

Introduction to the New Year

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to Acts chapter 4. Acts chapter 4. I'll be somewhat honest with you this morning.

Not that I hope I'm not dishonest with you at any other time of the day. But I'm going to be really, really open and honest today. Today is not exactly how I envisioned things.

Today, I really wanted to be at a place where we could clearly say, without a doubt, we had crossed the finish line of COVID.

I really did. I actually had fireworks planned, marching bands, that sort of thing. But I really wanted to say, I hope we never see you again.

You know, look in our rearview mirrors and say, sayonara, we didn't want you here, goodbye forever. But, it's really not that type of story as I envisioned it way back two years ago.

[1 : 08] The reality is, it is good to see you here this morning. Every Sunday, we get to see more and more familiar faces.

And it is very good. It is good to see some more and more children come to our children ministry and are excited to be here. And all those things are good.

But what's really interesting, as I was pondering upon how things aren't ideal in my mind, there are more and almost greater opportunities for the gospel than ever before.

And because of that, I wanted to share with you some of those aspects where I believe God has opened up a door in a way that we probably could not have imagined.

As you know, it's the beginning of school semester. And just about any church anywhere usually has a kickoff Sunday that starts with their kids beginning in school.

[2 : 10] For some of you, it's been a long summer. For some of you, it's been a short summer. For some of you, it's been a busy summer. So we kind of get a chance to reset, re-evaluate what is it going to look like going forward for us, and especially here at Squamish Baptist Church.

As most of you know, we're having a barbecue fellowship time together this Sunday. And to be honest, we do it because we're Baptists, right? How could we have a fellowship time without food? We would have to take Baptists off our church name. But more importantly to being a Baptist, we get to experience real-life baptisms today by two people who are coming forward in obedience to Jesus Christ.

And those are the things that we get to celebrate. But this morning, there are two main areas that I want to cover for you. The first one is I want to take a brief look at the life of the apostles.

And I want us to look at some components of their ministry and why it was so powerful. And I honestly believe it is the type of power that you and I can experience in our ministries today, both as a church and personal, when we submit ourselves to what the disciples and the apostles submitted to over 2,000 years ago.

[3 : 31] And secondly, I want to tie those purposes into our ministry here as a community, as a church, and how we believe these things can be accomplished here at Squamish Baptist Church.

For some of you that are visiting, that might not be the biggest thrill to hear. But for those, I hope, that are members and regular attenders here, this is going to give you an idea of what the next year and, Lord willing, what the next couple of years will look like.

So what we're going to be doing today is I'm going to discuss actually what some of our leaders' thinking and priorities are based on. So without more further ado, let's go back to our text.

If anyone doesn't have a Bible with you, because I am going to refer to your Bibles, we have ushers that will gladly provide you with one. So if you need one, please just hold up your hands.

So we are in Acts chapter 4. As you all know, Acts is the time period after the Gospels. Jesus Christ has resurrected and he's now ministered for 40 days and he's gone on to heaven.

[4 : 42] And as he's in heaven, just before he goes, he's charging these men and women that he has been building into for over three and a half years.

He's given them a charge. And as we're going to see here, they're taking it up. So before I get into chapter 4, the context is Peter and John and the disciples or apostles are preaching in the temple. And they're connecting the Old Testament truths to Jesus Christ. And they're basically making a strong case why Jesus Christ is the Messiah and why they need to put their faith and hope in him. And on the way, they actually heal this lame man who can now walk. The people are astonished and they get back to preaching. So let me read to you chapter 4.

And as they were speaking to the people, that's the apostles, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them. And if you're unfamiliar with those names, essentially those are the religious rulers who oversaw all the religion that came out of the temple which was based in Jerusalem.

[5 : 58] So they're in Jerusalem after Jesus had gone up to heaven and they are preaching. And they came upon them. They said, greatly annoyed, verse 2, because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed.

And the number of the men came to about 5,000. We can roughly assume when they use men, there's women and children as well.

So we're probably looking at greater than over 10,000 people had heard the message proclaimed by the apostles and believed.

On the next day, verse 5, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Anas, the high priest, and Sapphias, and John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high priestly family.

[7 : 05] When they had set them in their midst, being the apostles, they inquired, by what power or by what name do you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which had become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Verse 13, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

It's a pretty amazing story. Notice how bold the apostles were in verse 12. And there is no salvation, is no one else, and there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Let me ask you a simple question. For you, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who wants that type of boldness?

[9 : 06] Who wants the kind of boldness that you can speak before what would be the equivalent of our Supreme Court, the governing authorities, and be so clear, concise, with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Who wants that, right? As believers in Jesus Christ, we want that type of boldness. Let me ask you a second question.

Who here as a believer in Jesus Christ, who is a heart for the lost, would not give anything to see those kind of results in their ministry? Who would not want to see Squamish redeemed?

Let's be honest. We'd love it, right? Instead of being a hard soil, wouldn't we want to see it as a redeemed soil? Well, today I want to cover some of the characteristics of ministry that we need to see that type of ministry unfold, both here in our church and here in our community.

So we're going to look at some of the characteristics that the apostles had, and I believe we can have those same characteristics. The first characteristic is that they were saved.

[10 : 27] They gave their entire life, they made every decision they had to Jesus Christ when he said, follow me, come follow me, leave everything behind, they did.

There was only one priority in their life and that was Jesus Christ. Is that us? Is that our priority or is Jesus Christ an add-on, a supplement to good living?

It's what good families do. You see, they knew Jesus Christ as Savior. They knew Jesus Christ as mediator. They knew Jesus Christ as Lord.

And more importantly, they knew that there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. If there is one lie, the enemy tells this culture over and over that there are many ways to heaven.

But Jesus Christ declared over and over, no, there's not. And the devil, the enemy, the world will always try to fool us, whisper in our ears that maybe there's another way.

[11 : 29] The second characteristic that identified these men is that they were obedient. They were obedient. I'm going to put some of these verses on the screen because we're just looking at them one-offs.

So this is Matthew 28, 19. This is Jesus Christ gathering with the disciples and he's giving them their marching orders. And he simply says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

This is something we believe, right? When we read this, we believe this. But do we follow through? Let me ask you a question. How many times have you taken the time to teach someone all that Jesus commanded?

[12 : 40] See, the point is everything that Jesus commanded cannot be done in a day, an afternoon, but it's actually an investment of one life into another.

So that's the second characteristic. They are first saved, obedient, and now look at verse 8. 3, they had the Holy Spirit. Acts 4, 8. When asked by what power or name did they do this, their response was this. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, there is a supernatural natural power given to him.

Now, I want to make a distinction. For believers in Jesus Christ, we believe at the moment of salvation, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are sealed into the day of redemption.

But I also believe that there's these times, these certain moments in our lives where God has given us almost an extra power.

[13 : 47] And I'm going to bet anybody who has called on the name of Jesus Christ knows when those happened. One, when you first believe, right? There was something there. The truth rang out as clear as day and you gave your life to Christ.

Sometimes, it's when you act not like yourself. You're bold with the gospel. You recall verses that you may have studied maybe months or years ago.

And you know, it's almost the exact right time to share that truth. I believe that is something that the Holy Spirit does in our lives.

We can look at these right situations. Jesus told the disciples that one another, that another one would come after him. John 14, 6 says, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

So this work of ministry that we are commanded to do, we're not doing it on our own. Because I think, as most of us think, man, that's a lot of work that you have for me.

[14 : 59] This is a big neighborhood that I live in. I've got a lot of neighbors. I've got a lot of friends. I've got a lot of family members. You see, this understanding of the helper, the Holy Spirit, who will be with us is to give us comfort, understanding that God is with us.

Acts 1, 8, it says, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

So the three verses or the three characteristics are one, saved. You have to believe in Jesus Christ. Two, you've got to be obedient. You have to give yourself to him.

And three, there's a reliance not upon your own giftings and abilities but on Jesus Christ. But there's this fourth characteristic that we're going to talk about today that I believe for the most part we get detached from.

Now I want to take a look at verse 13 of Acts chapter 4. Please look in your Bibles. Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

[16 : 35] The truth of the matter as you know, the Gospels record the history of these men walking with Jesus in life. Let's be honest here.

Who wouldn't want to be taught by the Master? Right? Perfect in his teaching, perfect in his modeling of truth and faith, to be equipped for ministry by Jesus Christ himself.

I had the pleasure of going to seminary. It was a little bit dull. It took me four years, not the regular three. And as much as I love the men who poured into me, they were no Jesus Christ.

You see, the ministry that Jesus had with the disciples, we see in these Gospels. And today, I want to look at two components of that ministry.

The first part of the ministry that they had with Jesus Christ is called community. They lived with Jesus. They walked with Jesus.

[17 : 44] You're familiar during our COVID years, of watching church. We went through the book of Ephesians. And that word walk appears over and over and over.

Greek word peripete. And the Jewish understanding is how you conduct your life. We walk together. We conduct life together. So they did this together.

And what's interesting is that this past couple years, like no other, should demonstrate why walking in isolation is so horrible.

Right? COVID, if anything, teaches us that it's damaging to be alone. I don't know if you're paying attention to any of the news or the indications, but we do know that suicide rates have increased dramatically during this time.

A lot in our youth, despondency. I'll tell you one thing, sales at the alcohol store did not go down, despite limited hours.

[18 : 59] We read an incredible amount of drug dependence and overdoses that increased. In fact, the numbers of people who died from COVID are rivaled by those deaths from overdose.

I've been reading an article recently and one of the challenges for many pastors is that marriages have been put under an incredible stress and that there is an increase of divorces that has happened.

Now, what's, and they say some of the reasons is the great fear, the aloneness that was caused. But I'm going to tell you something. We as a culture are already, we're already headed towards isolation.

The reality is COVID just quickened it up. Some of you may not know, but before I had been married to my wife of almost seven years, I actually had a teenage son live with me, our teenage nephew live with me.

I decide to skip the diaper years and go to the easy years of teenagehood, right? Isn't that the easy years, right? And as you all know, I'm not shy in sharing my opinions, but I got to experience my first parent-teacher interview.

[20 : 26] And it ended up becoming a real mess. But anyway, one of the most memorable moments that I took away from that parent-teacher time is I kept, I get why kids have phones for emergencies and all that.

I don't get that while you're in class, you get to text and do whatever you want. And they were doing that at my nephew's school. And I'm like, I don't understand this.

And you know, of course, he spends all the money that he makes at Tim Hortons buying the biggest earphones that he can have, right? And he wears those while he's in class. And they let him.

And I could not understand how you could learn in community with others and be so unplugged from one another. It reminds me of the words of Psalm in the book of Proverbs.

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire. He breaks out against all sound judgment.

[21 : 42] You see, as we all know, isolation removes us from one another. It gives sin opportunities that it doesn't have when we're together.

It teases us that we can have some sort of independence which, as we see in the statistics, often leads to self-destructive behaviors.

And what's interesting, when you read the Gospels, about the stories of Jesus Christ, we meet the apostles as they were, not perfect men, but fearful men, as prideful men.

men who demonstrated very little faith at times. And we see this God, the Son of God, how he works from them.

Remember the story when the apostles are having an argument over which one gets to sit at the right hand of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 54] Think about that for a second. why Jesus Christ didn't say, I'm getting rid of you twelve and I got another twelve ready to go. Like, here they are, are jockeying for a power position.

In fact, James and John are so, I don't know what you want to call it, but they actually have their mom go have the talk with Jesus because they're not man enough to have it, right?

You know, just think about that. It's childish, it's underhanded. We see their judgmental attitudes. If you remember the sermon that I preached several months ago on the Syrophenician woman, she came with great need and the apostles wanted to get rid of her.

They didn't care. But we get to see firsthand the patience and love of Jesus, the discipling he brings, the patience and training he does.

Because you know who the apostles represent. Right? It uncovers us. Jesus Christ helps them with their fears.

[24 : 10] So that's the first thing. See, the reality is God places a radical priority on believers walking and doing life together. sin.

Although the world may long for isolation and solitary living and independent decision making, sin will drive us to remove ourselves from one another.

God calls us to something that is quite the opposite. God wants his children being the exception in this world. I believe more than any other time that God calls us to be a people of community.

I believe that God just doesn't call us to community. I believe that we are created for community.

God wants us to be a person. The second aspect of living with Jesus, as we know from the Gospels, is that Jesus taught. Jesus taught.

[25 : 13] Jesus taught and taught. Jesus taught and taught and taught over and over and over. Sometimes the same lessons. Now, why is that so important?

Well, if we look at John 1.14, which we'll put up, it says, And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth. I want you to pay attention to that word, truth. John 14.6 says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 8.31, So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and will know the truth.

And the truth will set you free. You see, the truth was not something that was an emotional response. It was something that they learned. And they learned by living it.

They learned by receiving teaching. In 1 Timothy, Paul writes, speaking about Jesus, who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

[26 : 30] The reality is we need truth. We need to be taught God's word. Jesus doesn't walk with us anymore. But he's given us this Bible to be taught.

Now, I'm going to tell you how important it is to understand this truth. In 1 Timothy 3.15, Paul is writing his disciple, disciple Timothy, and he's encouraging him and teaching him as he pastors this church at Ephesus.

Notice verse 15. It says, If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

So the implication here is we're called to know Jesus. To follow Jesus means to be a disciple of Jesus. It's to be like Jesus.

It's to live in community. And it's to represent the truth. Now, why is this such a big deal?

[27 : 35] Notice what the church is. A pillar and buttress of truth. A buttress was a wall that had extra like pillars against it, holding it back.

And today, we know more than anything else, there is a world that is full of lies. Like, it's so bad that even when people are running for public office, they have to have fact checkers, right?

Because we don't know what is truth and what isn't anymore. But Jesus Christ came, he taught truth, and he has given us that responsibility that we are to be the pillars that hold the building up.

I'm intimidated by that. I don't want to give away one of the pillars and crush people under a false gospel, a lie of this world, an opening for the devil to deceive them.

You see, this is our responsibility responsibility as a collection of people who gather here to represent the truth and to fight against the lie.

[29 : 02] So, what does that mean for Squamish Baptist Church? Here, in beautiful Squamish, British Columbia.

Well, first, it begins with our leadership. The verse I'm putting up is Ephesians chapter 4, reading in verse 11.

Again, we don't get Jesus, but you guys are stuck with me and some of the elders who are submitting ourselves to God's truth.

And it says, and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers. And that's where we would fit in, in that shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

Notice, it doesn't say to do the work of the ministry, that we have been called to equip you for the work of the ministry.

[30 : 07] For the building up, remember, truth, buttress, the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. It doesn't stop.

To mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

This is one of those verses you don't really need to unpack, is it? The power is just there. It tells us that the goal that we have as elders is for you to be mature manhood and womanhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That's big. But as we've learned, we've got help, right? We've got this thing called the Holy Spirit that we can call upon.

And we have this word of God, which is the words of Jesus Christ. So, we don't get to walk with Jesus, but we get to still learn from our Jesus.

[31 : 29] You see, our role as elders is to equip you with the church and to model community as it is for every disciple of Jesus Christ. Christ. I think I asked you this question, what would you like to see thousands of people come to Christ through your ministry?

Of course. But how about we just start with our close family and friends, the people that God has put in our area. Would we be okay with that?

Would we like to pray for our children, even our adult children? How about our parents? Uncles, aunts, our neighbors? Of course we do it.

We would. But there's that criteria that needs to be met. One, as I've said, salvation. Two, obedience to Jesus Christ to pursue a holy living. Three, rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

And four, to be equipped. Now, I've got a graphic that I'm going to show you. And in case you do not know, if you all have a bulletin, we have these values here that we share at the church.

[32 : 43] And they're written at the top. Exalt, equip, and engage. And this morning, I want to explain them to you. Many different churches use many different words to describe this type of ministry.

At one of my former churches, it was worship, walk, work. Here, we use exalt, equip, and engage. So, what I want to explain to you is why we as elders are making some of the decisions that we make and why we do the things that we do.

And, of course, you can come and ask questions at any time. But we met before COVID, and we've been talking, praying about these things. And how do we get to what God has for us?

So, the first point at the top of the triangle, and that's actually a mountain. Think of it as a mountain. We're in Squamish. We know it. Mountains, right? Snow-capped. It's beautiful. God reigns above the mountains, right?

Many of you guys don't know. I lived in Ontario my whole life. I'd never seen a mountain, and my work sent me out here, which I was glad to do.

[33 : 52] And I came to see a friend who had gone through a divorce and who was walking away from God. And we just went to these mountains, and we're confronted with a God that we should worship.

We got confronted with a God that we have to worship. He's right here. There's only one response to this. And as I said, my friend made that profession right there and turned away.

So, when we think about the next stage, exalt worship, target is God. How do we do that? A lot of this happens in this meeting right here, the worship time, the preaching of God's word.

We get that chance to sing praises. We get to pray with one another, for one another. It's the gathering. But there's a new component that we're adding to this, and it's called assimilation.

And what that means is, when people come to the church, we know and understand that our desires to see them become mature men and women of Christ, this is the first contact.

[35 : 03] And the person that's going to be heading that up for us is Lisa Mitchell right now. And we have a responsibility. Every person that God brings in the door, that's who God has given to us to pour into, to build into, so they might reach the maturity that God calls them to.

And if you've ever been in my office, you see on my whiteboard that we have these goals. Our goals are to see lost people saved, saved people mature, and mature people multiply. That's the ultimate goal. So, one of the goals, when people come, Lisa's going to be working. And some of the welcome desk and some of those areas are kind of first-touch things. So, we're going to see some physical changes. But those physical changes represent a new target, targeting of what we are wanting to accomplish.

I call them removing barriers. And that means working with the greeters, the ushers, in order to create a space where we're not distracted by this world and come with a sole focus on Jesus Christ. [36 : 16] Within that, we are going to be developing a new path to membership, to partner with us. We're going to be beginning a, it's called First Touch is Coffee with the Pastors.

It's an opportunity on a Sunday night to meet with Dave and I and some of the elders. It's going to be followed up with another time of a class-type setting where we understand our values. And then we're going to have a membership class which talks about our specific beliefs that are in our statement of faith. Previously, there were six weeks. We're going to be condensing them down. So, there's not as much time involved, but it's going to be just as deep. The second point is getting to the equip. So, this is the one that I really want to spend some time on. The reality is we all want to rush to the engagement, right? We all want to rush to seeing people saved. We want to minister. We want to do those type of things.

[37 : 13] But more often than not, the amount of engagement or quality engagement is usually dependent upon our maturity.

A lot of times, we hand over responsibility to gifted people who are immature. I'm going to list you, I'm going to tell you something about myself. There's a type of lead pastor I don't trust in life. All right? If you think I'm being judgmental, fine. The first one is if their age begins with the number two. I just do not trust a lead pastor whose age begins with the number two. And number two, if they've never had a full job, full-time job before. And I'll tell you why. The story, and most of you are familiar with the story that happened at Mars Hill in Seattle. If you're not familiar with that, there's a great blog on that. [38 : 16] But it was a church that grew massively to 15,000 people. And sadly, they were men that were far too young and did not have older mentorship. Or in fact, they did have the older mentorship and they ignored that older mentorship.

And that whole church is capitulating. There's actually a major podcast on the destruction that is caused in the Christian community. It's quite heartbreaking. But what happens is when we hand over responsibility to those that are gifted, perhaps they're clear, wonderful teachers, but they have not been pressed by life and experience, pride gets in, cracks happen, division happens. And that happens to each and every one of us. I have made foolish decisions in my 20s and even 30s. I wasn't a pastor, but just in ministry, mistakes that I made. So our goal is to train you in that maturity to learn.

So what are our areas of priority? Our number, we have three areas of priority. One, children's ministry. We want to pour into our children because God has given that as our first line of evangelism and care for.

Two, our youth ministry. That's a bit of a switch. That's going to be our second most priority. That determines how we spend our money and where we want to put our resources in to help not only with the children, but equip the parents for this.

[39 : 48] So up and coming, we're hopefully going to be getting, we're going to be having a parenting conference coming very soon, Lord willing, as soon as we're able to get the speaker lined up.

As you know, for the children that we've advertised, one of the things we need to accept is we need to work with other brothers and sisters of Christ in our community, right? We've got brothers and sisters. We want to hear from other churches, even today.

We want to partner with them because the reality is we all don't have the resources to accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished. So we wonderfully support Grace Church of 99 and

getting their children's ministry going.

We see Allison and Young Life, who's been pouring into a lot of the youth. We encourage that. We support them financially in doing that. Our adult ministry, we have women. It's called BSF.

But we've neglected the men. So in case you didn't know, this past year I ran a study, and it's called Every Man a Warrior. And what it is, it's a three-part study on training men to live your life for Christ in your home, your workplace, in your life.

[40 : 55] But the biggest thing is in your home. Today we're going to hear from one of the people getting baptized a little bit about the effects of that on him. And two, this class, Fundamentals of the Faith.

The reason why we're not bold is we're unsure. We're unsure in our teachings of Jesus Christ. My commitment is to teach this class the day I die. Every single year I love meeting new believers. It's a place where you can take people that do not know the Lord, but it goes through this salvation about why we have the Bible and everything else. And three, we're going to see it in our growth groups.

And I want you to understand what our priorities and growth groups are. One, it's to be known and to know. It's to be known and to know. So you know someone. I once was at a church that was 100 years old, and I had this small group.

And one guy came and introduced himself to the other guy, and they found out that they had been at the church for 15 years together and never met. And it wasn't much bigger than this one. Right?

[41 : 57] To be known and to know. One. Second, to apply the sermon. And what I mean by that is when I preach, when you're in a growth group, you talk about the applications of the truth that we heard on that Sunday.

And third, and probably the most important thing, I think, it's a place where the body comes together and pray and encourages one another. So over these next couple of weeks, we're going to hear testimonies and stuff of people and how that's affected them.

Historically, it's been led by elders, but my heart is to develop more and more leaders, and we're going to have that training. And now the last part is the engagement part.

Part. What happens is when you've been a worshiper here, when you've been equipped, we want to turn you loose.

We want you to use whatever gifts that you have to connect with the community. It could be music. It could be baking. A lot of times we've already seen it, Camp Sunshine.

[42 : 55] We have Dave who's a wonderful biblical counselor. We would like to continue growing Dave in that ability to actually use it as an outreach to this community. There is many hurting people, and some of them are within these walls, and counseling's great for us as well.

We see the Quest ministry with the DIRTs. We want to support them in that. We already do. But those are the things that we want to make priorities. We have our Christmas ministries. So how we see them as elders is those are the ministries that are gift and desired based.

If perhaps people move away and they don't want to do that ministry, we do not feel compelled to do it. We're going to look at you as you grow in the faith, and as you mature, and you come to us and say, listen, I have got a real heart for reaching this type of people.

And if you're able to get people to get you together, we are going to set you free to do that. So I'm going to conclude now.

But this is our commitment. This is how we are deciding to spend our money. So this coming March, there's going to be a men's conference that many of the men are going to feel free to come with us to.

[44 : 16] We're going to start using those type of things. We're working with Dave Carrente as well to have a men's retreat actually in October. It's kind of soon, but we're going to see what happens.

But those are the things that we want to get the ball rolling on. So my heart and my ask of you is, feel free to ask questions. Come to us.

I want to talk to you about these things. If there's other areas, we're going to be doing leadership training. The fundamentals of the faith training is really essential. If you're a man who has never studied or memorized scripture, and you're unsure of how to live as a husband, if you grew up like me, you weren't trained to be a husband.

In some ways, I'm learning every day. I know the Bible, but I never had a father. I had to learn from older men when I was later in life.

And I think that's why the Lord brought a bride later in life for me so that I would at least have something. And I know many of you have gone into life not knowing anything about those things. [45 : 23] But these are the ministries, I think, that can make a lifetime of difference for you. So if anybody ever asks you about the graphic that I pointed to that wasn't there, what we're about, what our focus is, now you know what it is and why.

And my hope and prayer is that we're going to see many mature, fruitful believers here in Squamish making an impact. Let's be honest. Squamish is a city unlike any other. There's, I had a whole section of my sermon to talk about the unique challenges to Squamish, and there is. And it means we have to pivot a lot more. So let me just close this portion of our sermon prayer.

I'm going to ask the Winstanley boys to come up and prepare us for more singing as we get to our baptism. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just thank you for the patience this congregation has given me just to hear where we're going.

Lord, you are an incredible model, and I'm excited in this new sermon series that we're doing, The Life of Christ, as we are going to go through every section of your life and how you connected with people, the culture, and we pray that it adds a depth to our faith that perhaps we never knew existed.

[46 : 50] A confidence, an understanding, an appreciation of all that we are of you. You're a God who, as Paul tells us in Philippians, you made yourself empty, and you walked as a man.

Father, we are just men and women, flesh and blood. Some of us are frail of health. Some of us are strong. Some of us are limited in certain capacities.

Some of us are gifted. But when you bring us all together, there's an infusion of the Holy Spirit that can do great and mighty things.

Father, I ask that you would continue to raise mighty soldiers within this church, that you'd continue to work amongst the elders as we have unity in all these things and how we support, love one another and want to see that grow in this church.

Father, we pray against COVID. We pray for healing for those who suffered. It has been a horrible, wretched disease. But at the same time, we pray against the fear.

[48 : 08] Pray against the isolation, the damage it's done. Father, there's radical changes for our country coming before us.

If it's not through this election, it will come through the next or maybe thereafter. But as democracies move forward, they tend to insulate themselves and move towards more control and less freedoms for people in the name of security.

We pray that you protect this church. We pray that you protect all the churches that meet in this city. We pray that we'd be a people fixated on you.

So Father, we ask these things and we ask you to continue to bless this wonderful time of worship that we have. In your name, amen.