

Church Membership and Discipline - Part 1

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[0:00] All right, thank you, Doug. Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Ephesians chapter 4. The cries of our littles brings me joy in a way it has not in a very long time.

It actually fills me with happiness to have crying in this room. So thank you. Glad to have it. I'm going to do something this morning that I don't do often for good reason.

It's done rarely enough, but I think it deserves explanation. We most regularly and as a habit exposit a text. We take a text, we read it, and explain to you what it means, work to give you application for it.

This morning we're going to use the text, this text in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 10 through 16, as kind of a jumping off point to talk about something broader. I'm going to explain to you why I'm doing this, but I just want you to be aware that as a regular thing, I know this is not the best way to open up the text and give attention to it.

From time to time, I think it can be an appropriate thing. I hope you'll agree with me by the time we're done this morning. So Ephesians chapter 10, chapter, I'm excuse me, Ephesians chapter 4, beginning in verse 10.

[1:16] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, 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 that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

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.

Now, this text is from our Bible reading this past week. And as I read it, it's a text that I normally read with great joy, right? This ecclesiological text, what is the church meant to do?

What's its high aim? I couldn't help but note that the body is to be joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, verse 16, and to lament the reality that we both feel and are in actuality disjointed in this moment.

Even when we gather in the largest of groups, they still don't have the whole body, this local expression of the church gathered together.

[3:06] And so I think it'd be good for us to think this morning, as we find ourselves in the midst of the pandemic, as there's restrictions being put on the sizes of groups that we can have, as we're anticipating this may drag on longer than any of us hoped that it would, how should we be thinking in this time?

And we'll tell you immediately, I do not have the direct and immediate answer for you about solutions for the problem. But I think if we'll come back and we'll start with some clear biblical thinking about what the church is, it'll help us to think in this time and it'll help us to draw good conclusions moving forward.

So I want to talk this morning briefly. I hope we'll see how quick I can do this about church membership and church discipline.

And if you've been around here for a while, you've heard about these things, you may be going, oh gosh, church membership and church discipline again. But all the more in a time like this, we need to be really, really clear minded about how it is that we are in a fellowship of believers.

And then how it is that we find ourselves outside of a fellowship of believers, right? So why and how do we see people into the life of a local church? Why and how do we correct people in the life of a local church?

[4 : 29] And why and how do we see people out of the light of a local church? This teaching is, of course, for those of you who are not members of our church or are not in the process of becoming a member of our church.

But not only that, it's also for those who are members of our church, right? We need to understand, we need to give careful consideration to the degree of our commitment to the church.

It's one thing to say that you are committed. It's another thing altogether to be committed to a local fellowship, right? Those of you who are members of our church also need to be able to make kind and compelling cases to your friends, roommates, classmates, coworkers, family who profess to follow Jesus Christ, right?

That they also ought to be members of a local church, right? The church is a great grace to us, right? It is the church that Christ died for.

We ought to treasure it properly if we mean to follow Jesus the way he wants for us to. Now, before I can make a convincing case to you of your need of church membership and discipline, I must make a case to you what the church is, right?

[5 : 40] We live, after all, in a day of very poor ecclesiology, right? This moment is proving that to be so incredibly true, right? To begin with, we used the word church to speak of buildings and property.

Should never be the case. But now we're using it of all kinds of meetings online, right? So you have multi-site church that's already existed. Now you have church at home.

You have online church. All kinds of perversions of the very word and what it means. Far too many people for far too long have thought of the local church as a club.

Far too many people for far too long have thought that to be a member of a local church means that you show up at significant meetings, that you pay your dues, and that you believe in the cause of the organization.

Far too many people for far too long have joined local churches because the church agreed with their political ideology, or met some stylistic preference, or offered them an affinity-based friend group, or made them feel good about themselves.

[6 : 48] But beloved, the church is not a club. It is not a fraternity or sorority. The church is not an organization that puts on events and supports causes, and your participation is optional.

The church is God's people, called together by grace through faith around an event, the completed work of Jesus Christ.

And because God's global church cannot meet under the same roof, this side of heaven, we will one day, praise God, but because we can't do it now, we gather in local fellowships to worship God in word and deed, right?

This is the form of church most mentioned in the scriptures, talking about the local gathering of believers. Jonathan Lehman, editorial director for Nine Marks, said, the local church is not a club. It's where we Christians go public to declare our highest allegiance. It's the outpost or embassy giving a public face to our future nation.

[7 : 55] Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2, verse 9 and 10, You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And so we as a church are meant to be a people, right, who represent Jesus' coming kingdom in a strange and foreign land, right?

And we ought to then gather regularly, as allowed in our current state, and declare who is part of that kingdom and who is not a part of that kingdom, and to go and recruit people to be a part of that kingdom, right?

Freely offering God's kindness to them in Christ. Martin Lloyd-Jones once said, We must cease to think of the church as a gathering of institutions and organizations, and we must get back to the notion that we are the people of God.

A Christianity devoid of life in the local church is found nowhere in the scripture, right? New Testament Christians would think so much that happens in our day incredibly odd.

[9 : 18] Even in those cases of frontier mission work, the missionaries are commissioned and prayed for by the church, the missionaries are starting churches, and the missionaries are received back to their sending church to hear the account of God's working.

Look at Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. They're sent by a church, they start churches, they come back to a church, right, to tell of all that God had done.

Mission without the church is missing. The main ingredient, right? We gather in order to go, and we go in order to gather. Christ died for the church, and it is his intention to make himself known through it and by it, right?

Ecclesiology, the study of the church, is not just some sideline thing for some people. All people who belong to Christ ought to be particularly concerned about this beautiful thing that he instituted called the church.

God intends for the world to be able to look around and say of a people, church, and to say of another, not church, right, which frames our concern for church membership and for church discipline, right?

[10 : 32] So, what is church membership? Church membership is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian, right? Now here, when I say local church, I mean people, right?

People who have already made an agreement together to be in a church fellowship together, right? Membership adds to that number, right? In which the church affirms the Christian's profession of faith and gives oversight of the living of their faith, right?

Who says to an individual, yes, you're part of the kingdom, right? With the confidence we can have, you're part of the kingdom, and we want to help you to live as a citizen of that kingdom.

It is through church membership that we do the one another's of scripture. You ready? I'm going to rattle them off. Well, not all of them. I'm going to rattle off some of them for you quickly.

Be at peace with one another. Mark 9, 50. Love one another. John 15, 12. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Romans 12, 10. Honor one another above yourselves.

[11 : 35] Romans 12, 10. Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12, 16. Accept one another then, just as Christ accepted you. Romans 15, 7. Instruct one another.

Romans 15, 14. Have equal concern for each other. 1 Corinthians 12, 25. Serve one another in love. Galatians 5, 13. Be patient. Bear with one another in love. Ephesians 4, 2.

Be kind and compassionate to one another. Ephesians 4, 32. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5, 21. Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Colossians 3, 13.

Encourage each other. 1 Thessalonians 4, 18. Right? None of these things are possible if there aren't others. All of that. And there's many, many more in the Scripture are meant to be done with others.

Right? People that you have said, these things the Scripture commands of me, as I read those things, I have people in mind, specific people that I am supposed to be doing that with and for.

[12 : 35] However, if church membership is not membership in a club, then it must be meaningful membership. Right? That's why we refer to our membership in this way.

Right? It's meaningful membership. You make promises to us and we make promises to you when you join our fellowship. Right? We're saying we are partnering together.

We are going to do this difficult task. Right? Grace filled, but difficult task of following Christ together. Right? And we recognize that Jesus died for this thing called church.

And he gave it to us that we don't go rogue in this, but we do it with one another. Right? We need each other in this. The church is a wonderful grace to us in following Jesus Christ.

So, I hope you get some sense of the importance of it. But where is church membership found in the Bible? The Bible speaks of us being members of one another in Ephesians 4, 25, Romans 12, 5, and 1 Corinthians 12, 25.

[13 : 42] Although each of these texts speaks to our unity as a local fellowship and not necessarily the formal relationship called membership. In order to note the formal relationship, we must draw conclusions from elsewhere.

Right? So, I hope that the following six places will be satisfactory. Right? And I'm already, I feel apologetic already that you're not looking at Ephesians 4. You can flip these if you'd like to or jot notes and look at them later.

And I know that I'm moving very quickly this morning. But here we go. Ready for six places that membership is found in the Bible? First, Matthew chapter 18, verse 15 through 17, which we're going to look at this text again momentarily in more detail.

It says, If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. So, Jesus was saying in Matthew chapter 18, if a brother is unwilling to repent of sin, then no longer consider him a brother.

[14:50] There's a process for that that we call church discipline. But that's what I want you to see at this moment from that text. Next, the ability to exclude someone from the church presupposes that it's known who belongs to the church.

Right? If I'm to go to a brother, how am I to know that they're a brother unless somehow we've included them as a brother to be, right? Hopefully not, but maybe excluded at a later time.

Right? So, you see it there. Matthew chapter 18, verse 15 through 17. Second, Acts chapter 5, verse 12 and 13. Luke records, So, people faced the decision of whether or not they would join with the group of people, right?

They wouldn't. The text tells us that some would not. But they had to decide, would they be counted amongst these people that were gathering in Solomon's portico, right?

The text calls them them, right? This joining is more public and definite than an informal association. You see that in Acts chapter 5, verse 12 and 13.

[16:15] Third, in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 9 through 12. Paul gives Timothy instructions for enrolling widows on the list of those receiving support from the church.

He says, Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works. And while this isn't conclusive evidence for formal church membership, it's tough to imagine that the church of Ephesus would have kept a list of widows, but would not have any formal means of identifying everyone who belonged to the church, right?

He's writing to a church in order for them to establish those widows within the church who should be receiving the benefit of the financial means of the church and who should not, right?

I just imagine them taking out their parchment list and putting asterisks next to the widows that receive this kind of care, right? Fourth, 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 12 and 13.

Paul writes, For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.

[17:26] So Paul called upon the Corinthian church to judge those who were inside the church, not those who were outside. They were responsible for the testimony of those who belonged to the church, not those who didn't.

This passage makes no sense that the Corinthian church did not have some public formal means by which people identified themselves with the church. The Corinthian church would have picked up his letter and gone, But who?

Who's he talking about? We have no way of knowing, right? Clearly they understood what it meant to not judge those outside, but to judge those inside, right?

The people who randomly show up on any given Sunday and we never see them again? No. Those who were counted amongst the church. Fifth, 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 6.

Paul writes concerning a man the Corinthian church had excommunicated. He says, For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough. So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow, right?

[18:30] Much to say about that text. We could get into it with discipline. But the thing I want you to see is this man's exclusion from the church was a punishment by the majority, right?

And you cannot have a majority unless you have a definite set of people from which a majority is constituted, right? You have to be able to do the math to figure out if it's a majority or not a majority in order to establish such a thing, right?

That's the fifth. Sixth. This is the last one. This is my go-to. That's why I saved it for last. Hebrews 13, 7 and then verse 17.

So 13, 7 and then 13, 17. The writer from Hebrews says, Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

And then verse 17. Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who have to give an account. Scripture repeatedly commands Christians to submit to their leaders, right?

[19 : 35] Here's some wonderful examples of that here. The only way to do that is by publicly committing to be members of their flock and saying, in effect, I commit to listening to your teaching, following your direction, and submitting to your leadership.

There is no way to obey the scriptural commands to submit to your leaders if you never actually submit to them by joining a local church. So I would say to somebody who's not a member of a church, who are your leaders?

And if that person said to me, you, I'd go, nope. I will not give an account for your soul. I will give an account for everything that I teach. I will give an account for the way that I treat you.

Of course, those things, right? But as your leader, I disagree, right? I have a list in the front of my Bible right now of people that I am accountable for.

And I take that very, that's a weighty, weighty thing. If you are a member of our church, I am committed to you. I hope you to me and to one another.

[20 : 37] Scripture also tells leaders, right? We're going to have to be accountable for those that we lead, right? And how are we to know if we don't have some form of membership, right?

How are we to know who we're going to be accountable to and for? Now, who should join a local church? Simple answer. Anyone who is a disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you profess to know Christ, you should be part of a local church. John 17, verse 20 through 23. It's Jesus' high priestly prayer. He says, Jesus established the truth.

To publicly declare those who belong to him in order to give the world a display of the good news about himself. Don't think you can do this by yourself, right?

This is the thing meant for the church to be doing. Jesus wants the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn't. And how is the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn't?

[22 : 02] They are to see which people publicly identify themselves with his people in the visible public institution he established for this very purpose. They're to look at the members of his church.

And if some people claim to be part of the universal church, even though they belong to no local church, they reject Jesus' plan for them and for his church. It's a flat rejection of it.

Jesus intends for his people to be marked out as visible public people, a group gathered together, which means joining together in local churches.

So how do you join a local church? Of course, it depends broadly. We could talk at length about simple versus complex Christian societies. We have a process.

I think healthy churches in America will have some kind of process because where we are in a complex Christian society, if someone says, I am a follower of Jesus Christ, they can mean all sorts of things, right?

[23 : 01] They could be a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness or a Seventh-day Adventist, or they could simply mean my grandma was a follower of Jesus Christ, right? Therefore, I must be because I was born into her family, right?

There's a lot of things that that could mean, and so we have a process, and again, I think any healthy church will, just to establish, what do we mean when we say that?

I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. Who is this Jesus Christ that you're talking about, right? It's either a Jesus of the Bible or a Jesus of your own making or some false teacher's making.

So there are processes for that. I'll spare you our process because I think most of you are already very aware of that process. So this is how we find people in the church, right?

We go through a process of welcoming people who profess faith in Jesus Christ, saying to them, we're going to commit to you to help you follow Jesus faithfully. And the ordinance that's connected to this, everybody know, is baptism, right?

[24 : 01] We are a credo-baptist, and the ordinance that's tied to membership is baptism. Second, let's talk a little bit about church discipline.

What is church discipline? Some people get really uncomfortable when they hear the word discipline because it sounds harsh to them, right? Whether through just a misunderstanding of the very word or possibly because of childhood hurts who weren't raised in a home where discipline was done appropriately, the word discipline is largely in our culture distasteful, right?

It sounds like, whoa, whoa, you're trying to take my autonomy from me? Mm-hmm. Yep, that's what's happening. For your good in a loving, kind way, this is what churches are meant to do. The word discipline can be synonymous with the word train, right? To be trained. So when someone is disciplined, they are being trained, right?

Our Ephesians 4 text talks about us growing up into Christ so that we're not children any longer, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, right?

[25 : 06] This doesn't happen unless you're trained to be discerning, right? To have maturity. In a broad sense, discipline is everything the church does to help its member pursue holiness and fight sin.

Preaching, teaching, prayer, corporate worship, accountability relationships, and godly oversight by elders are all forms of discipline. Some have called this formative discipline.

The narrower sense of the term church discipline has been called corrective discipline, and it is this narrower sense that I want to consider a bit further this morning. So that's what we're talking about, this narrower sense.

Church discipline is the church's act of confronting a church member's sin and calling them to repent, which, if the person does not repent, will lead to excluding them from membership in the church, right?

That's where it heads. That's its eventuality. Remember, church membership affirms the Christian's profession of faith and gives oversight of the living of their faith.

[26 : 04] So discipline is the way we press people on in holiness, and if they show themselves not to be Christian, it's the way the church removes that confidence from them.

It says, we once were, but we no longer are confident that you're a Christ follower, and we do this for the good of their soul. Matthew chapter 16.

I'm going to read you a big section here, so why don't you turn there with me. Matthew chapter 16, beginning in verse 13. Hang on tight.

I'm going to move quick. I'm going to land the plane soon, so stick with me. Beginning in verse 13, Matthew 16.

Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

[27 : 08] He said to them, but who do you say that I am? Right? And Peter, who always bumbles his answers, nails it this time. Right? Verse 16, he says, Now, the rock that he is referring to is not Peter.

He's referring to the truth that Peter has just proclaimed. Jesus is the Christ. Verse 19, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Right? So Jesus says that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, and then tells Peter, he'll give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What in the world is he talking about?

What is this binding and loosing that he's referring to here? That is so ignored in the American church. This is a significant moment in the mystery of Jesus.

Because of the gracious work of the Father in the life of Peter, he gets the answer right. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus says, On that truth, I'm going to build my church.

[28 : 29] Right? It's going to go forth militant, and it will be victorious. And I'm giving to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. We've got to understand that. Right? We've got to know our part.

Jesus has just declared his church is going to be victorious. Right? It's going to be militant, but it's going to be victorious. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church. How?

What do we do? What's our part? What's our responsibility in that? If you go just a couple of chapters later with me to Matthew chapter 18, we get a picture of what we're meant to do.

Beginning in verse 15. I read a little bit of this to you previously. I read through verse 17. We're going to go a verse further right now. So again, here, beginning in verse 15, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

[29 : 36] If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Right? I read an abridged version of that earlier for the sake of time. But you see, here's this process that's being walked out.

Right? To help someone live in holiness, we're meant to bring this corrective discipline to them. And then, verse 18. Jesus says, Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. That sounds very familiar, doesn't it? Wield the keys of the kingdom. Binding and loosing. Declaring who is in the church and who's not in the church.

Right? Through this process that he outlines for us in Matthew chapter 18. And it's a four-step process, if you note carefully. Number one, if your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. I've said to you all repeatedly that our church is constantly doing this kind of discipline. We ought to be all the time. Right? All of us need help.

[30 : 41] If no one's coming to you in this way and you're not going to anybody in this way, then you're really not following Jesus together. You're going to need people to help you identify those blind areas of sin in your life.

I need this. Right? People come to me this way. Right? And I'm not so sure that what you said was good and appropriate. You're probably right. I think my motivation was wrong in that. And I confess that.

Right? Repent. Right? That we might continue to follow Jesus well together. Step two, if he doesn't listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

This also happens more regularly than I wish it would in the life of our church. But it does happen.

Right? I get looped in on these things sometimes. Like, could you come help me? This person is not hearing the case that I'm making to them from the scripture.

Would you help in this process? Right? I'm very thankful that we see the very, very, very rare third and fourth step.

[31 : 39] And often, sadly, that's because people will remove themselves from membership when they realize that we actually take sin seriously in the church. That we actually take the scripture seriously. And there are, in fact, some black and white issues in the scripture.

And we point them out to people. People, from time to time, have removed themselves from membership. And we haven't gone on to these further steps. But we have also had to do so. So the third step is, if you refuse to listen to them, tell it to the church.

Who? We've got to have in mind, who is the church? Right? When this is said. Certainly, Jesus is not talking about the universal church in this moment. Right? How could that be possible?

He's talking about a local expression. A group of people who have covenanted together to walk in holiness for the glory of God. This is who you're to bring it to. And then the fourth and final step.

If he refused to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a Catholic. That is outside of the fellowship of God's people. Right? So there's four steps that we walk through.

[32 : 42] And this is this action of binding and loosing. And it is a thing that we are meant to do. The church is supposed to be about this work. Right? For the glory of God and the good of people.

So let's talk a little bit about what the aims of church discipline are. I want you guys, if you're not familiar with this, although I know most of you are, but just a refresher. Why do we do church discipline? Why is it important in the life of a church?

First, church discipline is aimed at the good of the person disciplined. The discipline warns a person of the danger of sin and calls him or her to repentance. Right? It's for their good.

We want them to know that there's a danger ahead. Second, church discipline is aimed at the good of other Christians. As the church speaks and acts against sin, the whole congregation sees the serious nature of sin and its consequences.

Right? We are warned as others are warned. Right? Smart people learn from other people's mistakes and don't make all those mistakes themselves. I hope that you're smart people. I think you are.

[33 : 44] Third, church discipline is aimed at the good of the church as a whole. Church discipline keeps the local body pure by protecting it from moral decay. It also addresses sin that could

potentially lead to strife and conflict in the church.

Fourth, church discipline is aimed at the good of non-Christians. Hear this carefully. It's aimed at the good of non-Christians. It powerfully protects our corporate witness and evangelism.

Because people notice when there is a whole community of believers whose lives are different from the world. This is good for unbelieving people to see holiness in the church.

Not perfect holiness to be sure. Right? But heading off in that direction. Trending in that way. And it helps to produce a community of changed people.

A community that gives hope to non-Christians. That people really can change. And then fifth, church discipline is aimed at the glory of God. Christians are called to be holy.

[34 : 47] Not for our own reputation. But for God's. Our lives are meant to display God's character in the world. And we want him to look magnificent. One important part of that is the responsibility to address sin in the church that would bring dishonor to his great name.

So, membership and discipline. The ordinance tied to discipline? The Lord's Supper. We welcome people to the table. Or we exclude them from the table.

This is this regular re-upping of our commitment to one another. Right? We say to each other, You are welcome here. The thing that Jesus did for you. We're calling together to commemorate.

Right? It applies. It applies to us. As we gather together and take the Lord's meal. So, in conclusion, Jesus Christ died for the church.

And it is his good purpose that we should follow his good instruction as individuals. And as individuals gathered in local churches. It is for our benefit and for his glory that we are about the work of biblical church membership and church discipline.

[35 : 53] Both have been neglected and abused. So, join me in praying that our churches will continue to care well for souls, both within and without the church, to the praise of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

And join me in praying that, particularly in this time. We are disjointed. And it seemed that we would be disjointed for a very brief amount of time.

I think I approached the entire canceling of our regular gatherings with a bit of pessimism. I think most people were a lot more optimistic than I was. But we have passed the date that I thought we would get to.

We've come to a place where I went, oh, this is still going on? Rather in reality or just in perception, right, wherever you are on the spectrum of things, right, it is still going on.

And I don't know what it's going to look like exactly for our church to be disjointed, not able to do membership, welcoming people in, baptism, or the Lord's Supper.

[36 : 57] How do we do this, right? Can we do fourth step discipline, third and fourth step discipline, as we currently are? I don't think that we can, but maybe some of you are more creative than I am.

So at the very least, we need to be thinking clear. We need to have really, really clear minds, right, for what the church is and isn't in such a strange time.

So I hope that you'll join me in praying continually for this. And I hope that you'll join me in praying now as we pray together. So please join me in prayer.