

Foundations for the New Year

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[0 : 0 0] do New Year's resolutions? Wow, I thought there might be, what's that? Want or do, that do, that want to do them, that set out New Year's resolutions. A few of you? Okay. How many have already made resolutions for 2018? Oh, there's some very enthusiastic ones. Do you know, statistically speaking, how many people keep their New Year's resolutions? Zero, none, none at all. Nobody does. No, that's not entirely true. But the thing is, it's always, it's really difficult to keep these resolutions that we make. And oftentimes, it's not the only reason, but part of the reason is because we make an attempt to change our behavior. And changing our behavior is really difficult. We might be able to, just by sheer willpower, kind of change how we behave for a time. But it takes a lot of work, and it's usually temporary. You think of like an elastic band. You can stretch it for a little while, but eventually it'll go back to its form.

And it doesn't really matter. The shooting, it didn't really have anything to do with the illustration, but it's just nice to do. But if you, you can stretch it, but it'll eventually come back to its original shapes. Or if I hit anybody, I didn't really give you any warning there.

But the way that you make lasting changes, you can't just change your behavior. You actually have to change who you are. You have to change your values. You have to change how you approach a situation, how you think about something. Because what we do, our behavior, our actions, flows from who we are. And if we don't change who we are, we can never change what we do. We can maybe modify it for a little bit with a lot of willpower, but it eventually will fall back into those old rhythms. Now, why am I talking about this? This is not going to be a message about keeping your New Year's resolution, especially because apparently that would only apply to about 3% of you. But I wanted to look at this and this just before we start in the new year, because this is going to be, 2018 is going to be a very important year for Squamish Baptist Church. And I hope you know when I say Squamish Baptist Church, I don't mean like the building or the service or some sort of kind of faceless organization that serves you, but I mean you as a people that are a part of this congregation. A church is made up of people who covenant together to follow God. And so you, as a group, as a collective whole, this is an important year for Squamish Baptist Church is hopefully you begin to step into a new chapter alongside with new pastoral leadership at some point this year. I don't have an update from the search committee or anything about how that's going, but it's an important year for you. And so we wanted to think about, I wanted us to think about this idea of who are we? Because who we are affects and shapes what we do. So as we start this new year, let's look, wanted to look at some foundations of who we are as a church, what, who Squamish Baptist Church is, so that we are informed about where we are going to go. Can we do that together? I'll invite you to turn to the book of, of 2 Corinthians. We're going to be in chapter 5 and we'll look there at some of the foundations of the church. And as we turn there, let's pray. Father, as we look forward to this year, we do see that and desire you to work among us and and through us. And we feel, I feel that it's important that we hear from you. And I know that what I say is not going to shape someone's ear. It's not going to bring lasting change to anybody.

And so I ask that you speak through me and you give those who are hearing wisdom to hear you, to filter through the chaff of what I say, to hear what you are speaking to them from your word and through your spirit. Pray that you are shaping us, that you are grounding us in you this year.

And I pray that you start that, you continue that this morning. Pray this in your name. Amen. Now, I happen to have an inside track on what Squamish Baptist Church is. I know that because it's in your bulletin that I've seen every week. I've heard different people start off the service with it a lot of times. And it's right on the very front. It says Squamish Baptist Church.

[5 : 0 1] And it says that you want to be a church that is exalting Jesus, equipping his followers, and engaging the world. So Squamish Baptist Church is a church that wants to exalt Jesus, equip his

followers, and engage the world. So this morning, I want us to focus on what these three, these three activities are. Because hopefully, they're not just words on a bulletin. They're not just words on a page, but they're true of who you are. We don't want them to be just another set of failed New Year's resolutions. Okay, we don't want them to be, you know, that gym membership that stays in your Bible and never actually gets taken to the gym to be used, or that treadmill that's sitting in your basement. We want this mission statement, this statement of purpose for the church to be something that is actually true of you as a church, something that you work towards and you strive towards. But how do we put that into action? Well, let me ask you a question. What is at the core of that, of those three activities? What's at the core of exalting Jesus, equipping his followers, and engaging the world? At the core of that is the gospel. The gospel forms the foundation of any church. You say you want to equip his followers. There's no followers of Jesus without the gospel. Okay, and the gospel is the foundation of the church. Without the gospel, there is no church.

But the gospel isn't just kind of the foundation of the church, and then we move beyond it. The gospel undergirds and flows through everything that we do as a church, everything that we do as followers of Jesus, as Christians. But it was the gospel. Well, let's read this passage in 2 Corinthians 5, beginning at verse 11, and then we'll pick out some pieces of it.

Since then, we know what it is. Actually, let's start at verse 14. I'll get this right eventually. Verse 14. For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live shall no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So here in 1 Corinthians, we see what, to me, is probably the clearest, the deepest, the most concise summary of the gospel in that last verse that we read. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. What does that mean?

But understand that we need to look a little bit back at what Paul is talking about. He's talking about being reconciled with God. You see that in verse 18, you see that in verse 19, and again in verse 20, and then that verse that we just read in verse 21. And from that, I want us to see two things about what the gospel is. First of all, Paul didn't say reconcile yourself to God, did he? He said be reconciled. That's a passive verb. I don't know if any of you study grammar, but an active verb is something that you do. Johnny, kick the ball. A passive verb is something that happens to you.

[9 : 08] So Paul explains himself in verse 18. He says, all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ. So then the gospel, then it's an announcement. Maybe you've heard this saying before, the gospel is good news, not good advice. Have you heard that saying before? The gospel is good news, not good advice? Anybody? I've heard that quite a bit, and until for a long time, I misunderstood what people were saying. I thought what they were saying is that the gospel is more than just something you should do. It's more than just that advice to take 10,000 steps, you know, if you've gotten a Fitbit for Christmas. But the gospel is this essential and fundamental. And that's true. The gospel is essential and fundamental, but I don't think that's what we mean, what we're supposed to mean when we say that the gospel is good news, not good advice. Because the difference isn't quantitative. It's not just that the gospel is much better than good advice. The difference is qualitative. The gospel isn't advice at all. It's news. It isn't good advice. It isn't amazing advice.

It isn't indispensable advice. The gospel is news. Now what's the difference? Advice is always something that you do. Okay, so Kyle, you should brush your teeth twice a day. Good advice. That's something I should do. That's good advice. Kyle, you shouldn't drink poison. That is much, much more important advice. Much more important for me to follow that much. It's indispensable advice, but it's still something I do. It's still advice, not news. The gospel isn't like that. At its core, the gospel is news. It's an announcement. It's a declaration of an event. What kind of event? A victory.

The New Testament uses the word that we translate gospel, and it's euangelion. Euangelion is the Greek word. Eu means good. It's a prefix we use in other English words like euphoria. And in

galion, it comes from the word angel or messenger. So good news. And outside of the New Testament, it's used as a declaration of victory. A message sent from the front line of a battle that our king is victorious. The war is over. We have been victorious. We have won. We're saved. So you think of a newspaper, advice, ask Annie, is page five in a column. News is on the front page. Victory in Europe day. The war is over. Everything has changed. Do you see what the difference is? Advice is something that you do. And no matter how good, no matter how important, no matter how essential the advice, it's always something that you do.

But news is different. News is something that is done for you and completely changes the world around you, the world that you live in. So what is this news? Well, we already pointed to it in verse 18, 19, 20, and 21. But Paul is talking about being reconciled with God. And I think that oftentimes we downplay what this means in our churches. I think that we love to talk about, I said this last time we were here, we love to talk about what we are saved from. We love to talk about sin. And that's important for us to talk about. But unless we understand who we were, we'll never understand what we are made to be. So it's good to talk about what we're saved from. But we often stop there and we don't talk about what we are saved to, why we are saved. We struggle to think about what it means that we are saved. What are the implications of this news? What does Paul say that we are saved too? In verse 21, he says, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We are saved to become the righteousness of God. Righteousness means that we meet a standard. It means that we're accepted. So Paul is saying that Christ endured what he did so that God the Father would look on us, the same way he looked on Jesus, that we would meet the same standard in the Father's eyes as the Son did. And you see what this means? How did God the Father look on Jesus? Well, before Jesus began his public earthly ministry, he was baptized. When he came out of the water, the Father spoke to him and he said, this is my Son whom I dearly love. This is the one whom I love. And that one that the Father loved went to the cross and our sins were put on him and the Father turned his face away. Why? [14:15] So that we could be his righteousness. So that we could have the same acceptance that he had. We could have the Father say those words to us that he said to Jesus, Jesus, you are my Son. You are my daughter whom I love. Jesus took our shame and our neglect, and we can take his righteousness and acceptance. This is the gospel. This is the announcement that because of what Jesus did, this is who we are. Remember what I said? Who we are shapes what we do.

Well, for a Christian point of view, who we are is shaped by what God has done for us. Actually, who God is shapes what God does, which shapes who we are, which shapes what we do. You see that?

So because God is Father, he has made us his sons and daughters, so that shapes how we behave, now as sons and daughters of God and not as enemies of God. And this is very important that we understand this. As one pastor put, if we don't understand first that we are sons and daughters loved and accepted by God because of what Christ has done, then we will do ministry so that the Father loves us instead of do ministry because we know the Father loves us. Okay, we'll do ministry, we'll do things trying to earn God's love instead of doing things because and of motivation of God's love. And the problem with that is that we'll use people to gain love instead of serve people to give love. It completely twists everything we do if we misunderstand our identity, if we misunderstand the gospel. This working to try and win the Father's love is often called moralism or sometimes kind of religion in quotation marks. What's really interesting, if you read through the New Testament, religion, the word religion is often used negatively. It's often used in a pejorative way, in a negative way. Because you see, often religion is good advice. Do this, do this, do this, do this, do this.

Now, he might have found it a major religion, but Jesus often railed against religious people and religion. Why? Because religion says, I obey, therefore I'm accepted. But the gospel flips that on its head and says, I'm accepted by God through Christ, therefore I obey. You see the difference? The gospel isn't a do-do, it's a be-be. It's not something we do, it communicates who we are, who we've been changed to be. It's good news, it's an announcement, an announcement that completely changes the world around us, completely changes our world. That God has, that Jesus has reconciled us to God and now we are his dearly beloved children. But here's the thing, when everything around you changes, you change. Think of that headline I put on before, Victory in Europe Day, the war is over. Everything changed with that news. The streets of London went from being afraid, constantly in fear of going back into the bomb shelters, to out everyone partying and

celebrating as they welcomed their troops back home. That news changed how they behaved, completely changed everything about their lives. So the gospel isn't about what we do, but it still does change us. And when we encounter the gospel, it leads to transformation.

[17 : 58] Tim Keller says, the gospel is not about something we do, but about what has been done for us. And yet, the gospel results in a completely new way of life. D.A. Carson, who's a New Testament scholar, wrote an article on a passage in 1 Corinthians. And what he says can apply to this passage too, in 2 Corinthians. He says, this book repeatedly shows how the gospel rightly works out in the massive transformation of attitudes, morals, relationships, and cultural interactions. Just as Paul found it necessary to hammer away at the outworking of the gospel in every domain of our lives, of the lives of the Corinthians, so we must do the same today. And then he goes on to give a few examples. It does not take much to think through how the gospel must also transform, for instance, the business practices and priorities of Christians and commerce, the priorities of young men steeped in indecision, indecisive but relentless, narcissism, the lonely anguish, and often the guilty pleasures of single folk who pursue pleasure but cannot find happiness, the tired despair of those living on the margins, and much, much more. He's saying that we need to apply the gospel to our lives and it affects who we are and what we do. And this must be done not by attempting to abstract social principles from the gospel, still less by endless focus on the periphery in vain effort to sound prophetic, but precisely by preaching and teaching and living out in our churches the glorious gospel of our blessed Redeemer.

You see, here in 2 Corinthians, what we read at the beginning of the message here, Paul said, one died for all. That's the gospel that we talked about. But he continues, therefore, all died. What does he mean? He means that because of this good news, everything changes. Who we were is dead. Everything has changed about who we were. In fact, he calls us new creations. The gospel transforms us. This is how the second part of our purpose statement is fulfilled. Exalting God means that we are transformed to look like him. Exalting God or worshiping is more than just words. It's more than just songs. It's more than what just what happens on Sunday morning. My younger son, and he's a great kid. I don't want to throw him under the bus, but there's one thing about him that annoys me. He's a very lovey person. That's great. He loves to give us hugs. He loves to say, I love you. Great things.

The problem is, is that when I go and tell him to do something, he would much rather just give me a hug and say, yeah, say he loves me. I said, well, no. And I end up quoting Jesus that said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments, right? You don't tell me you love me. Show me you love me by actually listening to the things that I tell you to do. And when the gospel takes root, this is what happens.

It shapes us and it transforms us. But how? How does the gospel transform us? How can we expect the gospel to transform us? The gospel transforms us because it shows us reality. It confronts us with two realities that we often forget. When we confess that Jesus came to die for us, it confronts us with the reality of our brokenness. We just celebrated Christmas and it's become so commonplace for us.

[21 : 20] Do you realize how insane the situation was? How bad it was that Jesus, that God had to send his son to come to earth to show us the way and to die for us? Like that is the nuclear option. That is the worst situation for him to have to do to take care of the problem because the problem was so bad that we were so lost. We were so broken that we were so twisted that Jesus had to come to earth and redeem us. That reality has to go to war with our pride, with our self-sufficiency. It has to humble us.

It has to drive us to Jesus. But in the same breath, the gospel confronts us with the reality that Jesus was not only willing but considered it joy. And that confronts us with this idea. We simultaneously see not just how broken we are but also how deeply loved and accepted we are. That Christ considered it joy to take the form of his creation and to bring us back to him. Not only as servants, but he calls us friends, as brothers, sisters, loved ones. And that the father looks on us with that same love that he looks on his son. That same pride, that same overwhelming acceptance that he looks on Jesus. He looks on us. When Natasha and I were first married, we had the only fight that we've...

No, that's not true. Thought I could maybe get away with it. But when we were first married, we had our first fight as a married couple. And I don't remember what it is about. Married couples, you probably have a similar feeling. You're like, I remember these fights. No idea what they're about.

But it was probably about me being petty in some way because 90% of our fights have been about that. But I remember we were in northern Alberta and we were walking through the snow to the arena. And as we walked at some point and argued, my shoelace came undone. And when we got to the arena, she didn't say a word. We were walking in cold silence after our argument. She didn't say a word. And then she just suddenly bent down and tied up my shoelace and looked at me. She didn't use any words. She didn't say anything at all. But she said a lot. Right? She said, I love you and I'll serve you. But she also said, you're an idiot. You know? That act of service didn't come with a price tag. It didn't have any conditions. It wasn't based on me doing anything. But it changed me. It broke me. And it opened me up to my wife. Why? Because it showed me these truths. Showed me that my perception of reality was severely off. And it showed me that my wife loved me and was willing to demonstrate that love to me even if I was being petty. And that's what the gospel does. Only magnified a million times. It shows us that our perception of ourselves and the world and our perception of God is wildly distorted. It shows us that our view of reality is distorted in a multitude of different ways. But at the end, it leads us to one of two views. When we look at our world in a distorted way, either we think too much of ourselves and we believe that we're rulers of our own world and we're free to do as we want, but we have a desperate need to assert our sovereignty over every situation. Or the opposite is that we think so little of ourselves and we're enslaved and we're scared of the things around us with a desperate need to either prove ourselves or hide away. But the gospel corrects our vision.

And the gospel confronts us with two simultaneous truths. That we're so broken, so sinful, so in need that it took God himself to come down from heaven to save us. And that we are so known, so loved, so accepted that it was his joy to do that.

[25 : 39] When we're confronted with our sin, we realize our need for change. And when we're confronted with our salvation, we're freed from our need to hide or to prove ourselves. These two truths of the gospel utterly change us. But there are two big implications that I want to draw out for us. First, embracing gospel transformation reminds us that we're not done yet.

We often think that the gospel is our way into the kingdom of heaven. And it's not less than that, but it is more. One person put it this way, the gospel is not the ABCs of Christianity, it's the A to Z of Christianity. What do I mean by that? I mean that we're constantly in need of applying the gospel to our lives. What this means is that everyone in the church is growing. Everyone is growing. The people on stage are growing. The people in the sound booth are growing. Sorry, guys. The people in the, usually you say pews, chairs, that's what are growing. That everyone is growing because we're in a constant need of applying the gospel to our lives. So it means that it's, it's our prayer every day, every week. With every breath we, we take, we're, we're seeing where we don't believe the gospel and we're, we're applying it deeper into our lives. Tim Chester, who's an English pastor, a pastor in England, wrote a great book called *You Can Change*. And he said this, not many Christians think of themselves as unbelievers. After all, we usually use the term to describe people who aren't Christians at all. So most of us can happily endorse the creeds of our church, but our problems rarely arise from a lack of belief in a confessional or theoretical sense, though this may be the case. More often they arise from functional or practical disbelief.

The problems lie in the gap between what we believe in theory and what we believe in practice. So on Sunday morning, I sing of my belief in justification by faith, that's confessional faith. But Monday morning, I still feel the need to prove myself. That's functional disbelief.

Or I may believe I'll be acquitted on the day of judgment, but I still want to justify myself in an argument tomorrow. I may affirm that God is sovereign, that's confessional faith, but I still get anxious when I can't control my life. I have functional disbelief. Sanctification is the process of narrowing the gap between confessional faith and functional faith. Do you understand that? So I want you to know that most Sundays when I'm done speaking, I just want to go and crawl into a hole. Why? Is it because I didn't do a good job? Sometimes it's the case. Is it because I told an embarrassing story about an argument with my wife? No, I usually enjoy those actually.

[28 : 46] It's because every week as I prepare, as I think about what the scriptures are saying, as I talk about what God has shown me, as I prepare and then especially as I talk, I'm so aware of how much I fall short of what I'm saying.

How desperately I want to fully live out what I preach. Because I'm not done yet and I won't ever be because everyone is growing. Everyone.

So when you hear something or read something or talk to someone or you see an area of your life and you become confronted with how much you need to grow, don't hide.

Rejoice that God has showed it to you. Respond. Or sorry, repent and respond. Don't hide. Don't sulk. Don't run away from God. Don't say, well, maybe I'm not a Christian after all.

Maybe I'm not saved. Or I hope God didn't notice when I did that. I better get it fixed before I pray in case he finds out. No, don't do that. He knows.

[30 : 00] He knows what you've done. He knows what you thought. Go to him. Respond. Repent. And apply the gospel to your heart. God shows us our sin because he loves us and he desires us to transform.

We can't hide it. We have to bring it to him. And honestly, that's a very annoying process. I wish I was just done. I wish I was perfect. So does everyone around me.

And the reason is because in Colossians, Paul compares the process of growing to that of taking off clothes and putting on new clothes. Now there's a very important picture in that example.

Because if you are taking off old behavior and putting on new behavior, if you're taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes, at some point you're naked.

Right? That's why I don't like to buy clothes at Costco because there's no change room. And I can't try on the new clothes. Because when you're taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes, at some point you're naked because transformation is uncomfortable.

[31 : 15] And it will always involve shame. It always involves shame when you recognize that need to change. There's no avoiding it. But here's the thing. We can't let shame stop us.

Religious people all over the world and throughout time have done that all the time. They haven't let, they've let shame stop them from transforming. And it's perfectly acceptable in religious circles. But it cannot be acceptable in the church of Jesus. It cannot be acceptable in Squamish Baptist Church. It can be acceptable other places to just dress up your old clothes, make them look new again, to ignore them, or to make fun of someone else's clothes who are more outdated than yours. But it can't be here. We need to go through that process of taking off our old clothes and putting on new ones, of changing who we are.

It's not acceptable to let shame stop us. If we want to accomplish the mission of exalting Jesus, if you want to be part of Squamish Baptist Church, then you need to be taking off and putting on.

[32 : 23] And there'll be times when you have to accept shame. And you know what? We can. We can accept shame. We can be shamed. Because Jesus hung naked on a cross to cover our shame.

Not to ignore our shame, but to cover it, to take it. So we can embrace that shame and put on his glory.

Many have compared the Western Church to the Church of Laodicea, and Jesus wrote this to the Church of Laodicea. You say I am rich. I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.

But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to come and buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich, and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness.

Now, I'm not saying that we show up on Sunday, and before the service starts, we all get our mics and stand up here and say every shameful thing that we've done and share our deepest, darkest secrets.

[33 : 26] But I am saying that we expose those things to the gospel. I am saying that we put ourselves in places where we have close people around us who are helping us to transform, who are helping us to see where we need to grow, to see where we need to apply the gospel to our lives.

That we are expecting that there are places in our lives that are not touched by that good news yet.

That we are participating in life groups or home groups or in the journey or some place where others are calling us to account, not to shame us, but to help us to grow.

Because this is what we commit to when we commit to a church, to being involved in a place of transformation. And it's ongoing, and it's uncomfortable, and you won't finish it here.

But ultimately, it's important. It's life-changing, and it's what we're here to do, to be transformed. But it doesn't stop there. We're built on the gospel, and the gospel leads us to transformation, but it doesn't stop there.

The gospel builds the foundation for our transformation, and our transformation leads us to mission. Look at verse 18, if you haven't closed your Bibles yet. All this is from God, who reconciled us to

himself through Christ, and gave us the message of reconciliation.

[34 : 54] The ministry of reconciliation. Or it says something similar at the end of verse 19. He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. So God has brought us on his mission, so we're transformed by the gospel, but it doesn't stop there.

We're called to demonstrate the transformation, and talk about the transformation, and bring transformation to those around us. We say that in the mission statement. We say that we engage the world.

That's what we're called to. But how do we engage the world with this transformation? Let's go back to Paul. Paul says in verse 20, we are Christ's ambassadors. What does that mean? He continues, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Paul is saying that his calling, and elsewhere he makes it clear that that's our calling too, is to be God's representatives. In other words, what God has done in us, he wants to do through us.

He works through us to accomplish what he has done in us. He works through us to accomplish what he's already done in us. So he wants what happened in us to happen to other people, and he uses us to do that.

[36 : 04] He's renewed us, and now he wants to use us to renew others. He's transformed us, and now he wants to use us to transform others. He's blessed us, and he wants us to use us to bless others.

And again, there's two things that naturally flow out of this. Not only are we collectively engaging the world, but each of us are engaging the world as individuals. We're engaging those around us.

And in that way, each of us are ministers. It's really easy in the church to think that the ministers are the ones that have official titles, or are employed by the church, or come up and talk. But that's not what the scriptures say.

The scriptures say that each of us are ministers. Has God done anything in you? Yes? Then you're a minister. You might say, well, I'm not finished my journey yet.

God's still working on me. I'm not ready to be a minister because I still have so much to grow. Well, of course you do. We just talked about that. Everyone is growing. I'm growing, and you're growing.

[37 : 04] That is an excuse that we're not involved in ministry, that we're not being ministers. Because part of how God is going to shape us and grow us is through being on mission, through working through you to affect others.

The other implication is that we're called to be on everyday missions. So we're all called to be ministers, but we're also called to be ministers every day. This time that we gather here on Sunday mornings is not primarily about engaging the world.

Hopefully it sets us up to engage the world, but it's not primarily about engaging the world. How we accomplish that part of our mission is on what we do when we leave here. So it means that God makes us to be ministers.

And he makes us, not some strange version of ourselves to be ministers, you know, that we set apart one portion of our lives and we're like, we're ministers here. But he makes us, all of us.

And I don't mean, that can mean like all of us, like every person, but what I mean by all of us is every part of us to be ministers. Okay? He makes us to be ministers in every part of our lives.

[38 : 12] And that means that we're on mission every day, but it also means that we're on mission in the everyday things of life. As we go along our lives, we are called to be ministers. I'll close by kind of giving us an example of what this looks like.

How many of you pray before you eat a meal? Show of hands. Also tells me who's still awake. Good. If your prayer is like mine, it often includes some, thank you for the food and something about bless this food to our bodies.

What do we mean by that? Oftentimes, we don't know. It's just what we usually say. But think about what that means. What does it mean for God to bless the food to our bodies? What we are asking him to do is we're saying, I am ingesting carbohydrates and my body, through the miracle of how you created, is turning those carbohydrates to energy.

God, help me use that energy for the mission you've called me to. Help me use the energy that comes from each bite of turkey. Well, except for the tryptophan parts.

But God, help me to use the energy that comes from this meal to be involved in what you're doing in the world. Help me use this energy to be on mission, to be doing in others what you have done in me, to be transforming others.

[39 : 33] Because that's who we are, or at least who we want to be. A people founded on the gospel. A people changed, transformed by feasting and reflecting on what the gospel means for us. And then a people that takes that transformation into every single part of our lives. And then we live out that transformation. We talk about that transformation. And we see others transformed. So as Squamish Baptist Church enters this year of building towards the future, this is my prayer for your church. That this will be a people who is built upon the foundation of the gospel, that is growing in transformation in every area of their lives, and is engaged in the mission that God has called them to.

Let's pray. Father, I pray a blessing on this congregation, on those who are gathered here this morning, and on those who aren't, on the leadership, on Pastor Dave, on the elders, and the leadership team, on the...

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