

Gospel Community: Hebrews 10:24-25

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] When people are gathered for preaching, the preacher must appeal to an authority.! And that authority will either be God's authority as it's found in His word, or it will be an! Or it will be an appeal to His own authority.

I hope that there's a clear understanding in our minds that when we come to His own authority, come together for the preaching of the word, you haven't come to hear me speak or anyone else that may come, but you've come to hear the word of God speak. It's by this authority that we're given life and direction in that life. So let me ask that you take your copy of God's word out and you turn to Hebrews chapter 10. We are, as I think most of you know, taking a brief break from our normal pattern of verse-by-verse exposition. We have been in the book of Acts as of late, finished up chapter 10 and poised to go into chapter 11, see the gospel spring forth into Gentile populations. It's an exciting place to be, but as it's the beginning of the school year and much of our congregation is made up of college students, it's kind of the beginning of our year. And we deemed it important to take some time to either focus you for the first time or refocus you as we consider some areas of Christian living starting into this year.

We started a couple of weeks ago talking about our gospel identity, and I've been crafting for you with some help of Wes and his grammatical prowess some summary statements to help us kind of get our heads around what it is that we're talking about as we look at the scripture together. And we started off with the idea of gospel identity. Who is it that we are in Christ? If you have placed believing faith in Christ, who are you? And the statement was as follows, by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, we are justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him. This gospel identity is our great motivation for worship. So having once been enemies of God because of our sin, having set ourselves against Him by the way that we lived, that record of wrong has been dismissed, and we've been granted the righteousness of Christ by believing in His person and His work. And if we have done this, we're accepted by God in Christ. We now have restored relationship with God. And it's that reality that causes worship to spring forth and worship that comes from every aspect of our living, not just music. So in all things we worship because of who God has made us in Christ. Romans chapter 12, verse 1, Paul writes, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, the therefore is there because of the magnificent gospel presentation that has been given in the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans. I appeal to you, therefore, because of these truths of the gospel, brothers, you are found in Christ by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. And what Paul is saying is that brothers, those found in Christ, give all of yourself to the worship of God. Having experienced the mercies of God to us, in Christ, we live for Him. We've been talking and using the metaphor of good trees, leaning heavily on this biblical metaphor. And the logo, it's not up there at the moment, but the logo, you're seeing it on papers everywhere. We might be overusing it, in fact, is to state that as good trees, the evidence of such is that we bear good fruit, right? We don't bear good fruit to become good trees, but we are good trees, and therefore, good fruit comes forth. And we've been presenting to you that the bearing of fruit takes effort on our part.

The process of becoming perfect in Christ is a process that takes us as the Lord is working in it. So there's some things that we must pick up and do and strive for and aim for, right?

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it's God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. So we work as God works. And I've said to you before, we work as if it all depends on us, and we praise the Lord that anything good is accomplished by His power within us.

[5 : 12] And we're looking at four different areas of Christian living, fruit areas, if you prefer. And I recognize full well that these things are not nice, tidy, neat categories. They overlap in many, many

ways. And so I don't mean to be over-reductionary as we talk about the Christian life, but it's helpful, I think, for us to have hooks to hang our ideas on. And so that's what we're attempting to do as we look at gospel identity and then coming out of that gospel conviction, gospel community, which is where we find ourselves today, and then coming weeks, gospel character and gospel commission. It is our hope that you are so tired of hearing about these things by the end of this year, but that your life is being molded and changed by what the Scripture has to say concerning these things. We want to see improvement in the life of our congregation.

So today, the summary statement for gospel community is this, being justified before God, forgiven and adopted by Him, we worship Him through gospel community.

Loving the church in varying means of fellowship and service. Now, this morning, I want to speak to you plainly, and I want to speak to you briefly, I hope, for multiple reasons. Number one, this has been a trying week for me, concerning community in a number of ways, and the details of which are not really important. But I have to tell you honestly that as I sat to prepare this particular sermon, some personal vendetta came out in my notes, and I had moments where I would take and highlight and delete whole pages and go, nope, not okay. Like, my motivation in saying the things that I'm getting riled up to say are not from love, and so I've gone through that cycle a number of times. It's been trying for me this week. Further, we have and we will speak often concerning gospel community. We speak about it a lot, and if you know me very well at all, you'll know that the topic of the local church is one of my great passions. I've seen its great need and the loss of the doctrine of the local church, and so we certainly will be talking about it more in the future. And then finally, you've soldiered through some long sermons lately, and I want to give you some mental space to consider the application of this morning's message for you. We're going to talk very practically at some points, and I want you to really consider what this means, what the Word of God means for your life today and as we move forward into this year. So our text for today, Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24 and 25, included on your notes there for you to mark up. This is not for you to ignore the text in your scripture, but for you to mark that up if you'd like to on that page. In order for us to get to Hebrews 10, 24 and 25, it's really appropriate that we back up to verse 19. So I'll begin reading Hebrews chapter 10, beginning in verse 19.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. Now let's pause for just a moment at the end of verse 23 and see that this text teaches us two wonderful privileges granted to us by the gospel. Two wonderful privileges. Number one, unlimited accessibility to God. Verse 19 and 20.

[9 : 25] Because we now have this confidence, because of what Christ has done for us, because he has been the perfect sacrifice for our sin, the sacrificial system has now been done away with. The temple curtain has been torn.

We now have full granted access, unfettered access to God because of Christ. And you see that in verses 19 and 20. Unlimited accessibility to God. Secondly, we have great advocacy with God. Verse 21. We have a great priest over the house of God. The Lord Jesus Christ sits at the Father's right hand interceding for us. The access that we have is because of our great clothing in Christ. And we have him as our advocate. And so the text goes on. Because of this, because of these realities, right? Unlimited accessibility to God and great advocacy with God. And the writer of Hebrews gives us three exhortations. Number one, he says, let us draw near to God. We have full granted access, right? What a wonderful privilege it is to know God, not in theory, but in reality, relationally. Let us draw near to God. Verse 22. Secondly, let us hold fast the confession of our hope. Let us contend for the truth. Let's cling dearly to the convictions that we have in the gospel. Verse 23. And the third exhortation is found in verses 24 and 25. You're wondering when we're getting there. Here we are. Verses 24 and 25. The third exhortation. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for our good and his glory. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. So I've shown you the two exhortations. Let us draw near to God. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope. What is the third

exhortation? What is the third exhortation? Let us consider how to stir up one another. And the Greek word for stir up is a very fascinating word. It can mean to stimulate, to stimulate, to spur on. Some would translate it in courage. Some incite. My favorite is agitate.

Let us consider. Let us figure out how we can bug each other to the end of love and good works. The linguist Colin Round translated it affectionate incitement. Bringing somebody to, and whenever I think of inciting, I think of inciting someone to violence. Let's use the way I hear that word used. Here, affectionately inciting somebody to love and good works. So this is an affectionate incitement. This third exhortation is giving us that we would love one another with action. Consider how we're to do this. And it's a work, right? I love that the writer of Hebrews says, and let us consider, right? He's not suggesting that we just think about how to do it. We're going to do it, but he's saying there's effort required on our part, right? That it's going to take varying means. How do we do this work of inciting one another affectionately to love and good works? And I would suggest to you that affectionately inciting someone to be Christ-like would be to say that we should love the church to love and good works. And so your summary statement says that, right? Gospel community, loving the church. Now, beloved, if we love

[13:47] Christ, we will love what he loves. Jesus loves the church. Ephesians 5.25 says, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Jesus loves the church because Jesus purchased the church. Acts 20.28.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. To care for the church. Jesus loves the church. Jesus loves the church because Jesus purchased the church with his own life. And Jesus identifies himself with the church. Acts 9.4. And falling to the ground, he, being Saul, heard a voice saying to him, this is Jesus speaking, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Saul is going around and hauling off Christians to jail. Christ identifies himself with the suffering of the church. So if we love Christ, we will love what he loves. Jesus loves the church because Jesus purchased the church and Jesus identifies himself with the church. What a great mark of true genuine, genuine regeneration is that we love what Jesus loves. And we do that through affectionate incitement, this love with action. And there's an aim to this incitement, right? We're pressing at people, we're pushing at one another to love and good work. We're pressing that we might walk in the ways of Jesus. We could call this activity discipleship. We rightly call it discipleship. And every activity of the church should be discipleship. Unless we have erred and we have wandered off into becoming a country club and we're simply holding activities for the sake of drawing us together so that we can all be good friends. If we are meeting together for the exaltation of Jesus Christ, then we meet together in order to press at each other in Christ likeness. What is a disciple? Simply a follower and propagator of Jesus, his teaching and his ways. So discipleship is affectionate incitement to this end. I fear too often we have too narrow of a view of what discipleship is. Certainly this morning, teaching you from the Word of God is discipleship, right? We're very carefully picking out songs that are true in their content, right? To get your heart and your head to unite together is discipleship. I hope you leave humming tunes and considering the truth of God to you in Christ. Sometimes I want to take breaks from preaching altogether and just read you the scripture that's being referenced in all the songs that we sing. If you'll take some time, you'll see that they're rich with the truth of God. All that we do together is or should be at least discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a wonderful book called *The Cost of Discipleship*, I commend it to you, where in which he defines what discipleship is and what it is not. He wrote this, discipleship means adherence to Christ. And because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous. And in fact, they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever and are essentially contrary to the whole conception of following Christ. I'm going to sum that up for you in my own words, right? He's saying abstractly knowing about Christ and about his ways is not discipleship at all. With an abstract idea, it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps

even to put it into practice, but it can never be followed in personal obedience. And here's what I want you to stick in your mind. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship. And Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. So we begin in Christ and we continue in Christ to be pressed on in his ways. And a primary grace to us in this effort is the gospel community. So discipleship is affectionate incitement to follow Jesus' teaching

and his ways.

And the author of Hebrews states this activity, this following of Jesus' ways in the to love, right? Love, which is an affection. I would argue with you that it's an affection that is decided upon. You set your affection on an object of affection and you seek the greatest good of that object. So love and good works are beautiful deeds. And this certainly expands beyond just the life of a congregation to the community around us. But for this morning's sake, we'll focus our energy on good works to one another. And good works are just a tangible outworking of that affection. And so we love the church in varying means of fellowship and of service. And I think if you're looking at that summary statement, you could make some synonymous connections. And I don't, it's not really that important that you do so. I'm not trying to rewrite Hebrews chapter 10 verse 25, but to say, 24, excuse me, loving the church would be to say to stir up, right? How do we affectionately incite, how are we agitating each other in a positive way would be to love. And we're going to do so to the church in varying means of fellowship, which is a closeness. And here we could see love in the fellowship of the saints and service, which is good works. So we're to love the church in these ways. But before we move on, what is the church? And many in our day have a confusion about this. And many would call this building the church.

And that's confusing. I am not exhorting you today to love this building. You might be able to love me by loving the building, but I'm not ultimately suggesting that you love the building. What is the church? And the study of the church is called ecclesiology. It's the theology of the church. The word means literally church knowledge or church logic. And as we approach ecclesiology, it's really better to ask not what is the church or more rightly to ask who is the church. The Greek word ecclesia is a very general word, kind of a generic word, in fact, in Greek, and it simply means the gathered ones. So as we talk about the church of Jesus Christ, it's a it's a people gathered around an event, namely Christ redeeming his people, his life, his death, and his resurrection. That's who we are. It's not gathered for an hour and a half ish on Sunday morning. It's gathered as a people around an event, not a series of events, right? Life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We as the church need to see that that permeates all of who we are. We carry as the church of Christ, the message of Christ everywhere that we go. The church is both invisible and visible, right? Invisible is the church as God sees it, all true believers for all time. One of the reasons that we like to quote old dead guys and put it on the front of your bulletin is not because we want to sound smart. The point of that is to try to connect you to the church invisible, right? To remember that that we're not alone and we have a legacy of people that have gone before us, right? That we owe an allegiance to only as they were following

[22 : 36] Christ. They say things often much better than I can, but what great access we have. I want you, especially you college students, to study theology and do so by the study of old books. It'll serve your soul well. So the church is invisible. It's also visible. The church as man sees it, as we can see and touch and tangibly understand the church to be. The church is both universal in that it's nationwide, people meeting everywhere this day, right? Gathered together in a large reality. And it's also local, and that's the form that is most mentioned in the scripture. So it's a people. It's not a property.

It's not programs. It's a people. So that's what we're to love, right? We're to love the people that we call the church. How do we do this? We do it in varying means of fellowship and service. A man named David Mathis published a book recently called Habits of Grace, also commended to you. He wrote this concerning fellowship. He wrote, It's a shame the word fellowship has fallen on hard times in some circles and is dying the death of domestication and triviality. It is an electric reality in the New Testament, an indispensable ingredient in the Christian faith and one of God's chief means of grace in our lives. The koinonia, Greek for commonality, partnership, fellowship, that the first Christian shared, wasn't anchored in a common love for pizza, pop, and a nice clean evening of fun among the fellow churchified. Pop is what they call Coke up north. I don't want you to get confused in the quote. Its essence was in their common

Christ and their common life or death mission together in his summons to take the faith worldwide in the face of impending persecution. Rightly did Tolkien call his nine the fellowship of the ring. This is no chummy hobnob with apps and drinks and a game on the tube. It is an all-in, life-or-death, collective venture in the face of great evil and overwhelming opposition. True fellowship is less like friends gathered to watch the Super Bowl and more like players on the field in blood, sweat, and tears, huddled in the backfield only in preparation for the next down. True

fellowship in this age is more the invading troops side by side on the beach at Normandy than it is the gleeful revelers in the street on VE day, the day after. Right? So, I just realized I made a big commendation to you to read old guys and I read a very modern guy who talked about apps and pop in the Super Bowl.

Contemporary authors are also beneficial to us. But this is that picture of fellowship, right? It's not it's not just macaroni and cheese after the service, right? It can include that in it, but it means so much more. The idea of fellowship is us gathered together and living our lives together for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ, right? It's us linking arms together in a battle, not seeking our leisure apart from it. We are designed for fellowship, right? If you are saved, God has saved you as an individual. But more than that, God has saved a church. He's called a people and he means for you to be a part of that people. Now, at this point, I know that I'm kind of preaching to the choir because you're here, right? And that's a wonderful thing. And there are people who aren't here who should be here and need to hear what I'm saying. And I want to say to you, right, that you need to help spread truth.

[26 : 44] You need to be talking to your friends, members. We need to be connecting with those members who aren't here and haven't been here for some time. We need to understand why they haven't been. And if it's simply that they've misunderstood, there's been a lack of understanding on their part over the need of community, then we need to help them to recognize that because we love them. We are designed for fellowship. The more I mature in my Christian walk, the more I recognize my need, of Christian fellowship, right? I have always had need of it. It's never not been a need of mine. But the more I grow up, the more I recognize my need of it. Across the years of pastoring here, when I take a vacation, I miss you guys more. In the beginning days, I was so glad to have a week off. Now, it's like, I want to jump back in the car and drive back up here. I miss you guys when I'm not with you, right?

I'm not outgrowing my need of you. Look at the, in our text, the corporate nature of God's people. Just look quickly at the plural pronouns. Verse 19, since we have confidence. Verse 20, that he opened for us. Verse 21, since we have a great priest. Verse 22, let us, our hearts, our bodies. Verse 23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope. And verse 24, let us consider. The idea of a Christianity devoid of the church is entirely foreign to the pages of the New Testament. Now, we sent out a member health survey, and I talked about this a bit at length last Sunday. If you'd like to go back and listen to that, I would encourage you to do so if you, if you missed it. Some of the, the ways in which we went about this. When we asked questions in the areas of these four C's, rightly, I should say we made statements and asked people to gauge their agreement or disagreement with these statements. And I am,

I am encouraged by the response. We scored best in the area of gospel community. I think that our church generally gets this more than many others do. Does not mean that we have arrived. It does not mean that there's not room for improvement. But we've done well, and my exhortation to you is that we can do better. I think generally as a people, we do well, but there are those who still lack the right and proper commitment to a local congregation that they need. College students, if you're here and your visitors, this is all entirely new to you, I want you to be involved in a biblically faithful, Christ-centered local congregation. We want to be that for you. We labor to do it well. We're not perfect. There's no such thing as a perfect church. We sure are trying. We'd love for you to be here. If it's not here, do it somewhere. Like, please don't spend your college years church hopping and bouncing and bouncing and bouncing and bouncing. Your soul will suffer for it, and I'm telling you that from experience. Get involved. Get yourself entrenched as quickly as you can with the people who are going to agitate you to love and to good works. John MacArthur once shared a story, which I'm pretty sure I've read to you before, but it's good, so I'm going to read it again.

He wrote, A pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember, and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow, and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and extinguished.

[31 : 09] Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor

reached the door to leave, his host said, Thank you so much for your visit, and especially for the fiery sermon.

I shall be back in church next Sunday. And I could account to you many, many stories of people who have withdrawn themselves from the fellowship of our church and from other local congregations, and they have always suffered for it. We have this strange notion that we have to be all put together when we come to church.

And so often when people don't feel put together, they don't want to be here. Beloved, this is the place you need to be when you're not put together, which we ever are really put together. This is the place you should come in times of hardship. You should want to be with God's people who are going to lift your hopes beyond the trivial things of this world. We're going to point you to Christ. That's why I miss fellowship with our body. I don't have to be preaching. I'm not concerned about the details of the service and how they're going to work out. I know you guys do fine in my absence. The reason I miss you is because I need my heart warmed at the hearth of Christ. I need to experience him afresh, and I experience him in part in you, in your lives, right, in your exuberance, your desire to be here. You just sitting in a seat is an encouragement to me on a Sunday morning. Glad to have you. We need one another. Let me do share with you a positive engagement, though, in the life of our church that I admired immensely. A lot of you know who the Zwimpies are. If you don't, I hope that at some point you get to know them. I think they're going to be returning to us from Germany this summer for some time. A precious family, Ryan and Kathleen and their five daughters. They're now serving at a school in Germany, and as we are prepared to send them off, we raise support for them. Many people rallied around them in that. Our church rallied around them in that. I was so impressed that they never disengaged from the life of our church. What an obvious time, right, to get all of the details put together to move to another country. And it was a massive amount of details that they were having to work out to not just say, well, Sunday mornings are not as important anymore, right?

We're transitioning out, and we can go through a transitional time. They came two days before they got on a plane and left and helped me with work on the church property, right? I wanted just to go, go home. What are you doing here, right? They were in constant fellowship. In fact, it may have even got more fervent before they left out of a desperation to be with you a little bit longer before they took off. I think I would have disengaged. I have to be honest with you. I think I would have said, what's the point, right? Why put more energy into this now? I'm leaving. I've gone for years. I won't be able to connect and know these people the same way anymore. They were a precious example of the way in which you should love the local church. Now, if you were a guest here, you're off the hook for a little while. My encouragement to you would be to get involved with the local church and to become a member of the local church, to commit to a local congregation in that way. We've got a members class next Sunday. You're welcome to come to. I'd love to have you at it. Members, we signed a covenant together. We made promises to one another in that covenant. And I want to remind you of a few of them. I've got a copy here of the prospective new members packets. We committed to each other to love the church with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ. We committed to each other to promote the edification and sanctification of the church. We committed to hold ourselves and the brethren, the church, to the standard of Scripture. And we committed to contribute to the work of the church with our talents, with our time, and with our finances.

[35 : 47] And some of you fall short in this regard. And I know that life is crazy. I know it's busy. And I know that it's difficult for me to say all this because some of you may think, well, it's your job.

And I've got to tell you honestly that I'm really thankful that it's my job sometimes because it makes sure I do it. I have to be here. I can't just flake out. It's impossible for me to do that. And I have to tell you honestly, I might flake out sometimes if that wasn't the case. I don't want you to be flaky. The balance of life and all of the many things that are going on in it is crazy. I'm there with you. I have three children and a wife at home and many, many responsibilities on my plate. We have got to quit trying to balance everything. We've got to start prioritizing things. And because I love you incredibly, I want you to put first and foremost above everything else, your soul. And because I'm so convinced that the grace of the church is necessary for you, I want you to prioritize being part of the church, being part of the fellowship. Boy, we work at making every time together we have valuable for you. I don't want to just waste your time. I want us to come together, right? If we don't come together and have your heart warmed toward Christ to the best of our ability, then you might as well go hiking on

Sunday mornings and be contemplative, right? Come here and experience Christ. This is our great hope. And we want to draw you together in greater and higher degree. The picture of the early church was a church devoted to one another in all components of life and are very compartmentalized, very industrialized lives now make that really hard. I'm going to tell you honestly, I'd love to have your whole Sunday. I'd love to return to an idea of keeping the Sabbath and just have you all day long, right? And we could pack it in on a wonderful day of resting in the Lord. I think we might be kicking too hard against the culture if we tried to accomplish such a thing. And so we've tried to break out times of meeting together around specific activities and to help you grasp the breadth of what we ought to be doing together as the church. But even those times aren't completely sufficient for that, we need to be seeking out each other in the in-between times as well. We need to be knowing each other across our lives. But as we've made commitments to each other and as we're pressing at what we're going to be doing together, we're going to up the expectations around here on members, right? And I don't believe that we're actually changing anything. I don't think we're giving any new directives out. I think we're simply more carefully defining what the covenant means. And I share these with you. If you're a member of this church and you're just not willing to commit to these things, you have my permission to bow out, okay? Because I want to love you well. I'm tired of letting people go on nominally and not thrive in their Christian walk because I'm being soft, right? I'm going to agitate you to love and good works, right? Because I care about you, right? Because I love you immensely. I want you engaged for your sake and for ours. There's risk in all of this of becoming legalistic. I think that anytime a high expectation is put on anybody, it gets quickly branded as legalism. Legalism says that I want you to look like me. I don't want you to look like me. I want you to look like Christ. There's ways we got to get that in. So, if you're a member of Christ Family Church or becoming, and I hope you are, there are three meetings that we want you to be a part of consistently. And this will begin to be expected of you in this year. Number one is our congregational meetings, gathering here on Sundays that we can be together. In all of these things, if you are throwing up or you have a fever, please stay home. Feel free to take a vacation. That's okay. I'm not saying you have to be here every single

[39 : 53] Sunday, but there should be a reason that you're not here. There should be a reason that you can't come and fellowship with us. And someone should know why, right? Don't let the reason be that you're flaky, right? That you woke up and you're a little groggy from staying out late the night before, right?

You need to be with God's people on Sunday mornings as we meet together. I wonder if we've ever had every member of Christ Family Church here on a Sunday. And I would guess we haven't. That's sad.

Congregational meetings. Secondly, community group. There are sign-up sheets out in the hallway. If you're a member of this church and you're not currently part of a community group, go out there and look at the times that they meet. We have a meeting on Sunday afternoons now, Monday night, Tuesday night, and Wednesday night. I hope that one of those times is convenient for you. If it's not, come talk to me. And I've said that before, and people have complained behind my back that there wasn't a time available for them, and they never came and talked to me. Just come talk to me. Like, I want to be accommodating. We want to help you be part of this community of faith. Come tell me why you're unable to do so, and we'll make it possible for you to do so. Be part of a community group, that smaller sphere coming in tighter, of people that can know you more and that you can know. It's not really reasonable for us to all know each other super well in this setting, but a community group, you can. And then down beyond that, and because we've got to keep the alliteration going. There it is. Wes made you a picture so the name made sense. A core group, and what we're going to call these, and I know core groups used in other contexts. Sorry. This is small group discipleship. So this is one-to-one, one-to-some, or some-to-some discipleship. You getting in with at least one other person, or a small group of people, three, four, five people, and studying together. Addressing these areas of Christian living, right? This conviction areas, and community areas, and character, and the commission areas, right? It's getting down to that place together, which we need, right? You need to have, Clay and I like to call bro time.

You've got to get it in in that way. You have to have a place of deep confession, and encouragement, and accountability, right? We need those kinds of things to be happening. We're going to talk more about the necessity of these things, and what should be happening in those to make it a discipleship process, but you're going to be part of these three things, okay? We're not

going to try to program this thing like crazy core groups. We're just going to start talking about it. Hey, who are you getting it in with? It's got to be with somebody. It doesn't have to be for a year. You could go through a book together and move on to somebody else. Who are you meeting with and being intimate with? Investing in and being invested in. Clay has very graciously agreed to give some leadership to this. We hope to have some trainings for it, so if you're going, we got to do what?

We want to help you and give you leadership and service in this direction, but I want on your radar right now, if you're going to be a member of Christ Family Church, you're going to be involved in these three things. Not in a legalistic way, right? Not with perfection, right? But you need to be engaged, and we want you to be because we love you. So various means of fellowship, right? Meeting together. You got a note that in our text, we're going to consider how to show one another up to love and good works, right? Which verse 24 has necessitated on us being together, right? Because verse 25, the writer of Hebrews states it in the negative, right? Which we can then assume the positive. He says, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some. Like first century church, it was already an issue, right? Still an issue today. So if we're to not neglect meeting together, then we must meet together in order to incite one another affectionately through fellowship and through service. Galatians 6, 9, and 10, and let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are the household of faith. Romans 12, 10, Paul says, outdo one another in showing honor. Now, I, as a pastor here at Christ Family Church, have read things like this, outdo one another in showing honor, and I've taken it on myself to make it like a service competition. Paul writes in one of the letters to the Corinthians, I would most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. And I've wanted this to be a characteristic of me, that if it's going to get done, I'll get it done. But in doing that, in an effort,

[44 : 44] I think a well-intentioned effort, I have just taken on too much. And in an elder meeting not all that long ago, I was really sinfully venting a little bit about how much I had going on.

And Doug Hitchcock, in his very mellow way, said, you know you created that culture. And so, I've called it the Nathan's got it culture. The assumption that things will get done, because they have been getting done. There's been a way. And I'm not negating that other people don't do things around here either. Please don't hear me saying that. But I've taken on too much. I've overloaded myself. It's made me have to neglect some other things that I should be doing better than I am. It's denied you of service opportunities. There's so many lessons to be learned in humbly serving the life of a congregation. Charles Spurgeon, this is on your bulletin. He said, there's always a set of grumblers about who think they could preach better and manage better than anybody else. They're the people who generally do nothing at all. And we have found that to be true. It's very interesting how people who typically have the most complaints are the least involved. in the typical, ongoing, day-to-day life of a church. So, there are things that need doing. And as I said, I don't want you to serve property. But you can serve me and you can serve others here by being engaged in just service stuff here on the property. There's a lot of stuff that goes into putting on our gathering together. So, as such, if you are a member of Christ Family Church, you're going to serve on a service team.

You're going to be part of getting in together, right? Time, talents. You're going to offer your gifting and your service to us. Sometimes, to my chagrin, ministry apprentices this afternoon, we're going to be going through some spiritual gifting. And I've just heard people not serve, not physically serve, because that's not their gift.

[46 : 47] Too bad. You've got arms and legs. You can push a vacuum cleaner, right? It's possible that you can do these things. And it'll be good for you, especially if you have the inclination in you not to do it, to get in and do it.

If you are over 60, we're not going to make you serve on a service team. But your service is valuable and it's important. And there's probably some more spiritually applicable ways that you can serve that would serve us better than vacuuming. Open up some time for you, for some of these young people that desperately need your wisdom. We want you to engage all the same. We're not going to ask that you sign a sheet today. But, members, there's some teams and you need to get on one of these. And we're going to be following up on this kind of stuff. We want you serving in some capacity. Members, a lot of our non-members, regular non-members, out-serve you. And I find that shameful.

I think that's a sad thing, that you're getting out-served by the non-members. We should be hosting them, not the other way around. Those teams are the hospitality team.

Matt Sossman and Jake Risner have kind of teamed up to give us leadership that. We're kind of changing what that looks like. But they're basically, I told, this is the analogy I gave them. I said, look, on Sunday mornings, we're throwing a huge party at the church building.

[48 : 12] And I got the entertainment part covered. But you've got to do everything else. People are showing up to your house, right? So the coffee has to be made. We've got to make sure things are picked up and clean. We've got the Lord's Supper supplies. We've got offering things.

There may come a day where we have to start making you park differently, tighter together. These guys might run out and put an umbrella over your head when you're getting out of the car on a rainy day.

Hospitality team is important because it just says to people, whether they're part of our church or guests to our church, that we love you and we care. Weekly cleaning. Abby Mewson is giving leadership to this.

It has to get done every single week. You'll be surprised when you walk out of here how dirty this building is. And it has to be tidied up. It's a major undertaking, and she needs help. Building and grounds maintenance.

Doug and Lisa Shelnut have been giving leadership to that. There's always a project. There's never not a project on this property to be done. And we certainly could use your help. Childcare.

[49 : 10] My mom, Julie Rayner, is heading that up. She's not had to do a whole lot as of late. We have the prayer meeting on Sunday mornings, and she's been organizing people to care for the children during that.

We're going to expand when childcare is offered a little bit. As you all know, we do family-integrated worship. We like to call it multi-generational worship and have the kids in the service with us.

We provide other areas for parents to go if they need to, an overflow space across the hall, a nursing room. In addition to that, we're going to begin providing care for little, little ones, little guys. And it's not our intention that we change who we are, but that we help people become who we are. So as people are coming into the life of our church, they just have some assistance in the process of doing that.

So we're going to have care downstairs. We're going to be encouraging children to be in the service with us, welcoming them, happy that they're here with us. But when that family is having a tough time, they're falling apart on a Sunday morning, we want to be there to love and serve and encourage and disciple them in the process of helping their children sit in the services with us.

[50 : 17] So we're going to expand that a little bit. Member care, Barbara Hitchcock heads that up. So when we have someone in the hospital, when someone has a baby, we plan and organize meals and get all that taken care of.

Barbara handles all that, and she could use some help with it. And we're going to be shifting oversight of all these positions off of me and to Doug Hitchcock. So Doug's going to start overseeing all of this and giving some orchestration to it.

It'll be a little bit of a process, those of you who are in those leadership roles, but we're going to be doing that so that it's not my primary or secondary or third concern. We have an audio-visual team. It takes a lot. There's people sitting back in the back right now that are on that that are pushing buttons and making sure that stuff works on a Sunday morning. And John Sheatham heads that up and, again, could use some help.

I think we lost some of our trained people to CFC Oakwood when we planted that this summer. And so we could use some more folks that could be trained on how to use that stuff back there. And then finally, we've formed a new team called the communication team, which Andy Truitt is going to head up to help us.

[51 : 22] We're rebuilding a website. Just help us more consistently and clearly communicate. So you won't contact me anymore for an announcement. You'll contact Andy for an announcement, and he'll get that together.

And Wes Shelnut is going to be giving oversight to those two things. So, again, out in the hallway on that table, there are forms for this. If you're a member of our church, you really need to be prayerfully considering where you can serve.

Serve in multiple places. That's great. Sign up on every single one of them as long as you're not spreading yourself too thin. But we need to get people on these places, and we will come and recruit you if you don't sign up to serve in some regard.

So the exhortation to us is to consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. And I hope that you're feeling agitated. I hope that you're seeing that you have an important part to play in the life of a local congregation.

I hope that those of you who have already committed to being part of a local congregation are maybe finding some space and some ways that you can give a bit more of yourself to the life of this church.

[52 : 27] None of this is about preserving a piece of property. None of it is about being social. All of this is about taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to our community and to the ends of the earth.

It takes all of us pitching in. We're the body of Christ. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.