

Treasuring Christ In One Anoth

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[0 : 00] And I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Colossians, Paul's letter to the church at Colossi, Colossians chapter 3.

And if you're using one of the pew Bibles that are in the chairs, you can turn to page 984. We're going to jump in the middle of Colossians chapter 3 this morning as we continue in our series on spiritual disciplines.

We have defined the spiritual disciplines as the means of grace that God uses to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully. The means of grace that God uses to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully.

And so we've already considered how God uses the Word to cause us to trust and treasure Christ more fully. How He uses our prayer life as we speak back to Him after He's spoken to us through the Word.

He uses our prayer life to cause us to trust and treasure Christ. And how He uses fasting as a means of provoking and strengthening and empowering our prayer life and our time in the Word so that we might trust and treasure Christ more fully.

[1 : 20] And last week we turned to the issue of the stewardship of our money and saw that not only does what we do with the earthly treasures that we have, not only does that reveal our heart and whether or not we actually treasure Christ, but as followers of Christ, what we do with our earthly treasures, how we steward the things that God has given us, can also shape our hearts and help us either to treasure Christ more or it can pull us away from Him.

And so stewardship is itself a spiritual discipline that God uses to help us to trust Christ and to treasure Christ more. And all of those things have been, for the most part, things that we tend to think that we do by ourselves and alone.

Although we took some time when we looked at the Word of God to talk about our corporate reception of the Word as we gather together on Sunday mornings, we still even tend to view that as we're all gathered together.

We still tend to view the way that we receive the Word even as we're gathered together as something that we do individually. So that a lot of times we conceive of our spiritual lives and our struggles within our spiritual life as something that's personal and doesn't involve anyone else. But what we're going to see this morning from Colossians is that that is, in fact, not true. That God would have us fight for joy in Christ together. That we would together struggle and link arms and try, as best we can, to treasure Christ more fully as a people and as a body.

[2 : 56] And, in fact, if we don't do that, we will fall short of treasuring Him in all the ways that we ought to. So I want you to open your Bibles, as I said, to Colossians chapter 3.

And we're going to jump in at verse 9 and read a few verses down. So I'd ask you to stand with me in honor of God's Word as we read together. The Apostle Paul writes, Father, we ask you to take these words that your Spirit inspired Paul to make.

that you would take these by the power of that same Spirit and teach us and instruct us and make our hearts come alive with a passion to seek after Jesus together.

I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. I don't know how many of you, in the Houston area, we don't really participate very much in public transportation.

I suppose if you live in the city, you might take the metro rail, you might get on a bus occasionally, but none of us live in the city. We all live out here in the suburbs. But even if you do live in Houston, Houston's not one of those cities where public transportation sort of looms large, where everybody takes the train or everybody takes the bus and things like that.

[4 : 59] But in many other cities, that actually is the case. And I don't know if you've ever been to New York or Chicago or any of the other cities that use public transportation heavily, but it can actually be, it can be really kind of humorous at times and kind of sad at others as you watch people.

Last year, several months ago, Nate and I went up to Boston for sort of a homeschool field trip to see some historical sites. And we didn't get a car.

We didn't rent a car. We just got on a little shuttle from our hotel and took it to the subway station. And then we rode the subway everywhere that we went. But I noticed every time I got on the subway, and it shouldn't be surprising to anyone, that as I looked around the subway, nobody really ever made eye contact with me because everybody was looking at their phone.

Most people had their earbuds in their ears, and so they couldn't hear anything happening around them. They didn't notice that other people were around them. The only time they ever noticed is when they had to sort of shuffle out of the way to let people on and off the train.

But for the most part, everybody sort of lived in their own little isolated bubble. Even though we were sometimes on a subway that was packed full of people, it didn't matter. Nobody paid attention.

[6 : 08] And if you want to stand out as the goofy guy from Texas, the thing that you do is, every time somebody looks eyes with you, you say, Hi, how are you doing? They can't hear you because they've got their earbuds in, and they know you've just said something to them, which is odd because for the most part, they don't spend any time talking to one another on the subway.

And so if you really want to stand out, that's the thing to do. But what you notice really quickly there is that they have a device in their hands, a telephone, which is really these days just a computer, but it's a telephone nonetheless.

They're still called phones. That was initially designed to help people to communicate with one another and make connections with one another, and yet now it has become something that separates and divides us and in many ways prevents us from ever connecting with anyone around us.

And that's often the case with technology. It's often designed to help us to connect better, and yet what it ends up doing is further dividing us. So there's some great blessings that come along with technology, but there are also some curses that come along with technology.

I can remember reading a couple of years ago an article about the Amish people. Now I don't in general ever condone sort of imitating things at the Amish.

[7 : 21] They have some theological issues. But this article I found fascinating because I'd never really understood some of the reasons that they live the kinds of lifestyles that they live. Why are they so separated from the modern world?

Why do they not want to participate and own so many of the things that we find to be almost indispensable for life? Why don't they own cars? Why don't they drive?

Why don't they have telephones in their homes? And while there are many reasons for why they avoid certain technological advancements, one of the primary criteria that they use to help them decide when to interact with technology is whether or not it contributes to the dividing of their social connections, to the breakdown of their social connections.

So it always seems strange to me that Amish people are willing to ride a bus with lots of other people to go into town, but they won't drive a car. And the reasoning for that, for many of them, is that when you get on a bus, many people are getting on it together and, assuming they're not all on their iPhones, they actually interact with one another.

So there's a social element to it. Or I never understood why were they willing to have a telephone somewhere in their village or their town, but not telephones in their homes?

[8 : 34] Well, because they recognize that they might need to call an ambulance, or they might need a phone for certain reasons, but they didn't want them in their homes because to them they discouraged face-to-face communication.

Rather than walking to your neighbor's house, you would call them and never see them. So that one of the criteria that they use for deciding how will we use this, will we use this technology in any way, is does it contribute to the dissolving of our social bonds that we have?

And the truth of the matter is, is that while we don't want to imitate their lifestyles, we can appreciate their commitment to being connected with other people and with one another in particular. And we ought to look at that and ask ourselves, is there something in that that we can imitate and that we

can find to be valuable?

Or better yet, is there some biblical ground to that? Is it just their kind of crazy, kooky way of life? It may be. Or is there some biblical grounds to saying we ought to work to preserve the union that we have with one another?

And the answer obviously is yes. And I want you to see that though from the Scriptures. So I want you to take a look at our passage here in Colossians. One of the things that we're going to see from the very beginning is that there's going to be an issue arise here in the text that we have been seeing throughout the past several weeks.

[9 : 54] And that is, Paul will draw attention to the fact that our salvation is in some sense accomplished and finished and done, and yet we are still in the process of being sanctified and made holy.

We've referred to this as the already but not yet. And we saw it really prominently in the Gospels where we have all this language of the Kingdom where Jesus says the Kingdom of God has arrived. It's here. It's among you. And yet we know that the Kingdom awaits its full arrival until His second coming. But there is a real sense in which the Kingdom of God is present wherever the Gospel is preached and wherever God's people gather together.

The Kingdom of God is actually present in this world, but we know it's not present in its fullness. Well, we find that kind of tension between our present possession of the blessings of God and yet the reality that they await us in their fullness in the future.

So I want you to see that in the text. Take a look first of all at verse 9. It begins with a command, Do not lie to one another. And now here we're going to see the finished, accomplished work of Jesus.

[11 : 10] Okay? So this is settled. This is the already. This is done. Do not lie to one another.

Seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its Creator.

This is decisive. You have decisively, once for all, put off the old self and you have now put on the new self. I think actually the way the ESV translates this term can obscure Paul's main point because if you translate it more literally, it would be, you have put off the old man and you have put on the new man.

Now why do I say that that translating itself obscures the meaning? Because I think that Paul intends for us to make a connection here with the old man being who we are in Adam. That's who we were.

We're in Adam. We're all born in Adam. We are all connected to our original father and yet when we trust in Christ, we come under the headship of a new Adam. We now have a new, a new spiritual brother that connects us with our heavenly father.

No longer are we associated with Adam and the condemnation that came through him, but we are now decisively, finally connected to Christ, the new Adam, the new man, and we now get to enjoy all of the blessings that come along with being united to Christ.

[12 : 32] I say that because of the way that Paul discusses this new man. He says the new man is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. That's Genesis 1-2 language.

We're being renewed after the image of our creator now that we have become, we have put on the new man. Now that we've done away with the old man who we were in Adam, we are now in Christ, we have a new man, and we're being renewed.

So there's the not yet. We are in process. We are being renewed. We have decisively put on the new man. We've trusted in Jesus. His righteousness has been credited to us.

We know that our eternity is secure in Him and through Him and because of Him. That's all done. And yet, we are in the process of being renewed.

We are being remade. We've become a new man. We are in Christ and yet, we are in process. But I want you to notice what the fruit of this process is.

[13 : 35] Notice what he says in verse 11. He says, Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and is in all.

You might better see the connection here again if we translate it a little bit more literally. He says, that we are being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator where there is no Greek and Jew circumcised and uncircumcised.

So it's as the new man being in the new man, having put on the new man, in process of being renewed, in that place, we are experiencing a reality in which there is no more Greek or Jew.

There's no more circumcised, uncircumcised, no more barbarian, Scythian, no more slave or free. Those categories do not apply when we consider how we are all united to Christ.

Something new has happened. And it doesn't just involve me as an individual. It's not just, well, I have been saved, I have put on the new man, and therefore, I'm going to be renewed.

[14:44] No. We've now been connected in a way that we were not connected before. These categories that defined our existence no longer define our existence.

Not because they don't exist in any sense anymore, right? I mean, Paul is the one who says, he speaks of the gospel going to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

It's not as if Paul conceives of all ethnic distinctions as practically in our real lives having disappeared. He doesn't conceive of that. You can just look down a little bit further in this chapter where Paul gives instructions first to slaves and then to masters.

It's not as if Paul is naively assuming that once we become Christians, all of the ethnic identifications about us, all the social indicators of who we are, immediately disappear from our lives.

He doesn't assume that. He doesn't treat it like that. He doesn't think that way. But he's saying, when we gather together as a body, we do not gather together as Jew and Greek. We do not gather together as slave and free.

[15:50] We are united in a way that is not conceivable and is not possible out in what we might call the real world. No, something more real has arrived than the real world.

And it is a unity that transcends all of these dividing characteristics. And that's part of what it means to be renewed in the knowledge of the image of our Creator.

It means that for us, those dividing aspects, those things that categorize us and separate us, they are being erased and we are being united.

We are being drawn together. And how is that happening? It's happening because he says, Christ is all and he is in all. What does he mean by those two phrases?

They are not identical, right? It means one thing to say Christ is all. It means another thing to say that Christ is in all. To say that Christ is all, I think, is to say that this new man that we have put on, that's Christ.

[16:54] When God looks upon us, He doesn't see our sin. He sees Christ's righteousness. So there is a sense as God looks upon us, He sees Christ. And then He sees Christ.

And then He sees Christ. And then He sees Christ again for all who have trusted in Jesus. So that the grounds of our righteousness are the same for all of us. So Christ is all in that very real sense.

The new man that we put on is in fact Christ Himself. I say that partly because of the language of this text, but also partly because Paul uses very similar language in Galatians.

I want you to hold your place in Colossians 3 and turn over to Galatians 3. In Galatians 3, verse 27, Paul says this.

Notice how similar the language is going to sound. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. It's the same verb that we see in Colossians 3.

[17:52] In Colossians 3, you've put on the new man. Here in Galatians, you've put on Christ. But now notice the results. The results of putting on Christ are the same as having put on the new man and being renewed in the image of our Creator.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. So when he says you have put on the new man, he means you have put on Christ.

And so for him to say Christ is all is to acknowledge that in some sense Christ stands in the place of all. In God's eyes, he sees Christ over and over again.

He is all. But more, he is also in all. I take this to mean that Christ is present in us in a very real way through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So that on one level, we are united and we are the same because Christ is all. His righteousness is credited equally to us. It doesn't matter man, woman, slave, free, Jew or Greek.

[19:02] His righteousness is credited equally to all of us. There is a kind of leveling there. There is a unity there in the faith. But then he says and Christ is in all.

Not only decisively saving us and rescuing us from our sins, but now the same Spirit mediating the presence of the same Christ is at work in all of us to cause us to be renewed in the image of our Creator.

And so the real question for us, I think, this morning is what does that look like practically? What does it look like for us to have the Spirit of God so work within us that how we live our lives reflects who we are?

How can the not yet of our lives now, how can the present living out of our lives, how can it mirror the already of who we are in God's sight?

So that what we want practically, we want to become righteous, as righteous as God sees us in Christ.

[20 : 14] He has declared us righteous and now the Christian life is one of becoming increasingly more holy and righteous in His sight. And that involves a group effort.

That involves our treatment of one another. That means, that entails a kind of unity that transcends anything that we see in the world around us.

So how does that happen? We already enjoy the already of having been declared righteous by God. We enjoy the already of God seeing Christ when He looks at us. All of that is true, but how can we now in this life experience more of what is held out for us in eternity?

Or as we've been saying throughout this series, if what awaits us in eternity is the everlasting enjoyment of the presence of God, how can we in this life enjoy more of His presence?

How can we get, how can we achieve more joy now? A taste of what's to come. that involves how we treat and interact with one another.

[21 : 21] Take a look at what He says in the following verses. Remember He has said you have decisively, you've put on the new man, but then He says, put on then, or therefore put on, as God's chosen ones.

So we have put on Christ, but now we are to put on something else, right? Something's got to follow that. We're clothed with Christ. Now we need to clothe ourselves with something in addition.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved. Here are the things. He's first going to list five things before He sort of goes on a tangent, a little bit of a sidetrack about the last in that list of five, and then He's going to come back and list the sixth.

So I want us to see there are going to be six things here in this passage that He tells us to put on, and all of these things are related to how we interact with one another.

All of these are the things that create the kind of unity that He's talking about in verse 11. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, and here they are, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and then jump down to verse 14.

[22 : 30] And above all these, put on love. Those are the six things that He lists. Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and ultimately, love. So these six things are the things that we must pursue.

These are the things that we have to pursue as we relate to one another. These should characterize what it's like to be in covenant with other believers.

These are the things that we need to pursue. So let's just consider them this morning. I want, as we consider these, I want you to ask two questions. Number one, does this characterize my treatment of other believers?

And then number two, in what circumstances might I be able to live out these characteristics? In what circumstances might I find an opportunity to display these characteristics to other believers? So we'll go through them really quickly because they're not complicated. It's not like there's some secret, hidden meaning in the Greek words behind all of these. they're fairly easy to see right on the surface.

[23 : 39] First of all, he lists compassionate hearts. That's not complicated. If you're compassionate, you're one who shows mercy. You're one who is inclined to not judge others, but instead to extend mercy and grace toward them.

That's what it means to be compassionate towards someone. God says when He reveals Himself to Moses that He will be compassionate to whom He will be compassionate. He will show mercy to whom He will show mercy.

So to be a compassionate person is to be a merciful person so that you don't hold it over people. You don't insist when somebody else in the body of Christ wrongs you.

You don't insist in making it right yourself. You don't insist that they've got to pay for what they did. They did this. They said this. They hurt me in this way. Therefore, they need to get theirs.

No. That's not what a compassionate heart does. Compassionate heart extends mercy and grace to others.

[24 : 39] It doesn't insist that they pay the penalty for the wrongs that they've done against you. Compassionate hearts. And then in addition to that, kindness.

Kindness is difficult to distinguish at times from the issue of compassion, but it's broader. It's a little bit more broad of a characteristic. Kindness is, yes, it will issue in mercy, but it doesn't just extend mercy.

Kindness is present not merely when people do wrong to you, but kindness is present in all circumstances, in all things. It's the way that you speak to one another. It's how you respond when someone else says something to you.

Whether they say something mean or something nice, it's how you respond. We all know, we recognize when we see somebody who's kind and we see someone who's unkind. And some people, some people in their outward demeanor at least, find it easier to express kindness than others.

Some people in their outward demeanor find it very difficult to express kindness to others, but we all know it when we see it. If someone comes to you and begins to converse with you and talk to you and ask you questions and talk about your day and you think to yourself, I don't like this kind of conversation, I'm an introvert, I want out of here, and you just sort of brush them aside and get away from them as quickly as possible, it's not kind.

[26 : 01] It's putting your own needs, your own sort of felt needs and desires to not be bothered by others ahead of theirs and that's not kind. We all know that when we see it happen.

So that we have around us constantly opportunities to demonstrate kindness to others. Constantly around us. But he adds to kindness something else that's very similar.

He adds humility and then meekness. It's difficult to separate these two because they go hand in hand. Humility is the refusal to elevate oneself above others.

Whereas meekness is the refusal to use one's strength to gain the upper hand on others.

Sometimes meekness is translated as simply gentleness.

But you can see how the two go hand in hand. One who is humble will automatically be meek and gentle. Because one who is humble is not looking in any way to elevate themselves.

[27 : 01] One who is humble is not looking in any way to make themselves feel stronger so that even if they are stronger or smarter alright maybe more well spoken than the other they don't feel the desire in the moment to make that known to everybody.

so that when you are having a discussion and a conversation with other believers everybody has experienced the person who needs to talk in such a way and talk often enough and say enough things so that everybody else knows oh he is the smart guy in the group.

We know that now. Everybody knows the one who has to sort of roll their eyes or sigh when other people begin to say things. The rest of the group might actually know everybody else in the conversation might know that what that person is saying it kind of doesn't make a lot of sense having trouble following them but the person who lacks humility and meekness is the one who will point it out either by their just outward behavior or maybe by direct statement of things but humility meekness doesn't ever seek to put another down in order to elevate themselves it never seeks to show strength to display strength or intelligence or whatever else the case may be that's not how humility acts that's not how humility treats other people because when you do that you immediately when you treat others as if they're an opportunity for you to elevate yourself you immediately begin to build walls between one another immediately there's no other outcome that's possible when you do those sorts of things walls begin to be built connections begin to be broken and disunity ensues but humility and meekness will order things in the other direction humility and meekness will tear down walls humility and meekness will reach out to others and will make connections with others and then lastly in this first list of the five things before he gets to the six which he says is above all he mentions patience patience but patience he doesn't just leave alone it's as if he knows that patience patience is the test of whether or not these other four characteristics are there because honestly if you're not compassionate you're not going to be patient with people you're not you're going to insist that they they get what's coming to them you will not be patient with them if you're not kind you have no inclination toward patience with other people you just want them to move on and get out of your way you just want them to deal with their issues and get them over with if you're not humble if you're not meek you will not display patience toward anyone you will have a kind of

impatience trying to assert your own superiority trying to let it be known that you're the strong one and you're the smart one so that patience comes at the tail end of this initial list of five things because I believe that patience reveals whether or not the other things are present and Paul pauses right here so that he can amplify patience notice what he says here's how he describes patience there are two things that will issue from patience if you're patient you will do these two things he says verse 13 bearing with one another this is the first thing and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other so the one who is patient will bear with others doesn't insist on things moving along quickly he will bear with them the fact of the matter is it is frustrating it can be irritating when you're in a mixed body of people and some people are really spiritually mature and they seem to be really moving ahead and they're really seeking after Christ and then others seem to be spiritually immature and they're not there yet and they keep doing things that you think just why would they do that that was such a dumb thing to do why would they do something like that shouldn't they be past that by now don't they believe in Jesus if they believe in him why would they even do that or say that or act that way and it issues forth in judgmentalism I mean we're all prone to do that we're all prone to do that we'll see what people post on Facebook the things that they say the pictures that they put up or the things that they participate in and we think how could they possibly do that what's wrong with this person what's wrong with them is that they're immature in Christ and they've got a lot of growing to do that's the reality isn't it patience bears with them patience doesn't expect them to make the giant leap from immature Christian to mature Christian overnight it bears with them and then when someone actually does wrong to you it's not that you're just bothered by their lifestyle or their choices but they do something wrong to you they offend you what does patience do he says patience forgives if you have a complaint against one another you forgive he says forgiveness ought to characterize every member of the body of Christ we ought to be a forgiving people we just should be right that's what Paul says as God and Christ has forgiven you so you should forgive one another if you're in the body of Christ if you're genuinely authentically a member of the body of Christ then that means that you've been forgiven you have been forgiven of cosmic treason you have been forgiven of offending the creator of all things he who is infinitely majestic and beautiful you have turned away from and yet in Christ he has forgiven you so that you cannot withhold now forgiveness from others much less your brothers and sisters in Christ this is what patience looks like in the in the church it's what it looks like we're all sinners we're going to offend each other at times there are going to be some who are more mature than others if we are actually going out and making disciples we ought to have a steady stream of new believers among us which means immature believers among us and we're going to have to bear with them be patient with them because we're sinners we're going to wrong each other we're going to offend each other someone's going to say something that you find incredibly offensive at times somebody's going to do something and you're going to find it offensive at times and you're either going to be bitter about that and get angry about that or you're going to remember how much you have been forgiven by God through Christ and you're going to extend forgiveness to them patience should be the hallmark of the body of Christ it should separate us from the rest of the world it should but there is a sixth mark there is a sixth category here of behavior verse 14 and above all of these in other words standing as more important than these and causing all of these and leading to all of these things above all of these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony or in completion it brings everything together it brings all of these various characteristics together but it also brings all of these different kinds of people together Jew and Greek circumcised and uncircumcised slave and free we could put it in modern terms black and white or poor and rich or democrats and republicans or conservatives and liberals whatever categories that we have that we put upon people or we take upon ourselves love it says overcomes all of those things it overcomes all of those things and it binds people together who otherwise would never be united together it binds them together the ESV says perfect harmony but it's just the word in perfection or in completeness there's something something about being bound with people not like yourself because you're all united to Jesus that imparts a sense of completeness to us it really does it doesn't mean again that out in the real world as we call it those differences don't exist but it means that when we think of how we relate to one another [35 : 59] I do not regard a brother or sister in Christ as first or foremost a member of a particular ethnic group I know that they are I know that that entails real world differences for how others interact with them and how they interact with the world but I don't regard them first and foremost in that way I regard them as a brother or sister in Christ I do not regard those who are of another

socio-economic class as first and foremost being either poor or rich I regard them as a brother or sister in Christ I do not regard those who are either educated or uneducated as belonging first and foremost to one of those classes maybe they maybe they're far more educated than me far less educated than me I do not regard them according to those categories love binds us together with a kind of completeness and perfection that you cannot find in the world all these things are true all these things are realities in Christ that we are trying now in this life and in this fallen world we are trying to make them more of a reality in our present everyday lives we're trying to take the already the accomplished work of

Jesus that unites us all together and erases these boundaries we're trying to experience that now in this life and the only way for that to happen is for us to be practically really bound together in local fellowships of believers it's the only way for it to happen it can't happen really any other way we can talk in exalted terminology about the unity of the body of Christ in some sort of worldwide way or in some sort of trans temporal that goes beyond all the different centuries and ages and generations of Christians and say all of us are one and we can talk about our unity in that kind of way and that's real and true it's not what Paul's talking about here it's not what he's talking about because in the church at Colossi he's got some masters he's got some slaves how do they relate to each other how's he gonna do that he's got some Jewish believers he's got some non-Jewish believers how are they going to relate to each other he's got some sort of uncouth barbarians you know and then he's got some more suave intelligent speaking people how are they going to relate together in the church this is not for Paul some theoretical unity that exists for the worldwide church throughout all the centuries this is a real practical unity that must be fought for in the church at Colossi and therefore must be fought for in real local congregations

I really struggled this week as I was studying to think about what to call this particular spiritual discipline should we just lean on a broad term and say this is the spiritual discipline of fellowship how we partner together because it's a good bible word fellowship or partnership it's a great bible word it's scattered all throughout Paul's letters do we simply call this the spiritual discipline of fellowship that sounds good following up stewardship right they fit together that sounds really good is that what we ought to call this the spiritual discipline of fellowship and that's a good way to describe it but if we're to really understand I think the concrete living out of what Paul's talking about here it might be more helpful to call this the spiritual discipline of membership because these things don't happen outside on a regular weekend week out daily basis they don't happen apart from connection to a local body of believers yeah there's a kind of unity that you have with other believers that you've been friends with that live in other places that's real okay there's a kind of unity that you'll have with the believers that you might work alongside of during the week there's a kind of unity that you'll have with those that you sort of fellowship with on an in and out basis there are other pastors that I know that I have a great fellowship and unity with that's real but I see them intermittently sparingly no there's a concrete place where this stuff is worked out it's in the local church so that we could just as well call this the spiritual discipline of membership of recognizing who we have covenanted ourselves to who we have pledged a relationship to who we have said we will hold one another accountable through discipline we will hold one another accountable we will encourage one another we will fight for the faith of one another and the sanctification of one another and that's ultimately what church membership is about it's not really about maintaining a list in a database so that

I know who all has joined the church it's not what it's really about what it's about is saying I have covenanted with this local body of people and these things I will try primarily here among these people to work them out and make them real in my life anybody can have good solid fellowship with a Christian friend that they only see a few times a year anybody can do that you want to know whether or not you are bound together in love with other people look around right look around literally look around right we're not this is not like standard bearers okay we're not going to be on the covers of all the magazines right no church growth magazine is going to show up here and want to write an article on us right put us on the cover we're just normal average Christians and some of you are stay at home moms and some of you are working and some of you guys make a lot of money and some of you barely make any money at all right we're a pretty disparate group of folks here and this is where it happens this is this is where real

Christian brotherly love is worked out here in this place among these people as we gather together on Sundays as we gather together in our homes as we talk during the week and meet with one

another during the week and pray together with and for one another this is where these things are worked out so that what we are after what we are really after is love that binds everything together and displays the reality of our having put on the new man let's pray happy Thank you.