

# Baptism Service - The Household of God

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Date: 17 July 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, a very warm welcome to you all to our service this morning. This morning is a baptism service, so there'll be a baptism of two children towards the end of our service today.

And I'd like to welcome you all, especially those of you who are visitors. I know there are quite a number of visitors with us today, and we're really pleased to have you, not just a family of those who are baptizing and relatives, but also some who have come for the festival and were in the hall, I think, for their breakfast.

We're glad to provide that and glad to see so many people making use of it. So you're very welcome with us today, and there will be tea after the service as well in the hall again, and you're welcome to join with us there.

And please take a bulletin sheet with you as well, giving some information. Well, just to pick up a number of things from the intimation sheet. As I said, there's tea in the hall after the service.

Everyone's invited to that. You'll see details of the midweek meetings on Wednesday and Thursday, the Gaelic on Thursday, at 7.30. I'll be taking the English as well on Wednesday at 7.30.

[ 1 : 0 6 ] And the services next Lord's Day are shown there as well. And I think the rest of them, pretty much apart from the thank you from God is Good Africa, sincere thanks from them for the amount that was raised in support of the children and schools and colleges in Africa.

£5,000 was raised at the lunches on Thursday, Friday last week. So that's a great thing to intimate as well. And just for the benefit of visitors, our practice is that we stand for the singings, we remain seated for the prayers, and the same goes right through to the end of the service.

So we're going to begin our worship today. We're singing in Psalm 122. That's in the Scottish Psalter. We have two versions of the Psalms. They're both within this one blue booklet, if you have one.

And this one is on page 416. A psalm that expresses joyfulness at coming to worship God.

Page 416, the tune is St. Paul. I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be.

[ 2 : 2 3 ] Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together, and to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God go thither. So it's page 416, and we sing the whole of the psalm.

We'll stand to sing. I joyed when to the house of God Jerusalem as a city of God go up, warumeth counten able to the rhetoric of God go up, by verse 1, Temür6, and Elyria.

Chapter 216, the district of God go up, where sistemaano-one, hang of the Hello, and Allah Instagram, you know, He or protector of God are safer, As the city is done, and we build together, And to that place the tribes go up, The tribes of God go wither.

To his best testimony there, To lost infants to pay, Our tones of judgment keep the thrones, All day is found their sin.

Pray that Jerusalem may have Peace and Felicity, Let them that love thee and thy peace Have still prosperity.

[ 4 : 55 ] Therefore I wish that peace may still Within thy walls remain, And ever may thy policies prosperity retain.

Love for my friends and brethren sing, Peace be in thee I'll sing, And for the house of God our Lord, I seek thy good only.

Now we're going to call upon the Lord in prayer, Let's join together in prayer. Our gracious God, our Father in heaven, We thank you as the psalmist did, For being able to gather together today to worship you, And we acknowledge that you are worthy of our worship, And worthy even of that perfect worship, That is ascribed to you in heaven.

We thank you today for the many privileges that are ours As we come to worship you, For the many privileges and promises Attached even to this gathering itself for worship.

For we know that you delight in being with your people, That you delight in hearing their praise, In hearing their prayers, In presenting yourself to them through the gospel, And through your Holy Spirit.

[ 6 : 57 ] And we thank you today, O Lord, For all that this means to your people, As they regularly gather together to worship you, As we do now. We thank you for this day that enables us to gather in this way.

We recognize, O Lord, that from the beginning, In the creation of the world, And of human life, So you gave this day to be a day set apart, To be holy to the Lord.

And we thank you that we come in the New Testament age, To recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ, As he rose from the dead on the third day after his death.

And so he sanctified this day to be the first day of the week. And to be a day in which your people are able to gather together in worship, Such as we do now.

We thank you for your word that guides our thoughts, That teaches us. Your word that you use to form and fashion and shape our lives. And we thank you, O Lord, That we have your word freely, And so many people in the world do not.

[ 7 : 59 ] We pray today, O Lord, That your word will be blessed to us, And blessed throughout the world. We thank you for those who proclaim your word, Who testify to your word, In their Christian life and in their calling.

And Lord, we thank you today that we can approach you, And seek that your word will be blessed to us here too. Open our hearts and our minds, we pray, To understand your word anew.

And give us today, O Lord, To be concerned, To place our own will beneath yours, Beneath the authority of your word. And help us to realize that it is your word that sets out for us The pattern of how our life should be, Both individually and collectively.

And not whatever ideas we ourselves may have. Help us then, Lord, to come with sanctified minds, Minds that seek for God earnestly and sincerely.

Minds that will truly be set out for you in a way that Would want to serve you and want to be a living testimony to you and to your grace. We thank you today for all those who have come to join us.

[ 9 : 09 ] Who have come to join us in relation to the baptisms. And also who come from different parts, O Lord, to the island in these days. We thank you for their presence here with us today.

We thank you for those who are joining the service online. We pray, O Lord, for those in different places of the world Who come to connect themselves to us as a congregation in this way.

We thank you for the messages of encouragement that some send from different parts of the world. That enable us, Lord, to know the thrill of your gospel being blessed.

And being blessed to people that we have never met. We give thanks, O Lord, that these provisions are made for us in your goodness. And we ask today that you would enable us to be thankful for all the blessings and all the privileges.

All the good things that you provide for us, even in the daily course of life. We pray today, O Lord, for those who don't have these or don't have them in the abundance that we have.

[ 10 : 13 ] We pray throughout the world for those who are beset with poverty, with deprivation, with persecution. In places where war and terrorism has plagued the lives of people, sometimes for the whole course of their life.

We ask, O Lord, where there is war, especially those places that war is raging in at present in different parts of the world. O Lord, we pray that you would bring peace.

And our prayer is that you would especially bring the peace of the gospel. And bring your people, O Lord, that sense of being your living witnesses in the world. Witnesses to peace.

We pray for the governments of the world, especially, Lord, those who have influence. And we pray that that influence may be guided by your truth. We pray for our own nation at this time and ask that you would bless them in government over us in Scotland and in Westminster.

And, O Lord, we ask that your blessing will be with them in such a way that would enable them to realize that it is to you they are accountable. That you have given us direction in your word, in the promises and in the commands of your word, so as to organize our human lives thereby.

[ 11 : 27 ] We ask today that you would bless those who disseminate your word, who are involved in the translation of your word, involved in the recording of your word in different languages.

We pray, O Lord, for the way in which that enables your word to go forth to people that have yet not heard the gospel in their own language. And we thank you that that is something which we ourselves have an ongoing interest.

We pray your blessing today for those who have illness to contend with. Remember, we pray those who are in hospital, those who we know ourselves, Lord, belong to us.

As a congregation, as families, we pray for them. We pray for those recovering from surgery, from various operations. We ask that you would bless them and draw near to them.

We pray today for any Lord here or elsewhere under the gospel who still do not know you savingly. We pray that you would be present today with them so as to open their heart to receive the Savior and to enable them, Lord, to reach out in faith and in trust and bring you into their own possession by your grace and by the power of your spirit.

[ 12 : 40 ] And we ask that you would bless us, Lord, in this service now as we anticipate baptisms as well. We thank you for the ordinances you have given to your church in baptism and in the Lord's Supper.

We pray that they may be blessed today to the families and the children directly involved. We pray these mercies, Lord, seeking the pardon of our many sins and your cleansing.

For we ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now, word to the children at this time. Nice to see the tweenies in for a moment.

And any other children here and watching online as well. Now, I'm sure even from a very early age you know what a mobile phone is. I don't have one on me at the moment. I don't carry it to the service just in case I've forgotten to switch it off or to put it on silent and it goes off in the middle of my sermon, which would not be very nice to happen.

But you know what mobile phones are and what they're for. And there's so much packed into a mobile phone these days. It's not just so that you can phone someone and speak to them. You've got your camera, you've got your music player and so many other things as well.

[ 13 : 48 ] Some of them that I don't even know how to work. I'm sure some of you know how to work them already. Well, mobile phone needs two things for you to use them effectively or properly.

There are two things without which your mobile phone is really of no use. First is a signal. You need a signal either through the mobile phone network or sometimes you can do it through the internet if you don't have a mobile phone network that you can connect with.

But you need a connection in some way or other to the mobile network, to the internet before you can use your phone properly. And that reminds me how important it is that we take note of the connection that God has given us with himself.

And that connection is the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the way by which we come into connection with God.

He is the contact point. He, if you like, is the network or the hot point through which we actually come into contact with God. And you know, sometimes your mobile phone signal doesn't work very well in certain areas.

[ 14 : 58 ] I was in a place recently where there was no mobile phone network and no internet. And I thought, before I went to the place I knew that this was going to be the case. And I thought, that's really going to be difficult.

How am I going to manage without being in touch by phone or through the internet for a whole five days or a week? That actually turned out alright. Because at least you could talk to people, which is something we don't do enough of when you're depending so much on mobile phones.

But if your connection goes down and you lose the contact that you need to use your mobile phone. Now, the great thing about God is the contact point that you have in Jesus never actually is lost.

It never even goes to a low sort of signal point that you can't get in touch with God. It's always a perfectly live and strong signal.

And that's why it's so important for us to use the contact point that Jesus is so that we can speak with God and hear God speaking to us through His Word.

[ 16 : 04 ] So when you use your mobile phone, remember how important it is that you have contact with God and that the contact point that Jesus is, is always live.

It never goes off. It's always there for us. The second thing about the mobile phone in order to work effectively is that you need to have it charged.

If you don't have your battery charged, it needs to be connected to the mains electric somehow or other for the mobile phone to actually get a charge to work. And you know how frustrating it is sometimes you've forgotten to put it on charge and maybe you don't have your charger with you or access to the mains electric to put your phone on charge.

And somebody is trying to get you and your phone has gone off because there's no battery charge. And then when you meet the person next time, they'll say to you, why weren't you answering your phone?

And you have to say, it was because the battery was flat. Now, our lives as human beings also need to be charged spiritually.

[ 17 : 08 ] And the battery that we have for our human life is our souls. In our souls, not only do we have contact with God, but we need to keep our souls charged up.

How do we keep our souls charged up spiritually? How do we keep ourselves spiritually strong? Well, we do that by what we're doing today, by coming to hear God's Word preached, by coming to worship Him.

And in our own lives personally, we keep our souls strong, our battery, if you like, strong, by praying to Jesus, by reading the Bible, by being with other Christians as well.

And if we have these, and if we keep up the charge of our souls, then we'll be in a good condition. Whether we're young or middle-aged or old, these are things that all of us need to do all the time.

We need to have use of the signal that God is giving us, the contact point we have in Jesus, and also keep our souls properly charged up so that we will not have our spiritual battery go flat.

[ 18 : 18 ] That's what happens when you stop reading the Bible, stop coming to church, stop interacting with other Christians. Your soul goes flat very quickly. And you need to recharge then in order to get things back the way they should be.

So remember, contact point of Jesus, and keep up the strength of your own soul, your life, to actually have a Christian life that is healthy.

We're going to now say the Lord's Prayer together, so the congregation join in in saying the Lord's Prayer. Let's pray the Lord's Prayer together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. Now we're going to turn to read God's Word, and we have two short passages today to read.

[ 19 : 25 ] Firstly, Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter 6 and verses 1 to 10. The twinnies will just go out just now.

So that's Galatians 6, verses 1 to 10. And also from 1 Timothy, chapter 3, verses 14 to 16. So Paul's letter to the Galatians, the Pulpit Bible here, it has it on page 1173, so it will be around about that point in your Bibles as well.

Galatians 6 at the beginning. Boom. Now the following me, we say, is the Daily heaven. Blue. Letcha commence...

... And they have theerekonon Hiii. burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor, for each will have to bear his own load.

One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

[ 20 : 44 ] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not grow weary of well-doing, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We can turn now to 1 Timothy, just some pages on from there. And 1 Timothy chapter 3, just at the end of the chapter from verse 14, where Paul is writing these words to Timothy, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

And we pray God will bless these readings of his word to us today. We're going to sing to his praise further, and this time our singing is in Gaelic. Whenever we come together for a baptism or commune time, we have a Gaelic singing.

And I know that this will be of interest too to visitors who may not have Gaelic, but will probably appreciate singing in Gaelic in a traditional way. So it's Psalm 25, verses 4 to 5. I read them in English first of all.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all your path help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to go. You are my Savior and my God. All day I hope in you alone.

Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown. So these verses in Gaelic are as follows. And for the Gaelic singing, we remain seated.

[ 23 : 16 ] So these two verses. So these verses.

So these verses.

So these verses.

So these verses. So these verses. So these verses. So these verses. da o Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 26 : 19 ] Thank you. Now, will you turn with me, please, to the second reading from Scripture that we read a short time ago?

That's in 1 Timothy chapter 3, reading again at verse 14. I hope to come to you soon, but I'm writing these things to you, so that 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 truth.

Yes, last time we met in the morning, you remember that we began a series of studies, short series of studies, on Scripture portraits of the church.

In other words, the way the church is described in different passages in the Bible, which can raise to us a lot about what our understanding of the church should be, how we actually approach the whole issue of what the church is, what the church is for, the function of the church, the composition of the church, all of these things.

And we saw last time this description in verse 15, the church as the church of the living God. And you recall, we noticed those who were there, remember that we emphasized, as this passage does, as the Bible does, that the church is not a building.

[ 27 : 53 ] The church is people, the people of God who worship Him. That's what the Bible means by the church. Even though sometimes we refer to this place, this building as the church, the Kenneth Street Church, it's not entirely wrong to do that, but it is, strictly speaking, the place where the church meets.

It is the place where God's people, God's worshiping people, as His church, regularly meet to worship Him. And today we're looking at this next phrase here that we find as a description of the church, the household of God.

Sometimes, as we sang in Psalm 122 in the Old Testament, the temple was referred to as God's house, the very structure of the temple, because God dwelt there, and the people went there to the temple to meet with God as they came together to worship Him as He Himself had set out for them.

But coming into the New Testament, the church, as we said, becomes much more the people rather than any building. And as you find it described here as the household of God, you also find sometimes in the New Testament the word house is used, but more often than not, it has the idea of household.

But the people of God as the church of God are His household. In other words, it's the idea of the church as an organized family. It's really the same term that's used for a family in the ordinary sense.

[ 29 : 22 ] A family in the natural sense, as we'll see going through the study today. So, the household of God is really a description of God's church, God's people, but looked at from the perspective of being a spiritual family.

And we'll see that many of the things that define family in the ordinary sense also carry through into how the Bible describes the church for us.

And it's important that we actually understand this, especially because we today are having a baptism of children. But it's important that we understand what the church is at all times, because it's one of the fundamental teachings of the Bible, what is the church?

Who are the church? What is the church for? What does God say about His church? Well, you know that the composition of family, in the normal sense, was set by God at the creation of Adam and Eve, and then their children comprised this family unit that really is basic.

to human society from that time onwards. Father, mother, children. Sometimes, of course, that family unit cannot remain intact, because sadly, death comes into family circles.

[ 30 : 47 ] Fathers die, mothers die. Sadly, sometimes both die, leave children as orphans. And also, tragically, children themselves pass away sometimes, even before their parents.

These are the facts of life, facts of life in a fallen world. But ideally, this is what you actually have, father, mother, children, though, of course, couples sometimes aren't able to have children, and that's in the providence of God, something that has also to be reckoned with in a proper fashion.

But we're looking at the ideal, as the Bible sets it out for us, of this human society of people together forming a family unit.

The father, the mother, children brought up in that setting. Now, I don't need to tell you that in the Western world, for many years now, that biblical idea of the family has been steadily dismantled.

And as Christians and as a Christian church, we need to maintain the Bible's teaching on what the family is, who comprises a family, and what the family is about.

[ 32 : 03 ] And that steady erosion or dismantling of family has actually gone side by side, and it's not an accident, with the way that the Bible has been set aside.

When you put the Bible aside, when you put the authority of God's Word aside, inevitably you're left with consequences such as these, that people then organize things, even family life, in their own terms, or in the way that mere human wisdom might dictate, or in the way that the prevailing culture of the age might dictate.

And that's where we're at as a society in our own country as well, largely. We have redefined marriage. We have redefined family. We have all sorts of ideas about gender.

And all of these are steadily taking us away from what the Bible itself, what God has set out in the Bible as His standard. And that has affected negatively people's view of the church.

Now, of course, I have to say, and you agree with me, I know that no church body is perfect. No congregation is perfect. No denomination is perfect.

[ 33 : 16 ] There is no perfect church in this world. That has to await eternity when the bride of Christ will be revealed in her perfection. Having said that, the way in which the prevailing culture has dismantled ideas of family relations, of marriage, of gender, that has made its way into people's ideas about the church as well.

And it's colored various ways in which the church is understood by many people. You even attend church and belong to various denominations. Let me just give you a definition from the Westminster Confession of Faith.

I know sometimes that seems to be rather dusty theological dry stuff, but it's a brilliant document in regard to the way definitions are said. And of such things as the church, it says this, The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion.

By that they mean the Christian faith. And of their children. And of their children. And as the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

Till that point especially, the visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion and their children. And as the house and family of God.

[ 34 : 37 ] And as such a definition, we carry that forward. There are three points I want to bring from that today in order to see what is meant by the household of God and how that has an impact upon ourselves as a congregation and our understanding of church and what church really means.

Now, first of all, as the household of God, God's church has order and structure about it. There's an order and structure.

Just the way that in a domestic family, the ideal, as said out in the Bible, the father, mother, children, they're organized in a certain way. So, as the church as well, it's both an organism and an organization or an organized group.

Being an organism means it's a living entity. The church is the people, the living people of God. But there's also the side to it that the church is organized.

When you go through the New Testament especially, although it's there in the Old Testament too, you'll find the way that Paul sets out how the church is to organize itself in the various places in which he's writing his epistles to.

[ 35 : 44 ] There are elders, there are deacons, there are members, there are families, there are husbands, there are wives, all of these different categories are mentioned comprising the church, let's say, in Ephesus or in Corinth or wherever.

And that avoids two extremes because the two extremes really are that you have some are of the view that what's really important is the church as an organism, as a living entity of people who are living disciples of Christ. And really it doesn't matter what the organization of that is, how it's organized together, that really doesn't matter. You don't need to have lists of communion members, you don't need to have lists of those who are baptized. These are things that really aren't all of that much importance.

What's really important is that the church is defined in terms of being a living organism. Well, that's one extreme. The other extreme is the other side of the issue where it's all about organized and organization rather than the organism, where you have an emphasis on how big is your congregation, how many communicants do you have, how many people come to church every Sunday, how well are your records kept, all of those sort of things. And that means that by and large, the spiritual side, the organism side is really left in abeyance. You have to have both. The church is both an organism and an organized group of people under the direction of God's Word in Scripture.



And in that organism and organized group of people the church is, our children in our system, in our Presbyterian theology, are actually members of the church by covenant. That's why we baptize our children, because they are already regarded as being members in covenant with God through their believing parents. We have respect for those who differ from that point of view, and I know that there are some who will insist that that's not what the Bible teaches. And there's been controversy, as you know, over the age. It's not really something to be in controversy about. It's something that we just accept. People have different views of, but this is how in our Presbyterian theology, in our Reformed Presbyterian theology, this is what we understand the teaching of the Bible to be. And so baptism, as we find it today, is not a mere act of dedication. I say mere act. It is an act of dedication, but it's much more than that. It's not just parents bringing their children to be dedicated to the

Lord, although that's involved. It's actually parents bringing their children in such a way as says, I want my child to belong formally to the membership of this congregation, to the baptized covenant membership of this congregation. And it's from that membership that then later on communicant membership is drawn. One of the great theologians of Scotland way back, Samuel Rutherford, and he was insistent that the children of parents, believing parents, were already members of the church, therefore were baptized. He put it this way, communicant membership are drawn from the covenant membership of the church. This is why we come in the structure we have to baptize our children. Now, that's something that should confer a sense of belonging. One of our concerns always is that our young people drift away from the church. Even from their youngest days, they may be lost to the church.

[ 39 : 36 ] And this is maybe one of the reasons that we don't convey the sense that they belong to the church already as children. And if you don't convey that sense of their belonging, it's not really surprising if they drift away. If they're not actually dealt with from the very start as those who belong to the church already as children, then it's not surprising that at some point or other they might drift away and say, well, I'm not really any better than those others who are not going to church or whatever.

We have to convey that sense of them belonging. All the children who were in here earlier as baptized are members of the church in covenant, in the covenant sense. And the prayer is they will come as they grow up to actually become themselves willingly communicant members of the church as well when they reach that age of discernment by which they're able to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That's the first point. The church has order and structure, drawing from the order and structure of the family unit and the church being a family of God, the household of God. Let's move on to the second point, which is that the church also, as the household of God, is a place of nurture and discipline. It's the same as in a family, in a domestic family. Ideally, you have nurture of the children, discipline of the children, knowing how to behave. That's what Paul is saying here to Timothy. If I delay, you may know, I'm writing this to you, that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God. You bring up children in a household, one of the things you want to pass on to them is how they behave, how they behave in the family, how they behave outside the family, how they carry the name of the family, the reputation of the family. All of that comes into rearing and nurturing children, and it's the same with the church as well.

They're all, of all ages, it's not just our children, our young people, we are all in that way needful of being nurtured and disciplined under the truth of God. And this is not a negative thing, this is a very positive thing. It's not something we should regard with gritted teeth, as if it's something really that's so harsh and so hard that really it's not something that we should find acceptable at all. Where the family is the place of education, the place of shaping lives, the place of preparing lives, so too in the church. And let me just pick up that point and say that in accordance again with the Bible, the main place of teaching and shaping lives for our children is not in school.

It's in the home. It's under the tutelage of their parentage, of their parents. It's under the teaching and the guidance and the advice and the shaping of the teaching that they receive in the home. That's why the home is such a precious, precious unit, and such an influential unit in the way that we bring up our children. But as a church, as the household of God, all ages are nurtured in the church, are nurtured by what God has given to the church to enjoy their shape. Our lives are shaped by the Word of God, shaped by the Word preached, shaped by the Word shared, shaped by fellowship and interaction with fellow Christians. All of these things contribute to the shaping of our lives. That's the standard that Paul has how you ought to behave in the household of God. God has a standard. God has an expectation.

God has a reputation Himself. And let's face it, it's not just our reputation as a church that we actually carry into the world in which we live our lives as Christians. It's God's reputation as well.

[ 43 : 35 ] That was one of the concerns for Moses. When God had threatened to destroy the people after the incident of them making the idol of the golden calf, remember God, that Moses, he pleaded with God to forgive, to take them as His people. And one of the things he said was, if you destroy us, then what will the Egyptians say? What will the enemies of God's people say?

They will say something bad about you, Lord. They will say you weren't able to carry these people, that you weren't able to do what you promised for them. See, the reputation of God is always connected to our lives and to our manner of life and to our way of life and how we carry forth those things that God has given us and our privileges in this world.

It really does matter what the world thinks of us in that sense, though in other senses, it may not matter very much. And you know this word discipline, I mentioned nurture and discipline.

Sometimes we think of the word discipline as entirely negative, as if it's just to do with what happens when somebody does something wrong and needs to be corrected. Of course, that's something that also forms part of the church's responsibility that has to be done lovingly and tactfully and with a view to restoration. But discipline is much more than just that side of things, dealing with correction when somebody's gone wrong. Discipline also involves giving the right guidance, giving the right counsel, giving the right advice, giving the right steerage to people from the youngest days through to adulthood. And that's what we find in God's provision in the gospel that He's given to His church. It is the household of God. It's where there's order and structure according to God's direction and God's specification. And it's also a place of nurture and discipline. And finally, I need to be quick with this one. It's a place of unity and love. The household of God is a place of unity. It cries out to us about unity and love. When you go to Ephesians chapter 4, that speaks about the unity of

God's people. It's always combined there with love all the way through that passage, Ephesians 4, chapter 4, verses 11 to 16. Now, that's the same again in the domestic setting, in the domestic family.

[ 46 : 05 ] The ideal is harmony and love and unity. But of course, being in the world we're in, being sinners ourselves, that's also subject to our own sinful practice, sadly. And it's a tragedy. When you do have family breakdown, for whatever reason, it happens. But whatever reason is behind it, it's always something that's got consequences. It's tragedy and there are implications. It's the reality of the world in which we live without making excuses for ourselves. But I want to just focus on one thing, and that is the emphasis today on individualism or the individual. The emphasis on choice, on personal choice, on personal independence, on personal freedom just to do what you want to do.

And you know yourselves that that's very much how the world out there thinks. That's very much, sadly, how the majority of our politicians think. It always has to be about personal choice, personal individual freedom of choice, independence. Well, when you come into the church as the household of God, and you think what the Bible says about the household of God, the church as the household of God is not me-centered. It's not me-centered or I-centered. It is God-centered. It is Christ-centered.

It's not about me. And it's not a situation of me versus us. I've referred many times to the way that Paul writing in his epistles very significantly and frequently uses the plural. It's not just focusing on individual sanctification, individual growth and grace, individual relationship with God.

Of course, there is all of that. But when God brings life into your experience, eternal life, spiritual life, He doesn't say, now you're on your own, just develop that the best way you can.

He places you in a fellowship of God's people. He brings you into the body of the church. He brings you into the household of God, a place that's not me versus us or me-centered.

[ 48 : 41 ] In Acts chapter 2, you have a very good example of this ideal, as you find after the coming of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost, you find near the end of that chapter 2 of Acts, when they were actually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers, awe came upon all, and all who believed were together and had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and so on, proceeding to give out to those who had need. There is sharing in the life that God had given to His people and sharing out for the benefit of others. And that sharing in and sharing out is really an element, a prominent element, of the household of God. That's what we exist for. That's how God has put us together. The world out there will say to you, be true to yourself.

Never mind what the minister says. Never mind what the Bible says. Never mind what people might say, this is actually what God is specifying. You be true to yourself, the world is saying.

You be the real me. That's where you find the real me, just following your own inclination, your own choices, your own will. What does the Bible say? The Bible says, be true to God, not be true to yourself. Be true to your God, because the real me is not found in my following of my own inclinations. The real me, my proper identity, is found in Christ. As a Christian, that's what defines me. That's where my identity is. And if my identity is in Christ, I'm not free to do what I myself would want to do, although I hope what I would want to do would be in line with what Christ wants me to do. But His will and His choice and His Word is what controls my life as part of the household of God. And that's what we do in the likes of our improvement of baptism, as the old theologians used to put it. We endeavor to live a life of faith in righteousness and holiness, unto which therein we have given up our lives to Christ. That's what's signified in baptism for us as adults. That's the implication. We have given up our lives to Christ. He's our master. He's our loving

Lord. He's our teacher. He's the one who dictates lovingly how we must live too. There's a lot more we could say on the household of faith, the household of God as a description of God's church.

But we'll leave it there for the moment and come to the remainder now of the service. And we're going to sing next in praying that God will bless these thoughts on His Word.

[ 52 : 01 ] We're going to sing from Psalm 127. Psalm 127, that's on page 171. Singing to a tune, Evan.

Unless the Lord builds up the house, its builders toil in vain. Unless He keeps the city safe, they vainly watch maintain. In vain you rise before the dawn and late hours vainly keep.

But you may toil for food to eat, He gives His loved ones sleep. And while we sing these verses, the mothers and those who are accompanying them will come in and take their place in the service.

Unless the Lord builds up the house, let's stand to sing. If the Lord build up the house, its builders toil in vain.

Unless He keeps the city safe, May we watch them sing.

[ 53 : 21 ] And when you rise before the dawn, And let our daily keep, That you may toil for food to eat, He gives its love one seed.

God's not a precious heritage, A blessing from the Lord, The children that are born to us Are to be his reward.

God, God, who sing now all years, Come, our children of one's year, The man who's with us, Full of them, Is blessed by God in truth.

God, who sing now all years, To shame, That will not be there for you, When we want to end, God is the force, Who is the man in the heat.

Please be seated now. Well, we've come to the point now, Where we come to the baptism of those children, And it's a very pleasant, Though very solemn occasion as well, Given that we saw that they are being formally admitted by baptism, Into covenant membership of God's church.

[ 56 : 02 ] And the first thing that we will do is put certain questions to the fathers to be answered. So can I ask you please to stand just now, Alistair and Alan. I'll just ask the question once and ask you both for our response.

Do you acknowledge God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, as the only true God, and your God?

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and mankind? Do you now promise to bring up your child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

Thank you. We're going to now pray. So just please remain seated during prayer. And also as we go forward to the baptism, I'll call the parents up to where I'm standing for each of the baptisms.

First of all, we're going to engage in prayer. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we thank you for this ordinance of baptism that you have given to your church, so that it might represent for us the washing away of our sins and our union with Christ.

[ 57 : 14 ] We acknowledge, O Lord, that it does not itself confer salvation, and yet it is a visible representation to us of matters that are important to us spiritually.

We pray at this time, O Lord, that you would grant us a thankful heart as we recollect the way in which you have given this ordinance to your church for all time.

We thank you for all that is in it represented. We pray that you will bless the element used of water, and the Lord remains ordinary water. We pray that you would bless it so it may carry spiritual significance to the children and to the parents alike.

We pray for the parents, Lord, at this time and for the children, that you would truly bless them and all who belong to them as they come to this important juncture in their experience.

And so go before us, Lord, we pray now. Make this time a time of real spiritual blessing to us, and all for Jesus' sake. Amen. I ask you and Helena to come up first of all, please.

[ 58 : 19 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

May God bless you and keep you. May He make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

[ 59 : 59 ] Let's join together once again in prayer. Amen. O Lord, our gracious God, we pray that what we have now engaged in will be blessed in the days to come.

We ask that these children, as they grow up, that they will come, Lord, by Your grace and by Your sparing mercies, to grow in the knowledge and the grace of Christ. We commit them to You and we pray for ourselves as a fellowship of Your people, that we may indeed be a proper family to them, to support the parents and to support the children alike.

Help us, Lord, to be available to them, to give them every encouragement and counsel and advice whenever required. We pray that You would direct them in Your ways and cause them, Lord, to continue in Your paths as they now bring their children to be baptized.

And as the children themselves receive that sign of the covenant, Lord, may it prove to be for them every time they think of it in days to come as a reminder that they have given up their names unto Christ and that they are obliged to live for Him and to His glory.

Bless us, then, we pray, throughout this day. Be with us this evening. We anticipate coming once again to worship You. And all of these things we ask, confessing our sins, seeking cleansing and pardon for Jesus' sake.

[ 61 : 18 ] Amen. Now we're going to conclude again with praise to God. Praise in English. Don't worry about the noise. It's fine.

Children's noises are what a congregation should expect. And there's something wrong if children's noises are not actually heard in a congregation.

So it's something to rejoice in. So we're saying Psalm 78, verses 1 to 6. You'll find that on page 101 of the Psalm books. Oh, my people, hear my teaching.

Parables I will unfold. Give attention as I utter. Dark and hidden things of old. Things that we have heard and known by our fathers. They were shown. These are verses that impressed upon the people of Israel the need to pass on the teaching they received from God to their children and to their grandchildren down through the generations.

And so we'll sing them as now as we come to conclude our service. And we'll stand. Please remain standing for the benediction afterwards. All my people, hear my teaching. All my people, hear my teaching.

[ 62 : 39 ] Parables I will unfold. Parable and incense in sequently now, Parable and incense in sequently desu in pond.

Things that we have heard and known by our fathers.

They were shown We will tell them to our children Generations yet to run We will show the Lord's great power And the wonders he has done Lost for Israel he made Statues bound to be, O maid In the order of forefathers To their families to tell

So the coming generation Not yet born would know them well And their children in their turn God's commands and laws to them I'll use the door to my left here Just to greet folks on the way out just now Let's now go for the benediction Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and evermore Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen Amen