Sunday nights where people have come together and we've had to kick people out of the building because they can't stop fellowshiping together.

Right? That's when we started to think, you know what, maybe God's telling us something here. Maybe God is in this. But the reality is change is tough. So I'm going to ask that you would pray for wisdom as we work through the merger plans.

We're going to keep you up to date as best as we can. The reality is we don't want nobody to be left behind. But I think there's some wonderful opportunities for us right off the bat, ministry of welcoming, assimilation, and hospitality.

hospitality right away. So I'm going to ask you to perhaps move out of your comfort zone. Invite a few families over for dinner.

[ 45 : 14 ] Start by connecting as people and as saints. And we'll see what God does with the church. Amen? All right.

I'm going to pray and then I'm going to usher us into a time of communion, which I pray will be our last time. We do it on our own, so to speak. Dear Lord, holy heavenly Father, I know our church got blasted with a lot of scripture and what moves our hearts and minds as pastors.

But we want to be faithful to the call that you have given to us to present this body in Christ as mature in the faith.

I'm excited that we have an opportunity to add more gifts, which means more opportunities for ministry. With more hands on deck, there's more equipping of the saints.

Lord, I believe there's just even this congregation that is meeting here right here right now at SBC. There is unrefined gifts. There's gifts that some of the people in this church have that they don't even know about yet.

[ 46 : 19 ] Father, we know that you can do great things with broken and crooked sticks. Father, we all are broken in one way or another, but you have redeemed us.

You now call us your own. There is no fear. We don't need to fear the great white throne of judgment. But we do need to fear whether we're doing what you're calling us to do, which is to build up the body until it is unified and mature.

Father, I pray that you would put that on each and every heart that is here this morning. I pray that they talk about it with their loved ones and the family and friends that aren't here and just what they think about this challenge.

Are they wanting to be mature? I pray that everyone here can give an honest assessment of where they are in their maturity and say that they want more.

They want to grow. Not just they need to grow, but they want to grow. That want has an emphasis on action. It's a deep desire moving us from an idea to motivation.

[ 47 : 38 ] Father, I pray that it affects our will to draw closer to you and to draw closer to one another.

Father, I welcome all the visitors here today. I pray that be blessed and I pray that they'd give an account of what our church is, that when they come back, are we growing?

They'll be able to say they heard the sermon and they witness the people hearing it. And now that they, when they come back to visit, they can simply say, are they now living it?

Father, as we come to this communion table, this is the ultimate act of unification as a church, a universal church, as those who patiently wait for you.

God, we are indeed waiting for you to this time. But in this quote unquote meantime, you are still calling people to the knowledge of you and we desperately want to be used for that, Father.

[ 48 : 43 ] We want that blessing. We want that reward. We want to be obedient to you. There is no shame in that. Father, we are called to welcome, to love.

And this table represents it. Father, if there is anyone here this morning that has a problem with another brother or sister of the Lord where they are not reconciled, I ask that they would not come to this table, that they would first seek reconciliation before coming back.

Partaking of this table means they are reconciled not just to you, but to us as a church as well. Father, we love you and pray that we're passionate about our love for you and are passionate about our desire to seek your mercy and blessings, oh God.

So this morning I ask that you would bless this time of communion, bless this time of togetherness. And all of God's people said, Amen.

So just as the men will be leading us in worship, we're going to ask people, if you haven't been here for worship time, we ask you, or communion, to come down the middle aisles and kind of peel off to the side.

[ 50 : 06 ] So come when you're ready. Use the time to, just to meditate upon your heart to get right with God. Often we need to confess some of the issues that are going on in our lives so that we come to this table freely.

And there I say passionately as well, remembering what God gave us in his son, Jesus Christ, to experience this communion.