

1 Timothy 3:16-17

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[0:00] Well, very good morning to you. If you will, please take your copy of God's Word and turn to 2 Timothy 3.

! On this, the first Lord's Day of the Year, we are going to do something rather dramatically different. If you're a guest today, we want you to know that our regular practice for preaching is verse-by-verse exposition.

And if you're not a first-time guest this morning, it's been a little while since we've done a verse-by-verse, through-a-book exposition as we've just come through Advent season and then kind of did the traditional sermon that we do at the end of the year, kind of charging you to make good resolutions for change. But this is even a little more dramatically different, because today I'm going to take our time together to talk about plans for the upcoming year.

And I struggled a little bit with this idea. If you hate it, it's all my fault. But it's difficult, as we're thinking about doing new things together, to communicate that really clearly, to kind of help give you the thought process to undergird it the way we would like for that to happen.

And as I'm just looking around the room, it seems that we have a lot of people out sick today. I know that we've heard both croup and RSV, and there's this, like, recycling stomach bug that I really hope is not the coronavirus.

[1:36] We'll see. But there's a lot of people out, so you may need to even help me to communicate some of this to others. But I have three goals this morning. I want to inform you of some of these plans for the year.

I hope to excite you a bit about them and to involve you, both in those things that you can attend, those things that are for you, those things that you have time for, and to be praying for those things that you cannot attend, that you would understand why they're important and what we're up to. But I do want to first develop some biblical framework for how we ought to think about planning for the church. What should guide the process of that?

And we're going to start here in 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17, because the simple answer is the Scripture. The Scripture should be guiding the process for everything that the church does.

So, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17, all Scripture is breathed out by God. He exhaled it is the actual word that could be translated there.

[2:48] He is its very source. All Scripture breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Certainly, the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Scripture, which we derive from this, means that the Bible has everything in it that we need for life and godliness.

It's not going to tell us how to design an electrical circuit, but for those things concerning righteousness, it is a sufficient text.

So, it goes broader than just what we do together as a church, but it most certainly includes what we do together as a church. And I'm very grateful that early in my life, through many influences and by the great grace of God, this doctrine got, what I like to say, concreted in my heart.

It's immovable, I believe, that the Bible is sufficient. And you have church leadership that believes that the Bible is sufficient. And frankly, I think our entire church believes that the Bible is sufficient.

[4:07] And I'm so very, very glad for this. So, we want to think biblically about what we do together as a church. Are we serving one another the way the Bible would ask us to serve one another?

It's at the core of what we're doing, the instruction that God has given us. And we believe that this is the case. It doesn't mean we'll always get it right or perfect, but we want to.

We need to keep going back to the text, back to the text, back to the text. *Semper Reformande*, right? The cry of the Reformation. Always reforming. Always looking back to the text. Making sure that we don't err.

Making plans that the Lord will bless, because they come from, they're derived from His commands for us. So, we want to start there as we think about what we ought to be doing together as a church. The sufficient, God-breathed word that we have. Secondly, we should think about kind of the nature of the church and its leadership.

[5:09] What those leaders are to do and what those leaders are not to do. So, if you'll join me in Ephesians chapter 4, I'm going to speak to this briefly. And while you're getting there, I'm going to read to you Acts chapter 6 and verse 4.

Now, I don't for a moment want to suggest that the elders of a church are synonymous with the apostles. But we believe that the elders of a church pick up certain elements of the apostolic ministry.

The apostles were receiving revelation, right? They're writing much of the New Testament. We don't do that. We don't receive new revelation. But we do see them doing in Acts chapter 6 and verse 4. In Acts 6, they're calling men to serve. Calling men to serve to unencumber them. So that verse 4 says they can devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

So the simplest job description you could possibly come up with for the elders of a church is to pray and to minister the Word.

[6:17] Let me show you this a little further in Ephesians chapter 4. This is verses 11 through 16. Paul has just talked about Christ ascending, which then is implied, he says, that he also descended and he gave gifts.

He gave gifts to the church for its function. And he says, starting in verse 11, and he gave the apostles, the prophets. There's much debate about what he means here.

I'm going to suggest to you that he's talking about the Scripture in this place. We have now the Bible that serves this role. The evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

So he's given to us leadership to the church. We've got the Scripture and we have leaders in the church, evangelists, shepherd, teachers, to equip the church, to equip us, all of us, for the work of ministry.

And I think this is one of the most important texts that's often not referred to when we think about congregationalism. What is congregationalism? I want to say it's so much more than just showing up to a members meeting of the church and voting on stuff.

[7:28] It is that. But it's so much more than that. We as the total congregation, myself and our other elders included, are to be doing this work of ministry.

So you're to be equipped to love and serve one another. Look what the text goes on to say. For building up the body of Christ. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

To mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So there's the goal and the positive. And then in the negative he says in verse 14, So we want to be mature.

We want to be growing up into Christlikeness and not staying immature. This is the ministry work of the church together. And he tells us how it's accomplished in verse 15.

Rather, speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

[8:46] Right? So we are to be speaking the truth in love to one another. And doing all of the various things that God has gifted us to do. So if you're a member of this church, or another church for that matter.

If you go on and you're a member of another church. It's right and proper. And it's safe to assume that God has brought you to that church. That you might function in some way in that body.

You have a part to play in the life of that church. And that includes all kinds of things. And I'm not about to recruit you to take out trash. Although you're welcome to be recruited for that. Because we have to do it. What's the focus here? Speaking the truth in love to one another. Which happens in informal, casual ways. It should be going on all the time. You should hit the ground here on a Sunday morning thinking, How am I to love and serve others this morning? How am I meant to walk into the building and greet people and speak the truth in love to them?

[9:50] And I think you'll find as you do this, others will speak the truth in love to you. And will press at each other and will grow in holiness together. This is what's supposed to be going on when each part, verse 16, is working properly.

And I fear that often we don't function properly. Because every part is not doing its part in this work. So, the leaders of our church need to be thinking in these terms. If we're to be praying and doing the ministry of the word. That ministry of the word has this extension.

It's part of the ministry of the word. To be equipping the saints to minister the word, the truth in love to one another. We're going to have to think about the best ways to do that.

We're going to have to be rational. Perhaps a little bit practical at times. How is this accomplished? For a lot of years, and no dramatic change here, but for a lot of years, we have really, really pushed back.

[11:01] And tried to keep ourselves from becoming highly problematic. And the reason for that is that very often in the lives of churches, programs begin to exist for the sake of the program to exist.

And you push people into them and you burn people out. And it must go on because we've always done it this way. And we lose sight of why we would even start to do something particular at all. But we're not entirely anti-programs. What we're doing right now is, in some sense, a program. We've decided that we should gather together at certain times.

We kind of start at that time. There are certain things that ought to be done during this time. There's goals in mind as we gather together and do this.

There's a great little book called *The Trellis and the Vine*. I'd love for all of you to read it at some point. Although it's really written for church leaders. And in that book, they work out this analogy of a trellis and the vine.

[12:02] And the author talks about how he has on the side of his garage this really beautiful hand-built trellis. And nothing seems to grow on it. And it's just put in a bad spot. A side of the house that just nothing seems to grow on.

But then on his fence, he has another trellis that he can't see because there's a jasmine vine growing on it. And that jasmine vine has outgrown the trellis.

And it threatens to pull the trellis off the fence. And he has to go in and get up underneath it and pin it back onto the fence to keep it held up.

And what they suggest in the book is that there are, of course, those necessary things we should do together as a church. The plans that we should make. The structures we should build that are trellis.

But that that trellis is meant to hold up the vine, which is the people work. The gospel proclamation. The speaking the truth in love to one another.

[13:00] And it's easy to get those two things out of priority. Right? Let's do some things. Let's put some things in place. Let's structure stuff and program things so that the vine can flourish.

And for a lot of years, we've been able to do it with very, very little trellis. We've always tried it minimally. We want to do so little trellis.

We want to focus everybody's attention on vine. We want to be so clear about this. But I think we find ourselves, as we've been growing, that we just need a bit more trellis.

We need to put a little more structure into place. That is to say, in order to free you all to do this precious and most important vine work, we just need some plans to do so.

We need to be deliberate about doing these things. I find for myself, I want to be a person who is so clearly prioritized in my mind that it's just natural.

[14:07] It just runs around in me. That there's no doubt in my mind what the next right thing to do is. It just bubbles up out of me. But if there's anything important that needs to happen in my life, I find that I have to make a plan for it.

I've just got to be really deliberate. I've got to write it down. I've got to think about when it's going to happen. If you happen to have a child sitting next to you that has the coloring sheet, it's a drawing of the mind that America has ever produced.

And many will say he's the greatest mind that America has ever produced. And he had to write down notes and pin them on his jacket in order to remember things. This encourages me. Important things, I think, need to be planned for. If you're not like me, that's a wonderful gift to you. But I've got to structure. I've got to think about those most important things. Otherwise, they tend to get put back. They tend to get chased away by the tyranny of the urgent, the crisis that often seems to be right in front of us.

[15:13] So we're going to add a few things this year. And I just want you to understand the why behind some of these things. Again, hopefully to inform you, to excite you, and to involve you.

So in your bulletin that you were handed, there was an insert. You're welcome to, this might serve you to pull this out and take a look at it. This was just a temporary thing that I can't pull together. I'm really hoping that we have some graphic artists, and I know that we do, who are looking at this and saying, this is terrible. It could be so much better. I agree with you that it could be so much better. And I would love for you to volunteer to make it prettier for us.

I would even gladly turn this into a magnet that we could stick on our fridges. So there's some thoughts for you. You're going to notice firstly at the top, it says Providence Baptist Church. And if you're unaware, I want you to know that our church has voted to change our name. So that's not taken place yet. There's a lot of details that have to be sorted out to make that possible.

[16:18] But as I sat down and typed this up this week, I just thought, this is going to go perhaps in the front of somebody's Bible, maybe up on the fridge, and we're going to change our name, I hope, very soon, formally, and I just didn't want it to be confusing.

So that's what's happening. Be confused for a moment this morning so that you don't have to be confused in the future. These are some plans for this upcoming year. So it's a save the dates, you know, kind of like a wedding save the date, but this is multiple dates, some things to be thinking about, some things to be looking forward to, to go ahead and put on your digital calendar, to have it up in a visible place, to stick it in the front or back of your Bible, to be able to reference the things we're planning on doing this year.

And I will tell you that the years that we've done more good things together are years that we tend to plan this early, because if it goes on the calendar, it's most likely going to get done. And if it doesn't, then, oh man, it's Christmas again, and we're off on into the next year.

So I want to talk through some of these things. Probably the most significant change is that we're going to add a Sunday evening litany of things to do together.

I want to be really clear. The church, the church as a total, only gathers, as a total, only gathers on Sunday mornings. This is what we've decided as a church.

[17:46] We have two what we call gatherings. We have a members gathering at 10, it goes till 1030, we take a little break, and then we have this gathering, which we call the public gathering.

If you're a member of our church, I've said to you, you ought to think of that as a singular event. Come Sunday morning, when we say to you, Hebrews chapter 10, do not neglect to meet with the saints, that's what we're talking about, right?

That time that we have all decided to come together. So everything I'm about to talk to you about is optional, but good. I want you to really seriously consider if these things are worth spending your time on.

So Sunday evenings from 6 to 730, beginning January 19th, and that is just a couple of weeks away, I know.

We're going to do some things together. Now, those things together will be interrupted at times by members' meetings. It's when we typically have had those meetings. That's going to happen next

Sunday evening, January 12th, and then April 13th, and July 13th, and October 12th.

[18:51] So that's when you can anticipate those members' meetings. things happening, and those will interject on top of and take the place of the things that I'm about to mention.

The first thing that we'll do on Sunday evenings together is a men's prayer meeting. So we're going to ask that the men of the church come together and pray.

It's good that the church prays together. And we do this already. We do this on Sunday mornings, right? When you're led in a prayer in the morning, this morning, it wasn't just Gary that was praying, and you were listening to him pray, right?

He was leading us in prayer. So we do this corporately, but we think it would be helpful if we set aside an additional time for prayer. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2, verse 8, I desire then that in every place the men should pray.

There's a little story about the ministry of Charles Spurgeon you may be familiar with, but it always encourages me to encourage the church to pray.

[19:55] It goes like this. Five college students visited London one Sunday to hear Charles Spurgeon preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. They arrived early and were met by a kind gentleman who offered to give them a tour.

At one point, he asked them if they would like to see the furnace room in the basement. If you're very young, you may not know what a furnace room is, but it heats up water, and it circulates it all throughout the building so that the building can be warmed.

So the furnace room in the basement. It was a hot July, and the students were not interested, but not wanting to appear rude, they consented. Their guide quietly opened the door, and there in the basement of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, there were several hundred people fervently praying for the service that was about to begin.

It was then that their guide introduced himself. He was none other than Charles Spurgeon, and he wanted those college students to understand that prayer was the power source of his ministry. Prayer matters incredibly. I too readily rush off into things thinking that I've got it handled, but I have nothing handled without God's help.

[21:09] Prayer is that thing without which nothing happens. Sine qua non. Without which nothing. We need to pray.

We need to pray for God's blessing on the things that we are about doing. And we need to be praying more broadly as well. We need to be praying for area churches.

Churches in our area. Those that are like-minded, that are preaching the gospel, that we can praise God for, that God would give them great courage and spur them on. We need to be praying for churches that we might not agree with so much.

That they would see the truth of the gospel and perhaps come to conviction and change. It's a good thing for us to do. We need to be praying for our ministry partners.

We need to be doing this regularly, which we often do on Sundays, but we need to be doing so in more detail and more carefully. They're on the back of your bulletin this morning, right? The Andersons were serving in Southeast Asia.

[22:09] They're learning language right now. They're working towards being sent to an unreached people group. They need a great deal of prayer. The Hamores, Josh is serving as the director of the UNG FCA.

You may have opinions about FCA, but I can tell you that Josh is doing a good work on that campus. And we need to be thinking about how to partner and how to be praying for him.

Matthew Carnegie, who's going to actually come and share with us this evening, talking about the state of Bible translation in the world. He's in Texas right now at Bible translation school and preparing very soon to go with a team.

We don't know where to just yet, but to be going and doing translation work. Emma Zwimpke, we need to add her to the back of this.

She also is going to be going and doing a very similar work in the coming year-ish, doing Bible translation work. The Walkers, also in Southeast Asia, they're there with the IMB.

[23:12] And the Zwimpkes in Germany who are coming back to us this summer, praise God. We're very thankful for that. But we need to be

praying for these, for Great Commission work. We need to be praying that the Gospel would go to all peoples.

And perhaps in the process of that, the Lord may raise up people in our midst that would go to those very places. We need to be paying for people in positions of power, for governmental leaders, local and state and certainly federal.

We need to be praying for the future of our church, that God will give us wisdom, what things ought we do and what things ought we not do. We need to be praying for our church leadership.

We desperately need your prayers. We are feeble men and we need your prayers. We need to be praying about the possible future of a biblical counseling center.

We've talked about this for years. What might it look like? You may not be aware of this, but this past semester on the University of North Georgia's campus, there were three suicides.

[24:17] And I sat with Josh, just him absolutely heartbroken over that. And there's currently a president at the University of North Georgia who wants biblical counseling to be available to students on that campus.

He said, I'm going to say this on a recording, he said that the services the college provides are not ample for what those students need. There's a door of opportunity.

At least in some small way, we could help. What a chance. What a chance to be on the leading edge of sharing the gospel on that campus.

So we need to be praying about that. Without which nothing, how are we to accomplish such a task? I have no idea we need God's power. So there's some things that we're going to be asking that the men would come together and that they would pray.

We also are going to add a men's morning meeting. So this is just kind of men, men on the side I'm just talking about for a moment. We did this some time ago, a Saturday morning meeting once a month.

[25:27] It's going to be a little bit longer form this time and we're not just going to talk about man issues all the time, but we're going to in advance let you know what topics may be covered. I think this will give us the opportunity to have some kind of longer form teaching about some issues.

The first one will be February 1st. I will tell you just off the cuff, I can't guarantee this, but I think when I'm going to be and let's think together biblically about whether we should or shouldn't take up this kind of teaching.

We shouldn't. But February 1st, if I can manage to prepare for that. So in advance, I'll let you know what we're going to do. We're going to come together. We're going to have some breakfast. We're going to really get into the Word together around some particular topics.

And a men's retreat every year. We can check that one off. We did it this weekend and I'm really grateful for those guys that could come and sad if you weren't able to be with us. Genuinely, wish you could have joined us over these past two days.

Also on Sunday evening, we're going to have a women's Bible study. So my sweet and wonderful wife has been pressing at me for quite some time that the women need a consistent time to connect together without little ones distracting them.

[26:42] Boy, do we have a lot of beautiful little distractions right now, don't we? So she's been encouraging this and pressing this and I said, you're absolutely right. We should be thinking about how to do this and so we're going to try to accomplish this on Sunday evenings.

Sam is going to begin that by leading through a book called Women of the Word and then beyond that it will be an inductive Bible study. So we'll select a book and the women will get together and discuss those texts together.

We'll also have a women's retreat and that will be April 4th and 5th of this year. We've got the center booked. It is happening. It's going down April 4th and 5th.

And then to support, kind of the broader needs of the men and women of our church, this year we're going to do two one-day retreats. The first will be on parenting.

That will be February 8th. Many of you are in the trenches right in those early years. Right now, including unborn children, the members of our church have 84 kids, four and under.

[27:49] Really, that's a staggering number. And then I think when you add the five and up kids in, we're like at 128 children. It's a wonderful blessing and a need that we should be thinking about together.

And then in September on the 27th, we're going to do one on marriage. And I think, I think we may do these every single year. Do a parenting one day and a marriage one day every single year. Also on Sunday evening, we're going to start a, what I'm currently calling, and this is just me, so it may take a different shape. Somebody may tell me they hate it. That's okay. But I'm framing it this way for our thinking.

A young adult class. And by that, I mean youth. So I just don't like that term very much. Young adult class. And we think this is important because this age is a difficult age.

I'm so really glad that I'm not that age in this age. Does that make sense? Like, oh, the pressures that they're experiencing are immense.

[28:56] And parents, you're doing a wonderful job. So we're in no way saying, oh gosh, we've got to come in and rescue these poor teenagers from their parents. And we don't want to suggest that at all.

But we do think it's an age that needs a lot of support. Very tragically, Hillary Clinton has co-opted the term that takes a village.

So maybe we can just turn it into, it takes a church. We need to be helping and supporting one another. Our young men need the wisdom of their fathers.

And then they need a bunch of other fathers saying the same stuff to them. Right? Their heads are thick. My head was very thick. It still is. But I think it's thinning as I get older.

But very thick. And they need a lot of input into their lives. And they need that age group friendships. They need to be able to talk to one another through the challenges that they're going through.

[29:54] And so, we intend to do this. I'll have a meeting with parents. We'll talk out what this might look like. We need your help. We need your help pulling this off. Church, we need your prayers.

We suddenly have a bunch of teenagers. And I will tell you right now, myself included, all of those parents are trembling with the challenges that are ahead of us with these young people.

And yeah, we need your input. We need your partnership. We need your help. So we're going to have a class for them. That'll be on Sunday evenings. And I'll tell you, just in case, it's going to be a shocker to you, we're going to have some fun.

And we're going to feed them some food they probably shouldn't eat. but we are going to open the Bible together. We're going to get their noses in the text. We're going to help them learn how to study the Bible well, understand the gospel, get the church and what the church is and the great blessing that it is.

Yeah. We've also put on the calendar a retreat for them in June. I just blocked out the entire week. I can't promise it'll be the entire week. We'll talk more with parents and see what might work for us.

[31:06] But we want to take those young people away and with their parents to be clear. We're not going to steal your children but we'll take them away and teach them. And then in addition to that on Sunday evening we're going to do children's classes for all the other age groups as well.

And I'm excited about what we may be doing with them, developing some curriculum for them. So that's the big one, Sunday evening. And I think there's a lot, a lot of good. And again, think of it as trellis for us to step into together and do a lot of really good vine work.

Speak the truth and love to one another in all of these various ways and around these different issues and topics. I think this will be a very good thing if we can lean heavy into it.

And once again, Sunday evenings may be the worst time for you. You might be hearing all of this and you might be saying this all sounds so great but I just don't think I'm going to be able to make Sunday evening work. But when else would we do it? That would be my retort to you.

And I think these things are important enough to make the effort if it's at all possible for you. A couple of other opportunities to connect and to serve.

[32:13] There are some 50 commandments in the Bible that end in one another and those things can be happening. All those one another's can be

happening in everything that I've mentioned so far. Some examples, love one another, welcome one another, bear with one another, care for one another.

To do that, you need to be connected with people and it's really easy to show up on a Sunday morning, the last minute, get up when it's time to go and get out of here and not ever really get to know anybody or to be known by anybody.

We're not a terribly large church but the way this building is set up, you kind of get funneled in and funneled out and it creates some difficulty. It's hard to connect with people if that's all you're doing. So we're going to continue to do community groups, no changes to that. Those groups, if you're not familiar with them, are led by an elder. Often, not always, but they're hosted in an elder's home. They're on the second and fourth Tuesday or Wednesday of each month. It's very light. You can bring your children to it. We're going to open the text for just a few minutes, perhaps sing a song, a prayer.

[33:18] I think just about everybody eats food in some measure or another. Our group, not because I'm a great leader of it, but our group does a dinner and it's always a really, really wonderful time to get it.

So it's a chance to come and connect with people, get to know people, and hopefully this flows into other discipling relationships beyond just that time together. And then some service days.

So we have some property work days on the calendar. Beloved, we need to steward this building well. It's a gift to us. You've benefited from it, whether you think you have or not. You're benefiting from it right now.

And we can't pull this off on our own. We need your help. Unclogging toilets does not fit in the prayer and ministry of the word job description.

Although I'm happy to do it, but we're finding ourselves so busy that something else is getting neglected if I'm doing that. If I'm unclogging a toilet, there's something prayer and ministry of the word that I probably should be doing and I'm not able to do it.

[34:20] Not above any of that kind of work, but we need to be able to pitch in and help out. And so we're going to schedule some work days both to clean on the inside of the building, those things that are difficult to do like dusting the lights in here and also working on the outside of the building as well.

And then in some other months, we've been calling them barn raisings, but I dropped the G and did an apostrophe S which makes it look really hilarious. It says barn raisins.

And I'm seeing it now that I'm looking at it written down. But it doesn't really matter. So if you're not familiar, the Amish are incredible people. From a lack of technology, they get together when they have to raise a huge structure and the whole community comes together and raises the walls of a barn.

It's called a barn raising. And so we've been doing this now for this past year. Opportunities to come together and serve those people in our church that especially need help with big projects as kind of the priority.

But it's just a good time to get together and make some stuff happen. So y'all have helped me on my property. I had to hand dig a ditch to run power in. And I am so grateful that I didn't hand dig the ditch.

[35:35] A bunch of you guys came and made that happen. We tore up a deck and we've done some pressure washing. So it's a good opportunity to come together, love and serve one another.

Men especially, but I don't want to exclude the women of the church, but men especially. Put those on the calendar and just consider if you might be able to take some time to come together in that way. So there's a lot of good opportunity here and it may seem like too much, like it's a whole bunch.

But we really want to be careful not to overpack anyone's schedule. We want you to have time for work and family and your unbelieving neighbors and friends.

we want you to have time outside of these plans for Christian fellowship and service, that informal stuff that you all do so well. So I just think a little bit of perspective may help at this point.

I did a little math and if I did it correctly. If you're a member of the church who were involved with everything I have mentioned, and no one's saying that you have to be, but if you just said, all right, I'm doing it, every single thing I'm showing up to, if you availed yourself of everything, you'd only be giving about 30 hours of your month.

[36:51] About 30 hours of your month to all of these good works. It's a little perspective. It's not a terrible ask of you. And I think you'll find, in whatever measure you decide to engage, that you'll find yourself being served by it.

So, for 2025, just ask yourself, how would God have you spend your time? And I don't presume to answer that question for you.

I don't know how God would have you spend your time. The only expectation that this church can and does lay upon you, if you are a member, is that you join us for the times when the whole church gathers, or should be gathered, which is that Sunday morning, those meetings that I mentioned.

I think that's the only moral obligation that you have. But I hope that you will, with what I presented, see these opportunities, and you'll find some measure of excitement for and some involvement in, if in nothing else, that you would help us by praying that those efforts would be fruitful.

In closing, I want to read Psalm 127 and verse 1, which says, Unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it labor in vain.

[38:12] Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Our efforts to build and to protect are of no value unless God blesses our efforts.

So let's pray to the end that he would use our plan in mighty ways in this coming year. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.