

The Church, Pt. 2—Believers are One Body
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This past semester I had the opportunity to go and hang out with the high school seniors a few different times during small group on Wednesday nights. And a week-and-a-half ago was one of those opportunities. It was kinda fun, 'cause what they've been doing is they...the leaders have me come in and talk through just different issues, challenges, questions that would be good to address for seniors who are about to graduate and go to college or go on in careers, or whatever God has before them. And what they have me come in and talk about was actually this right here, about a week-and-a-half ago, the body of Christ, the community of Christ...why is it even important to be in a church, or what's it matter, who cares? And I went to Ephesians chapter 4.

Well, it was really cool, because the following day, on Thursday last week, Larry tells me...I knew that I was going to preach here this week, but he tells me 'Listen, I'm going to be going through Ephesians 3 this week,' which was last week, 'and so I'm going to be going through Ephesians 3; I'd like for you to go through Ephesians 4.' And I was like 'Wow! I just went through that!' So I've actually been having this rattling around in my head quite a bit over the past couple of weeks, and even the last couple of months. And that's what we're going to talk through today...Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1-16, and looking at the body of Christ.

As you're turning there I'll go ahead and give you the bottom line of what we're going to see here, why is it important for you to be in a body of believers, a church? Why is it important for you to be integrated, intimately integrated, within that church? Two things...1) the church will suffer if you are not there. Ok? 2) You will suffer if you are not there. And we'll see how that plays out. Ok? It has a drastic impact on you and the church. And this actually goes counter to much of our culture. Why? Because we are Americans, and not only are we Americans, but we are Alaskans. We want to be self-reliant; we don't need anyone else. We are an island unto ourselves. 'If I can't do it, nobody can.' Can-do attitude, whatever. Ok? That doesn't work, spiritually, and we're gonna see why. Ok? And so just to give you a heads-up, if you have that sort of just attitude ingrained in your heart and ingrained in your being this may be a difficult one for you to hear, ok?, if you apply that same one to the spiritual life. Ok? I'm just giving you a warning straight out. And just so that you know, if you take issue with what's...feel free, take it up with the Apostle Paul. I'm not coming up with this on my own, ok? We're going to walk through this and you'll see how this plays out. Ephesians 4:1, it says

I therefore, a prisoner for the LORD, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...

We're gonna stop right there. I know we didn't make it too far, but we're gonna stop right there. Who! Ok. And just the reason we're gonna stop right there is because he says, "Therefore...", ok? Have you guys ever heard...what do you do when you see the word 'therefore'? You see what it's there for! Exactly. Ok? Why is it there? Ok. The word 'therefore'--why is it there, what's it there for? Ok? Well, because the reason for that is because the word 'therefore' connects whatever came before to whatever comes after. Because of what happened or what we've just said, this is the nature result; this is the outcome. Ok? Because of this, therefore that.

So what happens here? In Ephesians chapters 1, 2, and 3 Paul outlines the Gospel. He outlines the truth that we are saved by grace, and grace alone. He outlines the truth that I am so messed up that I can't save myself. God is the only one who can save me, and the same for you. But the good news is that God has offered salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to forgive my sins. And he goes...in chapter 3 he ends up saying, as Larry talked about last week, He builds the church and the church is a demonstration of God's wisdom. And he's talking about the value of that, and the fact that that is rooted firmly in the Gospel.

And then Paul goes on and he says, "Therefore..." in Ephesians 4:1, and everything afterwards follows based upon the Gospel. The implication is this: how you react to, and how much you display, what Paul is about to go through is a direct indication of how well you understand have have grasped the Gospel in your own heart. Ok? Let me word this a little bit differently. The better you understand the Gospel and have grasped it in your heart, the more and more your life will reflect what he is about to talk about. Ok? Because of the Gospel this is what should happen if the Gospel is alive, and growing, and vibrant, working into the depth of your being. Ok? Therefore, because of the Gospel, therefore this is the response to the Gospel. So that's what he's saying, ok? And I'll go on.

Chapter...or verse 2 he continues

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

We'll go ahead and stop right there for just a moment, and what we'll do is we'll look through what can we tell, what can we learn, what is Paul trying to show us in here. And there's some different implications, but basically what it comes down to is the fact that believers are part of one body. We are part of one body. If you are a follower of Christ here today, you are a part of the body that every other believer is a part of here. Ok? Well who, what...? Ok, who? What? How...what does that make a difference? Let's put it this way. There are two things that are implications of this. One is...don't tear down the church. Don't tear down the church. And the second is that a separated body part is dismembered. And here's...I'll explain.

What kind of sense would it make for an arm, hypothetically speaking...I know this is not possible, but what kind of sense would it make for an arm if it said, 'You know what? My body is pretty messed up; it's got problems, and so I'm just going to detach myself and I'm going to go look and find a different body.' That would not make sense, ok? Nor would it make sense for my body, if my arm is injured, that I'm like, 'You know what? It's injured; I should probably just get rid of it. I'll hack it off right there. I don't need an arm. There we go. It's gone.' Ok? That's not the way we respond. If our body is messed up, if it's injured, or if there is a problem, if there's a sickness, we work to heal it. We go and see a doctor. One part of our body takes care of the other. My hands...if I stub my toe or something and it starts bleeding all over the place, my hands are going to reach down and stop the bleeding, ok, and try to take care of that part of the body. That is the natural response of a body. Now here's the thing. Because the Gospel unifies us with one body, one Spirit, one Lord...all of these things, the implication is if there is something wrong with the church and your natural response is to tear it down, there's a problem. You don't understand the Gospel.

Think about this. If your natural response is to look at Wasilla Bible Church and say, 'Man, it's messed up,' yeah, we are. I'll go ahead and admit it, ok? We are a body of people who admit the fact that we are so messed up we can't save ourselves. We are so messed up only God can save us. That's how messed up we are. Ok? If that is the case, we should expect the fact that there are going to be problems. We are not perfect people; we will not always see eye-to-eye. It does no good to tear one another apart. All that is is creating more damage to the body. Help fix it! Help fix it. If you have an issue with someone, is your response to talk about them behind their back, or to voice your frustration to all these other people? Or is your response to go and talk to this person and say, 'I've got this difficulty. Let's see if we can work it out.' Are you creating unity, and protecting and maintaining the unity of the body, or are you tearing the body apart? If you are not working to maintain the unity of the body, that's an indication that you still yet need to understand and grasp more of the Gospel in your life. Because the problem is you are so focused on yourself, instead of focused on God, that you see the problems with everyone else and you are not seeing them through the guise of the Gospel, the compassionate eyes of Christ that He sees that person through.

Not only that, but there is somethin' that run into periodically, and this is this idea that 'Well, I don't...I don't really get anything out of it, so it doesn't really matter if I'm there or not. I can come, I can go. I'll come and go as I see fit, 'cause there's other things that I've got going on, and so really it doesn't matter. It doesn't do anything for me.' Well first of all, I will point out that church is not all about you, ok? This is not 'me-church'. You know...it's not all about you. The simple fact...if you look at it and you say, 'I can disconnect myself and I'm fine. I can have a growing, vibrant faith apart from the body of Christ, being regularly involved in a body of Christ,' you are lying to yourself. It is completely untrue, unbiblical, and I am absolutely convinced that it is a lie straight from Satan himself, that you can grow as a Christian apart from a body of Christ. It is completely un-...you will not find any bit of Scriptural support for it. But time and time and time again what you will find is Christ and His apostles say, 'You need to be a part of the body of Christ.' So if you separate yourself that would be about like an arm just saying, 'This is ridiculous. This body doesn't do anything for me. It doesn't do... I don't need this body, and it doesn't matter. I'll come and go as this... It doesn't matter.' And so the arm detaches itself...imagine if this were possible; I know it's not. But imagine my arm just detaches itself. It falls on the floor, and my hand starts kinda, you know, kind of...I don't know, kind of pullin' my arm away, or whatever. It's not gonna last, even if that was hypothetically possible, it's not gonna last very long. What's going to start happening to that arm? You can interact... What's going to start happening with that arm? It's gonna die! Ok? Rot! Nasty gangrene, maggots are going to set in. It is going to be nasty, ok? That is what we call a dismembered body part.

What do you think you are when you cut yourself apart from the church? What do you think starts to happen to your heart and your soul, your spirit? What do you think starts to happen spiritually? You are not an island unto yourself. God did not design you to be that way.

Let's put it this way. If I were to flip it around, and let's just say we're talking sports 'cause this is something that, for whatever reason, our culture understands, if you were part of a sports team or a part of a band, a musical group, or something like that, you probably would have the commitment to make sure you were at all the practices. You wouldn't miss the games. You'd make sure that you were there at team events, functions. You would make sure that you were there. Why? 'Because it matters that I'm there for the team, and I want to be a part of this.' That doesn't mean that emergencies don't come up, or things where you have to miss a practice or you miss a game. But you would be there. Why is it that in matters that have eternal significance we think it doesn't matter? And we put a whole lot more emphasis and focus on something that really nobody's going to remember two years from now, whether you won or lost that game, or how well you played that set at a concert. It's food for thought.

But also what we see is that...and this kind of is something that goes totally against our culture, and I've already hinted at it, but what we see here in this passage is that there is a unity, but there is also a diversity. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, over all, through all, and in all. What that tells me is this...there is a wealth of individuals, and we all are different. But still yet, we are one, and we are unified in Christ. Because of that we should expect that there will be a unity and a diversity. But here's what I would say—Christianity is personal. It is not individual. See, a lot of times in our culture we confuse the idea that because Christianity is personal, that also means that 'it is my own spiritual journey that I do on my own'. That is completely false. Christianity is personal; it's a decision that no one else can make for you. It doesn't matter what your family has believed or has decided. It doesn't matter how long you've been a part of a church. It doesn't matter if you have spent the last twenty years here working and serving. If you have never come into a personal relationship with the God and Father of the universe, if you have never placed your trust in Jesus Christ to forgive your sins...because He and He alone can do it through the sacrifice that He paid on the cross, and through His resurrection that brought Him to new life, that can bring new life into your life...if you do not have that personal commitment, guess what? You're not one of his followers. And no one else can do it for you. At the same time, just because you have made that commitment doesn't mean that it's an individual walk. God intends for us to walk that personal walk together. It's kinda like the Trinity...one God, three persons. God has always been in relationship—Father, Son, and Spirit—for all of eternity. He is, by nature, relational. If we are made in His image, why do we think that we would be different? God intends it to be that way.

We'll go on, though, and look at this here. Yeah. I'll read 7 through the end here and then we'll talk about it a little bit. It says,

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,

"When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."

(In saying, "He ascended," [he's talking about Christ] what does it mean but that He [Christ] had also descended into the lower regions of the earth? 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 pastors, the teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, , 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.

We're going to go ahead and look at a few of the things that pull out from here, that we can learn from that section of the passage. The first is basically this...the God of the universe, the One who created it all...He intends to work in your life and to fill your life. He intends to work through you. It says that Christ, the One who made it all, He gave gifts to men. He led this host of captives. He's talking about His followers, people who have been set free from captivity to sin and are now captivated by Him and by their love for Him, and they will follow Him wherever they are held captivated by the amazing life-transforming grace that is found in Jesus Christ. He leads these captives and gives them gifts. Why? It goes through and explains through...follow the chain through the parentheses and everything else to where it picks up again. Why? So that He might fill all things.

His intent is He wants to pour His Spirit into your life and fill you up until you are overflowing. And not just your life, but the lives of every single person around you. Now here's the thing...He intends to do this not just through some crazy...where 'Ok, here we go, I'm just going to pour' and we're going to have a bunch of stand-alone little cups or something, 'I'll pour my grace in, oh, that one's full, now I'll move on to the next.' Any of you guys ever done...you know those cupcake holders or the cupcake...I don't know, the things that you bake 'em in, a cupcake...I don't know...it's the metal thing with the cups in it. Whatever you call that thing, ok? If you wash it, you go ahead, you wash it, you turn on the faucet and the water starts dripping into one. What happens when it gets to the...that one cup that it's dripping into gets full? It goes to the next one! Yeah! It overflows and starts pouring into the next one. And it overflows and pours into the next one. That is the way that God's grace extends to all people around you, especially those who don't know Him yet. He intends to pour His grace into your life to the point that it overflows and starts impacting the lives of the people around you. That, if you think about it for just a moment...the God of the universe wants to do that in and through you...that is one of the most amazing miracles that you could ever ask to be a part of. And He gives you gifts to do just that.

So what are these gifts? That's the natural question that comes out of it. Well, basically I would sum it up with this, and this is pulled from this passage. It's also hinted at elsewhere and declared elsewhere in the Scripture. But basically it's any sort of gift, sort of experience or ability, that God gives you in His grace so that His grace can pour out to other people. It's not so that you can be lifted up and encouraged, yourself. It's any sort of experience and ability that God gives you that He can use to pour grace into the lives of other people. He uses it to build up the body, verses 7, 12-13, 16 and indicate that grace was given to each one of us for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the knowledge of the Son of God. When each part is working properly it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. The whole point is so that we will build one another up. That's why God gives this grace, so that we will build one another up and so that we will also make it possible for those who do not yet know Him to encounter His grace. That's the point.

Well, how do you discover 'em? Well, they're basically discovered is they're confirmed by other people in the church. That's what I've encountered in my own life. How many of...have you guys ever taken the spiritual gifts test? It's like, you know, little piece of paper, you answer...like forty-five questions or somethin', fill in...you guys ever taken...any of you? Ok, some of you guys have. Well those, ok, yeah, those can be tools, maybe yeah. But really, how you find out what experiences and abilities God is using to pour out His grace in other people's lives is typically they tell you. They say, 'You know what? When you did this, that meant more to me than you can know. God used that, when you said this or you did that, you have been the...when you shared that experience with me and you were willing to sit with me and go through that same sort of experience right now with me, God's grace worked through you in my life.'

My grandmother, and I'll just...I'll kinda...well, nah, I'll mention this in a minute. But we'll go ahead and we'll carry on here for just a minute, ok? Yeah? No, sorry...we're switching it up a little bit this morning. So basically they're discovered as they're confirmed by other people in the church. My grandmother...I'll go ahead and share this now...she went through this...a couple miscarriages back before I was born, but extremely hard. I've never been through that circumstance. Never have. I personally never will, in terms of me, and by God's grace I hope never to personally experience that in my family. But it was interesting to see my grandmother; throughout the rest of her life...because of that experience she was able to minister to, and pour out God's grace to, numerous other women who went through that experience. She wouldn't wish it on anyone else, but God used that experience to enable her to show grace and to walk through extremely difficult times with other women who were going through that. That was a gift of God's grace that He used to impact other people, to build them up, to draw them closer to God when they were in some of the lowest moments of their lives.

Spiritual gifts can be quite like that, but we'll go on and we'll look at another thing. Well why is it critical? What does it matter? Who cares if I know what my gift is? Well, first of all I would say this. You are uniquely gifted. You are gifted...you have experiences and abilities that no other believer does, and there will never be another believer who has that same set of experiences and abilities that you have. Not only that but fulfillment, spiritual fulfillment, real spiritual fulfillment requires that you are using the gifts that God has given you to build up other people. You're uniquely gifted.

Think about this for just a second. I mentioned my grandmother. There are things that you've experienced in the same way that my grandmother experienced, and other believers that I've encountered, that I will never experience unless if I experience it through their lives. There are aspects about God that you have learned because of what God has taken you through...that you see, that I have not even begun to comprehend. That's just a simple reality. There are things that you may see about God that I don't understand. And the problem is if you don't share those experiences, if you don't share those abilities, guess what? I will not experience and understand that aspect of

God. And I am the poorer for it. I'm missing out on what I see and understand and experience of God because you aren't using the gifts that God has given you, the experiences, the abilities to minister to the people around you.

Not only that, but it's a typical thing throughout Christianity...think about this for a moment. I mean, it's the typical paradox that runs throughout Christianity. Jesus, apostles have all mentioned various aspects of this. If you want to save your life you lose it. If you want to save it, you give it up. Why? Because it's a realization that as long as you are focused on yourself...me, me, me, me, me...as long as you're acting like a 'me-monkey' guess what? You're never going to be satisfied. You're always going to be discontent. You will never have enough. And so what ends up happening is you are missing out on God's grace. You want to experience God's grace...stop focusing on yourself and start pouring the grace that God has given you into other people. And guess what God'll do? He'll pour more grace into your life. You want true spiritual fulfillment? Use the experiences and abilities God has given you to extend grace to other people—here in this body of believers and outside these walls to people that you know.

I'll point this out. This is kind of a fun thing. This is one of my favorite little verses, passages, whatever. In verse 11 and 12 he ends up saying that Christ gave to the church a variety of different roles and positions, ok? And this is not an exhaustive list. But he ends up saying, he ends up listing a couple in particular. And it says “...and He gave the pastors, teachers, to the church...” Right. Why? “...to equip the saints for the work of the ministry...” Think about that for just a sec. According to this verse, who is doing the ministry? You can interact... Who is doing the ministry? You! Ok? You! The saints! Ok, if you are a follower of Christ you are one of the saints. Yes, I am a follower of Christ. Therefore I am one of the saints. And I do have a personal ministry outside this church, outside the walls of this church and within this church on a personal, relational level. But that is not my pastoral responsibility, and that is not my pastoral role. When I am acting as a pastor and teacher what does it say that my role is? Equip—yes, my role is to equip, encourage, and train you to use your ministry, to use your abilities, the experiences that God has given you. And when you come to me and you say, 'Man, I think that we really should do this as a church,' that's part of the reason why some of you have done...I'll probably look at you and I'm like 'Yeah, you're right. Go on.' And you kinda stand here like there's this awkward...and it's kind of because people will look and it's like, 'Well, shouldn't you do something?' I'm like, 'Yeah, go for it!'

I mean, the whole point is ideally you are ministering to one another. You are walking through life with one another. You are encountering the people outside the walls of this church that I will never encounter, and you are pouring God's grace into their lives. You are the ministers! That's part of the reason why I like...and I got this one from the pastor of the church where we were at in North Carolina while I was going to seminary. But I just love it so much because it...there's an element of truth to this. He says that, “You know, when I became a pastor I left the ministry.” Why? Because the ministry, the real ministry day in, day out, is done by you in the lives you live, and the people you interact with.

So why should you be involved in the church? Well, basically, as I said, the bottom line is basically if you are not involved in the church the church is weaker and less beautiful without you. It's like a mosaic that is missing a very key piece; and it's not complete, the picture is not complete unless if you are there and involved, pouring your life into those...that body of believers. Not only that, but...and again this goes totally against our culture...you will not spiritually grow as God has intended you to grow unless you are pouring your life into another body of believers, into a body of believers. And I'm not talking...it doesn't have to be Wasilla Bible Church. There are other good, godly, biblical churches in this area. If this church is not the place where you fit, where your experience...ok. That's...you don't have to...you go, you find a body of believers where you can belong and you can pour your life into that body of believers.

There's an interesting thing, and I'll just point this out, ok? Verses 13 and following, there's an interesting theme that runs through here. Paul ends up saying “*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,*” ok, adult, be an adult...that's the goal, and he's talking spiritually, “...so that we may no longer be children,” not what we want to be, spiritual children in terms of babies, infants, people who need milk. “*Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way...*” And he ends up saying that each part, when it's working properly, “*makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*” Paul...his basic overall...over...I think if you could summarize what he would say in this passage is basically this. Realize the fact that you are a body. And if you are acting like a spiritual infant, and you shouldn't be, grow up. And how he defines that is whether or not you are using the experiences and abilities that God has given you to extend grace to the people around you here in this body, and outside its walls.

Let's put it this way. I've got a son, Alistair. He makes me smile. He is eight months old like a week ago. And so he's eight months old. When he is hungry, especially if he goes...he'll start crying. He'll let you know when he's

hungry. If you ignore him all of a sudden he can turn into this beet-red...like, just veins popping out of his little, chubby cheeks, and like neck and everything, beet-red, tongue curled up to the top of his mouth, just “Rrah!” Banshee screaming. Why? Because he's hungry, he needs to be fed, and he needs to be fed now. Ok? Not only that, but if he has a dirty diaper he's going to let you know about it. Do I have a problem with this? No. This is the way it should be. Ok? He is a small infant. It would be crazy of me to look at him and to say, “Go change yourself. Get your own food.” That's just not where he's at. In the same way there are aspects, there are people who are new believers, or maybe are just getting into a body of believers, and you are trying to find out... And Paul would say, 'Ok, go ahead, but look. You shouldn't stay there for very long. You need to start turning around and doing whatever you are able to do using the experiences and abilities that God has given you to serve others. Stop being a little baby pitching a fit. Grow up.'

Let's put it this way. I have two other children, Liam and Charlotte. They are 4 and 7, respectively. When we have dinner we...we'll have them clean up their dishes. And if they don't help set the table, or if they don't, you know, do different things like take their dishes back to the counter or the sink, Sarah...one of her favorite lines over the last several months has been, “Am I your Cinderella?” Like 'Come on now. Pick up your... What do you think you should be doing?' 'Ok, here we go...' and they pick it up. Why? Because we have this expectation that they are fully capable, and they will contribute to the family. In the same way, there are people who are fully capable of contributing to the body of believers, but you aren't. It would be like me...and imagine, if you will, if I tried doing this to Sarah. I'm like, I go to the table, I sit down, and I start yelling and screaming at the top of my lungs, face turning red, veins popping out, 'I want my food! I'm hungry! Give it to me now!' And not only that, but then it would be extremely disturbing if I turned around and was like, 'And not only that but Sarah, I messed my pants! Change me! That would be messed up! It's wrong! It is. It's wrong on so many levels. It is.

But think about this. There are those of us who are sitting in here, and a tendency that we have to do that spiritually, to look at church and to say, 'Me, me, me, me, me! Am I getting fed? Are my needs being met? Am I this, this, this, this? It's me, it's me, it's all about me.' And you should be well beyond that point by now. And Paul would say “Grow up.” That's the message in this.

So final question here is basically this...how involved should I be in the church? Well, ok, fine, be involved in the church. What does that mean, and how involved should I be? Well, question, what does that mean or what do I mean by this, is basically...here's...I'll respond with a question. What experiences and gifts, abilities, has God given you? Are you using those to impact the lives of other people, whether that's in a formal position in the church like helping the children's ministry, or if that's something where you are just ministering to the people who are sitting around you, and making a point of getting to know them and connect with them and encourage them; using the skills and abilities to do work, whether here at the church or whether to your next-door neighbor who is not able to do something that they need done, and you do that so you can pour God's grace into their life and help them see something of God. Are you using the experiences and abilities that God has given you?

Now how involved should you be? I'll respond with another question, two of them, actually. How much do you want to know God? And how much of His experience, or His power, do you want to experience in your life? How much do you want to know God, and how much of His power do you want to experience in your life? Quick analogy...let's say you get a home theater, amazing, awesome, world's best home theater, flat screen TV, you know, high definition. It's like, it's just huge screen, awesome, amazing, there you've got all the channels, for speakers, for surround sound. You've got the latest technology to play every... You get it all hooked up, you push the remote, and nothing happens. So you get frustrated because, man, here it is. I want this, it's great, and I want this home theater experience. But it won't turn on. So what do I do? I go to the user manual. I flip around and I find customer service. I call customer service and somebody picks up in India or someplace like that. And it's like, so I call, and like 'Hey, I need help here.' And they say, 'Ok, well, is everything hooked in?' 'Yes.' 'Well, did you plug it in?' 'No. Why do I need to plug it in? It should work on its own.' The person would think you were crazy. Ok? Why? Because if you want it to work you plug in to where the power is. You go to that outlet, and the builder, when he built the house he said, 'Here's the outlet, here it is, right here.' If you want your home theater to work, plug it into the outlet.

In the same way, Jesus, God, He intends...if you wanna know where the outlet of His power is, it's the church. If you want to know and experience God, but you refuse to pour your life into the church and to get connected, guess what? It's like callin' customer service because your home theater doesn't work, but you refuse to plug it in. So again, I'd just answer this question 'How involved should I be in the church?' How much do you want to know God, and how much do you want to experience His power in your life? That is the answer to your question.

I ask you to go ahead and stand with me. And what we're going to do is we're going to close with a song of prayer, a prayer of witness. And this is a song that really, to tell you the truth, is all about ministry...praying that God will help equip, and train, and encourage us, and give us confidence to speak His truth so that others, whether it's here in this body of believers, or whether it is out in the community, our family, our friends, our coworkers, our school mates...whatever it may be, we will speak the truth of God's grace into those people's lives, which is the ministry.

[Congregation sings the prayer song.]

Go in God's grace and extend it to others. Thank you.