Taking Jesus at His Word

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Preacher: John Lowrie

[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Turn with me, please, to the Gospel of John, and we're reading from chapter 4. We'll finish chapter 4 this morning. Just to reiterate the news about John passing away, our prayers are very much with the family at this time over these coming days and weeks, as we prepare to give thanks to God for the life of a life well lived in the service of God, not only as a loving father and a husband, but as a faithful servant to the Lord in this church.

He will be sadly missed, and so we uphold the family in prayer at this time as well. Can we remind you, I think this Saturday at 11 o'clock down at the plaza, we are joining, if you want, with Holy Trinity to sing carols in the community. I'm looking forward to that. It's great when churches work together in that way. We preach the same message, if you can make it, 11 o'clock, Saturday morning at the plaza, singing carols with Holy Trinity, and it's on till about half past 12. Probably one of these things, come when you can, leave when you must. So if you only stay half an hour, that's fine as well. So I commend that to you. That would be great. Let me see. This is to do with Thomas. You're coming into membership later. Good man. Good, good, good. Look forward to that.
John's gospel. We are continuing our series of studies in this book. It's not an incarnational type address this morning that will come probably in a couple of weeks' time in our carol service, but we are considering Jesus and who He is and something very important this morning in our trust of Jesus. So let's read together from John chapter 4, and we'll read from verse 43 through to the end. Jesus has spent some time amongst the Samaritans in the Samaritan village. One woman has been transformed by meeting Jesus, and so has the villagers. And we'll read from verse 42.
They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. After the two days, he left for Galilee. Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.
[2:26] When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay ill at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son who was close to death. Unless you people see signs and wonders, Jesus told him, you will never believe. The royal official said, Sir, come down before my child dies.

Go, Jesus replied. Your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that the boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him. Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, Your son will live. So he believed. This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea. We'll end our reading there and we'll consider this in a moment. Let's come before God in prayer. Let's ask for his help.
Our loving Heavenly Father, with your word open before us, we pray that you would speak to us now. Lord, it's been our joy to sing to you this morning, to sing to your son. Our hearts have been transformed.
We are not the people we were. We have been saved. We've been born again. We've been regenerated by your Holy Spirit. We have a hope in this life and in the life to come. We praise and thank you for this.
But Lord, we come to your word now. Lord, we live on earth. We live in this body with all its constraints and with all its frustrations and with all the difficulties that we face in life.
[4:33] We pray, Lord, that we might take comfort and a challenge from your word this morning. So, Father, wherever we are in our walk with you and our faith in you, whether it's large or small, we

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pray, Father, that the Holy Spirit himself would take your word and apply it to our hearts.

So, Father, we commend ourself to you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I became a Christian just before I turned 20 and I remember how that felt. I remember just the joy.
I'd been seeking God for about a year and a half and until God realized me that it wasn't up to me to analyze God and to put God in the dock and decide whether I would follow him or not. It took me a while to realize I needed to go in the dock and needed to realize that I was a condemned sinner and I needed Jesus to be my savior. I needed him. It wasn't something you just choose. I needed him to be my savior, not just the savior of the world. And I can remember the excitement of reading God's word and thinking, I only knew about David and Goliath. I knew about Jesus walking on the water, raising Lazarus, various things. I knew nothing of the Old Testament. So, I looked forward to reading from Genesis and every morning waking up and suddenly knowing that this was my God, that this was who he was. But it didn't take me long before I got frustrated. Here's an image that always surprised me when I read of the Exodus and God's people coming out and God doing miracles, delivered them from Egypt and gave them food and water and so forth and how they constantly said, moaning, whinging, doesn't God, he brought us here to die. And I used to go, what's the matter with you people? Can you not see? It just blew me away, just this response. And then I realized over, I've been about 40 years a Christian, that that was not only their pattern, but that would become the pattern for my own life as a Christian.
It is very difficult to walk by faith. And if you know your own heart, that we struggle to walk by faith all the time. We want to see more evidence of God. And here's another way saying, we doubt God in the dark, when he's already shown us things in the light, maybe even after many, many answers to prayers, even in specific things, when the same situation appears again, we still begin to doubt and we become fearful and we don't seem to grow in our faith as much as we should. And that is the topic of this passage that we read. It's walking by faith, it's trusting God, but trusting God especially in his word. That is really what this is about. And it's knowing God's word and clinging to God's word and moving out on God's word. And that's what we're looking at. We're continuing our series of studies in the gospel of John. And over the past few weeks, we have considered John, Jesus, who he is. John's whole point in this was to get us to believe who Jesus is. He's the Messiah. He is the Son of God.
And by believing in him, we will have life, eternal life in his name. It's his desire that we know Jesus and we believe and we trust in Jesus. It is God's desire. John McIntyre knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Many of you do as well, perhaps not all of you. We've heard powerful statements up to this point. He was with God in the beginning. Through him, all things were made without him. Nothing was made that has been made. He is the great creator God. That is the Son. We heard from other people who met Jesus, the disciples, these villagers. He is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God.
[8:43] He is the King of Israel. He is the Savior of the world. You were building up a picture more and more in chapter 4, all the way up to chapter 4 of who Jesus is. Then, when he turned water into wine, that first sign that John gave us in Cana, we see a taste of what heaven is like. Pictured in quality wine, in good wine, rejoicing. Heaven is that place. And then he says, destroy this temple and I will raise it again. Jesus is now the temple, the place where man and God meet. He is the meeting point. It's where we worship. It's where we are forgiven in Jesus. Then we've heard about Jesus' teaching. How can we enter heaven? We need to be born again. We need to be born from above. And then we, not last time, but two times ago, we reminded ourselves who Jesus is. He is one above all. He is above all because he is from above. He is the Son of God who came to this earth as we remember him at Christmas. He was sent.

He comes. He sees and speaks what the Father has told him. He is filled with the Spirit. He is the Son of God. He is supreme. Everything has been placed in his hands. And then last time, over the past few weeks, we have seen him in enemy territory in many ways, in foreign territory. He moves from his own people to the Samaritans, this mongrel bunch who believe some things about the Old Testament but not others.
And he comes to these outcast people, a woman, and the disciples are saying, why is he speaking to her? Jesus crosses cultures, crosses into another world in that sense. And this woman is saved, you could say, along with the people in the village as well. And then last time, we reminded ourselves the implications of that. The harvest is now open. Scottish people can now be saved. Now that Jesus has come and he has died and he has risen again, every tribe and tongue and

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nation, the harvest is now plentiful. The barn doors have now been swung open. That is what Jesus means here. People can now be saved.
And brought into the kingdom of God. It involves reaping. It involves sowing. We sometimes reap what others have sown. Like people, faithful people like John McIntyre, who have sown over many years.
Others reap that. We might not always reap, but we all have to sow. And sowing is hard work. Bringing in the sheaves. It is hard work. We sow with tears at times. It is hard work. And others might benefit from our hard labor or we might benefit as well. So, that was how the last passage ended with that great declaration, this man really is the savior of the world. And you remember John's reason for writing. It takes great delight in writing that. These people now believe. They believe. This man believes. This woman believes. He just loves writing that down. They have come to realize who Jesus is.
[12:03] That's his purpose. And in this second sign that we read this morning, it ends the same way. Verse 31. No, 31. Verse 53. So, he, the royal official, and his whole household believed. John is delighted to record this. It's how it finished. But in this passage, John does something new. He's always revealing something a wee bit more. And what he's revealing in this is there are two types of faith. There is a faith that people come to believe in Jesus through signs and wonders. And there is another faith that is based only on what Jesus says. It doesn't need signs and wonders. So, that's what we want to look at this morning and the moments that remain. So, first of all then, faith in Jesus signs and wonders. You remember John, whenever he's presenting a miracle, he calls a sign. This is a sign that points to Jesus. The first sign he gave us in chapter 2, verse 11. What Jesus did here at Canaan and Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory. And then we're told, and his disciples believed in him. The disciples knew things about Jesus. They made statements. They were still growing in their faith. But when they saw water being changed into wine, they believed in him because of what Jesus has done. Now, in this second sign, verse 54, this is the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee. He gives us a second sign. And the two signs. And the two signs are different. They are not the same. The first sign was Jesus did something, and his disciples believed in him. It was a faith in Jesus based on miracles.

We now believe, wow, look at what Jesus has done. I believe in him. It's also the same with the Galileans to whom he has now come. And it's based on what they have seen. We are told here in verse 40 three. He leaves for Galilee, and he makes a statement. Jesus has pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. We know he would ultimately be rejected by his own people. But however, in this instance, he's actually welcomed. Verse 45, when he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. Why?
They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem. Their faith was based on what he had done in Jerusalem. John doesn't mention what he had done there. He doesn't go into detail. One of the commentators says, perhaps the impact of Jesus doing something in the sophisticated city of Jerusalem really impressed them. Wow, Jesus is one of our own. He's a native of Galilee. He's coming to Jerusalem. He's doing these things. Wow, he is impressive. We believe in him. It's a bit more impressive, I think, if you go to London and do some great deed in London than if you do the same thing in Preston Pans. It doesn't have quite the same effect. But you go to London, you do something. Wow, whoa. This is what Jesus said. They know. Their faith is based on what Jesus has done. Both the disciples and the Galileans, they believe in Jesus because of what they see. They see the signs and the wonders and they come to that conclusion.
Now, you and I are a bit like this. I know my own self. I remember as a young Christian saying, how can these people in the Old Testament not trust you? Wow, Lord, I trust you. And then as you go through your Christian life and there are things come and impinge upon you, something that you need an answer to, something that you need help in. And, oh, Lord, don't you see I need the answer to prayer just now. The bus is coming and I can't afford to miss the bus. I have an interview or whatever.
And you pray or you're maybe praying for loved ones and you've prayed for them for many years. And your faith takes a wee bit of a shake because there's no evidences of maybe God doing things in your life. You begin to doubt. And it's amazing that when God does show us things in the light, we begin to doubt again in the dark. Even when we say we won't and our faith is strong, sometimes it takes a shake. We never really know how strong our faith is until it's tested, until the Lord turns up

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the speed on the treadmill of life and you suddenly realize that our faith isn't quite catching up with the situation that we find ourself in. It's a very real thing. And it may be that you think you stand this morning, but who knows what will happen this week and whether your faith is up to what's happening. It happens to us very, very often. And it's the only way that that muscle of faith can grow is when it's put through certain difficulties and certain trials. And we feel that we constantly need consistent signs. Lord, I do remember the time when you answered that prayer. But this is different now. This is, I need it again, Lord. It was great. I rejoiced when the relief was amazing. But a few years have passed. I'm back in a similar situation. I need you to work. And my faith has taken a knock.
[17:38] And we struggle. And that is one sign of faith that yet it is based on signs. But there's a better faith. And that's what we turn to now in this second sign. Secondly, faith in Jesus' Word.

John presents this second sign to us now, verse 54. It's the story of the healing of an official son. And what this story points to, it points to the nature of true faith, of genuine faith. Not a faith that's based on, Lord, give me evidence I might believe in it, even though it's miraculous evidence.
It's the nature of faith that's based solely on the Word of God, when there's no signs to accompany it, but based purely on the Word of God. And Jesus implies to us it's a better faith.
That's what he says in verse 48. Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe. In other words, they were always wanting something tangible. And Jesus says, you will never really believe until you see signs and wonders. That was very much the attitude of the disciples and of the Galileans. Jesus is not really, in many ways, giving this Roman official or this royal official a hard time. He's addressing it to you people. But it was a common problem that people wanted Jesus to do miracles. We want to believe in you, but do something to prove it. It's a very real thing.
The disciples' faith was like that. So were the Galileans. They believed because of what Jesus had done in Jerusalem. The disciples believed because of what he had done in Cana. And this second sign takes place in the same place. Cana. He's back in Cana, where he did the first sign. But this sign is different because it's not based on what Jesus is going to do, but on what Jesus said. And the need on this second sign is far greater. This isn't just wine at a wedding. This is the death, possible death, of a son, of a son to this family. And it's out of this personal anguish. The need here is very serious.
[20:01] It's far bigger than just a wedding who, at worst, the groom would have been embarrassed in his family. This is far more serious. And yet, the sign is far more impressive because Jesus doesn't do anything there and then visible to this man. But he simply speaks his word. So this man comes, travels from Capernaum about 20 miles away to Cana. And he comes with this great need. We are told in verse 47, he begged him. And the actual Greek here means he continued to beg. It's in the continuous sense.

He kept begging, please, please, please, come and heal my son. He doesn't argue with Jesus in his statement. Well, I want to see a sign. I need to see a sign. He simply comes with his need, showing the importance of prayer. And he travels 20 miles on his horse, gets there, and he begs, begs, begs, Lord, will you not help me? But prayer must be accompanied by faith. We need to believe.
And Jesus replies, unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe.
Showing the nature of true faith, that there is a better faith that doesn't rely on signs and wonders, but relies on the Word of God. And yet, this is how many of us begin our Christian life.
God is very gracious to accommodate our weak faith. I remember as a young Christian, I received so many answers to prayer in the early days. I just felt if I prayed, things would happen. And God was gracious, like a baby, where you have to do everything for the baby. God seems to do everything for you in those early days. Your faith is a tiny wee thing. You hardly know anything about Jesus. You hardly know any verses to recall. But God just seems to spoon feed you. We had young Theo with us last night, and just mum feeding him and so forth. And it was great. You have to do everything for a baby.
You can do nothing, absolutely nothing for itself. But at some point, you want this baby to stand and to grow and to walk and to do things. And it's the same for us as Christians. But in the early days, you get so many answers to prayer, so many signs to just encourage you that God is with you, He's feeding you, and so forth. It's how we begin our Christian life. Lord, if you will answer my prayer, give me this thing, then I will believe in you. Because our faith is small, and we need these things. It might be, Lord, give me a life partner, this job opportunity, help me with this difficult situation, help me with this person. And the Lord, in His grace, does this. But it's a faith that's based on signs and

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wonders. There is a better faith, a faith that though we do not see these things, we take Jesus at His word. Because it's a better faith, because if God gave us answers to all our prayers, then what's happening is God is serving us.
[23:10] We are God. And instead of us trusting Him and giving Him the glory in the midst of these things, we are robbing Him of His glory, and we are wanting this for ourselves.

It's the mistaken notion that we are in a position to dictate to God what we want. Let me quote you from Bruce Milne's commentary. Miraculous signs and miraculous answers to prayer may have a certain value as a starting point, making us aware of God's reality. But they remain weak unless they lead to a concern for the Christ to whom they point and whose glory they signify. In other words, the better faith is one that trusts purely in Jesus' words. And that is what happens here. God is not committed to answering our prayers just because we want Him in a string, but only when we take Him at His word. So, Jesus responds to this man out of great grace, verse 50, go, your son will live. Simple as that. Very few words, go. And then you have this amazing response.
This is the key verse in the whole chapter. The man took Jesus at His word and departed. He just heard, go, your son will be made well. He doesn't argue, but what proof is there? Can you send the son to move back one hour? Can you do this? How do I know? He simply heard this. It's Roman official. He took God at His word and departed. He gives him no sign. It's quite a strong test that Jesus gives to this man. He just the bare word, nothing else, no other signs, no turning water into wine. His faith is based purely on what Jesus says. That is true faith that acts on the word of God and on the word of God alone. It trusts the character of God. It trusts the promises of God. And then as a result, you know, while he's traveling back, he arrives and he's told the good news. Questions are asked, why did it take him so long, 20 miles? Because he's told it was yesterday. Why did they wait a day?
Some folks say, well, he just believed and didn't see any rush to go lightly, that maybe his horse was tired. He's traveled 20 miles, whatever. He never came back to the next day to go problems. We simply do not know. But the timing of this is the thing. It was when Jesus now realizes, wow, it was when Jesus, one o'clock, that's when he said those words. And as a result of this, verse 53, he and his whole household believed. Here is a different faith, a faith that's based purely on the word of God.
[26:03] It's a miracle that Jesus in many ways can perform every day. Like this young boy, he never met Jesus. Jesus healed him at a distance. We don't need Jesus to come to your house, your workplace, your family to be able to do mighty things. He operates at a distance. His word is enough. His word from heaven.

This word is enough for us to trust in. And yet, sometimes our faith is based on continual evidence. Maybe the Lord would say to you and say to me, John, unless you see signs and wonders, will you ever really believe? Will you ever take me at your word? This sign points to the glory of God.
Are we impressed with the glory of God? You remember the centurion. Some people say this is the same incident. It's not. It's two different incidents. But remember the centurion. The centurion says to the Lord, Lord, I don't deserve you to come under my roof. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. Say the word. Speak the words. I myself am a man under authority. I tell soldiers, do this and they do it. And to another, he does that. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and says to those falling, truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith that simply takes Jesus at his words and claims this. How do we do this? How do we take Jesus at his words? I've been a pastor for many years. I know my own heart. I know the hearts of God's people as well. Often when they go through a hard time, they go through a hard time, that all basically you ever do when you come to see folk, it's not necessarily there, there, we are here for you, I love you, and so forth. You point them to Jesus' word. The word is important. What does God say in his word in this situation?
This is something to trust in, to have faith in. And we don't often do this. Whenever we begin to doubt, what are we doing? Sometimes we talk about trusting God. I know I just need to trust the Lord.
That is too vague. It's far too vague. What do you mean trust the Lord? You need to hang your hat on a verse. When you tell me you're trusting the Lord, give me chapter and verse that you are trusting in. What part of God's word are you trusting in? Don't rely on vague things. If you just say, well, I know I have to trust the Lord, but I don't really know what I'm trusting in.

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[28:39] God has given us many great and precious promises. Are you trusting in the character of God, for instance? If God's not working in a way that you expect, are you doubting his wisdom? Are you doubting his love and his compassion, his grace and his mercy in this situation? Lord, I'm finding it hard to trust you because members of my family haven't come to know Jesus as my Savior, and I'm finding that hard to believe that you're a loving God. You're not trusting in God's word where it says he is loving, he is gracious, he is sovereign, he is kind. He's too wise to make mistakes, good to be unkind.

We need to recall God's word, almost like a prescription. Recall what we know of God's word, and we know much of God's word. Do we trust his word? That is what we're talking about here. It's not a vague trusting Jesus. Trusting the word of God, knowing the word of God, recalling the word of God. Are we able to do this? So we need to get to know God's word. Meditate on it. Recall it. I don't know how many times I'm on quiet time, and you know this yourself, just the right verse at the right time.
I was worried about today. I read in my Bible. This was the verse that came, and that is the word that takes you into the day. Maybe nothing's changed. It's still raining, or you're still missing the bus, folk, or still bending your ear. Life is hard. The tablet's only working. But that one verse, that truth, takes you into the week. It makes a difference. Do you love the word of God, the promises of God? Does that not thrill you? When you go into this week, you have the 66 books of the Bible, where God has spoken to you. These are for you. And Jesus says, this is a better faith. John, stop relying on signs and wonders. Trust me in my word. Recall what I've said to you, John. Recall the verses that worked a long time ago when I worked through them. They can still work today. What I showed you in the light. Don't doubt now in the darkness. This man took Jesus at his word and departed. We have a week coming ahead of us. You will depart this building. You will depart from your quiet time. Do you take Jesus at his word and then depart, or do you still depart from the presence of God, asking for more signs and wonders? Trust in the word of God, regardless of the signs. Regardless of things don't work out quite the way you would want. Still trust. Move. Live it out by faith. We are to live by faith. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 7. Not by sight. That is not easy to do. If you're sitting there thinking, I don't get this. It's easy. I think you're telling porkies. It is not easy to walk by faith, especially when it's tested, especially when it's tried. And all we can do is not ask for signs and wonders, but ask for his word. Lord, your word. Say the word. It will be enough. Lord, speak to me from your word. I soak in your word. Read God's word every day. That might be just the thing that you need to hear that day. Treasure God's word. Then you can go in faith on that word, not just this vague notion. Does that make sense? I found this very challenging, but very comforting. He took Jesus at his word and went his way. Then the signs and wonders came. Don't have it the other way around.
[32:19] It's a better faith to trust in the word of Jesus. We're going to stand. We're going to sing after hearing God's word. From heaven you came, helpless babe. Entered my world, your glory veiled. It's an incarnational type song. Let's stand and we'll sing together.

from heaven you came, helpless babe. Entered your world, your glory, veiled. Not to be served, not to serve, and give your life that we might live. This is our God, the servant king. He calls us now to follow him, to give our life as a daily offering of worship to the servant king.
there in the garden of tears. My heavy lord he chose to bear. His heart with sorrow was torn. And not my will, but yours he said, this is our God, this is our God, the servant king. He calls us now to follow him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king.
come see his hands and his feet. The scars that speak of sacrifice. And that close stars into space. To crawl them surrendered. He is our God, the servant king.
He calls us now to follow him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king. So let us learn and to serve. And in our lives have thrown him.
[35:17] each other's needs to serve. And in our lives have thrown him, each other's needs to prefer. For it is Christ, we serve him. This is our God, the servant king. He calls us now to follow him, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king.

And we are looking at the servant king. And we are looking at the servant king. And we are looking at the invitation to the wedding banquet tonight.
Where Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven as like a banquet that a king laid on for his son and says, come. Come, everyone to this wedding banquet. So that's the invitation we'll be looking at the invitation. So that's the invitation we'll be looking at this evening. It's a great picture of heaven and

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glory.
And that's the invitation for you to consider that invitation this evening. Let's close this part in prayer. Our loving Heavenly Father, we see in your word that you are the God who speaks. And when you speak, things happen.
You spoke the world into existence. And the same word that brings things into existence is the same word that sustains the whole of creation. Father, you spoke new life into us. You said to us, let there be life. Let there be light. And there was light. And we were changed.
[37:10] We pray, Lord, that we would see that word as the word that sustains us. So help us to be people of the book, to know the book, to hear your word, and to live by it.

Not relying on signs and wonders, great as they are. Help us, Father, to trust you, to take your word, and to always move in faith. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated.
In a moment or two, we'll gather round the Lord's table. Oh, thank you very much. I'm going to ask Thomas. Thomas, grab a seat at the front here. We have something very pleasant to do where we invite Thomas into membership. Most of you know Thomas.
He's been with us. How long have you been with us now? April of this year. April. Grab a seat. Grab a seat. You're okay just now. So we're about to welcome Thomas into membership. Most of you know Thomas.
And basically, I often wonder, often this feels quite formal. He will say a few I do's. Members of the church will say I do. And I think, really, quite tedious. Do you?
[38:30] Yeah, I will and you will. And you think, does it really mean anything? And we can say it so easily. But it's as important when somebody joins the church that they commit themselves to God. They make a profession of faith, and he will do that just now. But he will also commit to serve Christ in this place. And he will also commit to serve you. And you will commit to serve him as an equal brother in the Lord. And it's good to not only do it in this instance, but perhaps to remind yourself that we are to do it with each other. And if this is an area that you've been laxing, and it's mostly focusing on yourself, and you've not really been serving another brother or sister who's poorly, a phone call, a text, or an inquiry about how they're doing, then this is a wake-up call in many ways of what it means to be a member. Does that make sense? So we're going to go through this. Though it might appear rote-like and just mechanical, I think it's important. And we make these things in the presence of God. Let's, Thomas, it says, the church is made up of those who have come into a real and living relationship with God. They have recognized their need of forgiveness, and have come to trust in the life and death of Jesus as God's only solution for sin and righteousness. A couple of questions, Thomas. If you agree with these, just say, I do. Thomas, do you confess your faith in God as your Creator and Father, in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and in the Holy Spirit as your Teacher and Sanctifier? Here is a series of questions about your commitment now to serve Christ in this local church. Romans 12, just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many, four in one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. Here are three questions, Thomas. Thomas, do you believe that as a follower of Christ you are called to join together with other believers in the local church? Do you now commit yourself to love and to work, to share and to serve within this church, within our community, and within the wider world? Do you believe that here you may learn and grow, and do you accept the responsibility of being a member of this church? Very good. That's a big smile. That was very good. He's been bending my ear since

April. I want to say, I want to serve the Lord in this church. He's probably the most driven out of all the members. It just gives me work trying to find work for him to do, but that's great, and we need to harness that up, that's for sure. Here is a commitment now, not only to serve the Lord, but to serve your brothers and sisters. Jesus said, a new commandment I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. A final question, Thomas. Do you promise to love, encourage, strengthen, guide, pray for, and care for each other as an equal partner in the body of Christ?

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