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[00:00:04] We're in First Corinthians Chapter 12. If you have a Bible, open up. Yeah. Turn your phones to silent and open up in your Bibles to verse 12. And the deal today is this. We're going to our text is verse 12, all the way down to verse 31. I'm just going to read verses 12 and 13. We're going to pray. You can sit and I'll teach. The Bible says for as the body is one and as many members, but all the members of that one body being many are. Her murmur, murmur and murmur are are what our one body soul also is Christ for by one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks. So when he says by one sphere, we were all baptized. He's not talking about being water baptized into the body, although for sure that symbolizes our immersion into the church. He's talking about being placed by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ, through faith in Jesus Christ as you were born again. And this is the same across the board for everybody who believes right no partiality with God, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free like you could ad, whether rich or poor or whatever ethnicity and have all been made to drink into one spirit. Let's pray. And Father, thank you so much for just the profound portion of Scripture that we have the deep privilege of studying and reading today. And God, it is the desire of our hearts. We've been so moved today by your presence among us and so centered. On you. God. We pray today that all of the things that so easily vied for the attention of our minds and hearts, those distractions. That nagging away at us to the extent where sometimes, God, the truth is sometimes we have misplaced affections, we have misplaced desires.

[00:02:18] We are distracted by and consumed by the things of the world. And we lose our center. Today. God, we pray in this short time that we have in the holiest scriptures that that you would and we just declare this today you have our full attention. God speak to our hearts in such a powerful way that we will never be the same again. And, God, that this church, this is your church, that this church will never be the same again. We love you and praise you in Jesus name. Amen. You can have a seat. All right. Question for you today. What does it if you were at the first Service, do not shout the answer out. Okay? What does a house, a farm, a temple, a bride, a family, a flock, an olive tree and a human body have in common. Okay. Let me do it again. Why does a house, a farm, a temple, a bride, a family, a flock, an olive tree and a human body have in common. What's that foundation? That's true. What was this one over here? Somebody said something. Don't be shy. Ahead. Okay. All right. What else? They all got problems. They all have problems. Okay. What do you say? God is with them. Okay. So no. All right. I mean, yes and no. But really, as you look at all of those, what we discover is they're all biblical metaphors for the church. They're all biblical metaphors for the church. So various authors of New Testament books have described the church in these terms like a house, like a farm, like a temple, like a bride, obviously a family, a flock and olive tree and a human body. And each of those metaphors are beautiful pictures of the church.

[00:04:14] I mean, are they not? You know, they're they're all describing the church in very beautiful terms, and they all have a common denominator. Now, they may have many things in common, these metaphors, but one thing they have for sure is that they're singular. They're one. There is no author of any book of the New Testament that says, well, there's many temples or there's many brides or there are many bodies of Christ, or the church is like many olive trees. That's not the case. All of these metaphors have this common denominator that there is a singularity, that there is a oneness. And I think that's really important for us to consider today. The unity listen, the unity that we have as brothers and sisters in the family of God. And maybe more than ever, we need this unity. We live in a culture that is so divided that I know many of us are wondering, then where is the unity on all of these different levels? There is great division that has erupted in our society to the extent, I think, where many people are wondering then where can I find real unity? Where can I discover that sense of real oneness? And listen, brothers and sisters, the answer should be the church, if there was. Let me just say that again. And the answer is the church. Amen. Right. Okay. All right. Okay. Like, if ever there was an opportunity for the unity, that supernatural beautiful unity of the body of Christ to be shining right now, I mean, against the very dark backdrop of the conflict and the division that we see in our culture, if there ever was a time just for the church to naturally shine, now is that moment. And yet I can tell you that this may be and I don't think this is a stretch of the imagination.

[00:06:10] This today might be the most divisive moment in American church history. As a pastor, as a Christian, I'm just saying that I've never seen the church more divided than it is today. And I think that we need to be reminded we need to be reminded that we are one in Christ. Hey, there are always going to be disagreements, and it's probably good that we do have some disagreements so we can wrestle through things. But the level of divisiveness, the level of name calling and labeling, the very personal attacks that you see happening from Christian to Christian is just disheartening, I believe, to the heart of God. Ephesians chapter four, verse four, says, There's such a good verse for us to consider this morning. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called, to the one hope that belongs to your call. And then Paul just goes off, right? Kind of like a machine gun. He loves lists. He says, one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is overall and it and through all and in all, I love that man. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all of us who is over, all of us, who is through all of us, and who is in all of us? Can you say amen to that today? And I, I think of all the metaphors that are provided in Scripture. The body was probably the Apostle Paul's favorite. And I think that, you know, with good reason, right? You look at the physical body and you make a correlation in a spiritual sense to the church. You can see how almost perfect that metaphor, in fact, is. The physical body has many parts, and yet those parts are united and they operate inter dependently to the place where this living organism can be active.

[00:08:13] It can be working together collectively to fulfill a single purpose. And I think, man, what a beautiful picture of the church. We are many parts. We are many members. You know, Paul is going to use the word member in this portion of scripture that we're reading today. And I think when we think about the church in the sense of members, we automatically default to our church membership. Right. I'm part of this organization, this institution, this denomination. I've gone through the assimilation process. I've signed the line on the statement of faith. And so now I'm a member. And that's not what Paul's talking about. Paul is talking about being born again. There is an individual work of God's spirit that's happened in our lives so that we have an independent, in a sense, relationship with God like we are many individuals, we are many parts, we are many members. And yet, like a physical body, we are united, we're interdependent. The church is a living organism, not a dead institution. We are active and working collectively together to fulfill a single purpose. And I just want to ask you, is that your experience of the church today? Is that is that look, some say yes, some say no. Some say well, kind of kind of. You know, the main point today is this it's on the screen and you can read it yourself as I read it to you when you were born again, you were born again into the church, the body of Christ, where God intend you intends you to be an engaged and active member. True. Worshiping him exclusively, building up your brothers and sisters. And I added this through the use of your spiritual gifts and reaching the world with the gospel.

[00:10:07] That's the main point today. And I just want to challenge you and ask you, is that your experience of his church when you were born again? You were born again into the church. You're not just this standalone solo Christian that does it on your own, kind of like this lone wolf wonder. That was never the plan of God. You were born again into the church. The Body of Christ and the intention of God for you is this You are engaged and active member. You're not just standing on the sidelines, you're worshiping God exclusively and you are building up your brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ through the use of your spiritual gifts. How many of you today know? And I want you to raise your hand and it's okay if you don't, don't raise your hand. Because you're embarrassed to give the impression that you don't know what your spiritual gifts are. How many of you know what your spiritual gifts are? Raise your hand. All right. Well, we got some work to do today, and that's okay. But God wants you to be engaged in the church in such a way where your spiritual gifts are being used to edify, to build up, to strengthen your brothers and sisters. And then we collectively should be reaching the world with the gospel if you're taking notes today. Three very simple points. All right. That I think will make a lot of sense to you, but but also require us to be willing to apply. The first one is this We are one body in Christ. We are one body in Christ. I'm going to approach this from a different angle today. I think that you probably could assume how I would approach this point.

[00:11:42] But I want to come at it from a little different angle. We are one body. We are exclusively one body because our because of our exclusive faith in one God like we are a unique community of people because there is only one God that we worship. We worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the garden father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is not up for grabs. It's not just an arbitrary decision that you make. You don't come to the table and say, Well, God, I want to worship you, but I'm also going to worship all these other things in my life. You don't just get to make it up as you go along. Almost as if Christianity is some, you know, celestial salad bar. I mean, do they still have those restaurants that are just. Yeah, it's just salad. It's like a salad restaurant. Have you is that the most stupid thing ever on the face of the planet? No, no, bro, it is. I'm just saying, who wants to spend money on lettuce? Here, raise your hand, cause I got I. All right, well, God bless you. Vegans and vegetarians today. All right, the rest of you. Carnivores. Can I get an amen from. All right, all right. I know, I know. I have issues. But sometimes we approach God like this. It's like, well, I'll take a little bit of this and I'll take a little bit of that. And we have fashioned God in our own image to the extent where He ceases this being God like the God that you believe in now is no longer the God of the Bible. You know, I want you to remember today the context of the early Christian church. They were living in societies and cultures that were permeated with idolatry, I mean, deeply permeated with idolatry.

[00:13:29] There were false gods that were worshiped on the national level. There were false gods that were worshiped on the professional level. And then there were false gods that were worshiped on the farm family level. Right there. There was a pantheon of gods. This whole concept of monotheism was absolutely strictly unique to Judaism. The rest of the world had all sorts of gods. They worshiped as though you were living in a particular nation and nationally. The leader leaders would say, Hey, listen, we need to pray to these particular deities because we want them to protect us from famine. We want them to protect us so that we win this battle or this war. And then not only that, you would go to work, maybe you worked in textiles, or maybe you worked in the agricultural world. There were very specific gods dedicated to those industries that you would be required to worship. You would go into work on any particular day, and collectively the first thing that you would do is you would pay homage to this false deity. That was part of the way the culture rolled. And then when you went home, when you went home, there were family rituals that you would have before dinner where the family together would worship select gods that had, you know, become part of the family life. And so all I'm saying is when when an early church Christian put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ, they had to deny all of that in their society. Right. They wouldn't be able to say with the national leaders, hey, okay, well, worship those gods so that there's no famine or so that we win the war. They would they would say, no, I can't do that. I'm a Christian.

[00:15:06] They would go into the workplace and, you know, the boss would gather the people together and they would set the deity in the center. And the Christian would have to say, Man, I can't do that. There's one God that I worship, and that's not the God that I worship. They would go home and the family would gather together and they would have to say to their family, You know what? I don't do that anymore. I don't worship those false gods anymore. I worship the God of the Bible Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and I worship the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father. And I'm saying that to you today, because I want you to understand, in the early church, you know, a Christian couldn't just take or leave the church. There was literally nowhere else for them to go. There was no other group that they were able to fit in to because every other group was worshiping a false god. Sometimes today, you know, the truth is this, that some of us as Christians, we have all these groups that were a part of you know, we've got this work group and then we've got this social group and then we've got our church group and they're all on the same plane. And somehow we seem to fit into everything. But that was not the case in the early church. There are and you might be thinking today, well, listen, I mean, our culture doesn't worship false gods. Really? Really. Yeah. Our our culture worships false gods. I mean, we may not call those gods the same thing today. There may not be little idols that we gather around.

[00:16:38] But make no mistake about it. Idolatry is alive and well in the United States of America. And the biggest idol that's worshiped in our country is ourselves. It's ourselves. With when you were water baptized. When you were water baptized, there was something that you were signifying. And this was the way it was for the early church. Water baptism signifies that you've left that world of worshiping false gods. You've left that world of worshiping yourself. And now you have oriented and centered your life around the one true God. When you were laid back into those baptismal waters, that old life that was oriented around you was dead and buried. That's what that signifies. And you were raised in newness of life as a worshiper of the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Larry HURTADO, in a classic work called Destroyer of the Gods, speaking about the significance of Christian baptism. And let me just tell you, like baptism here's a lot of fun. We got a nice pool is heated. It's chlorinated. You know, there's towels that we give you. We give you a little shirt. You know, that's pretty cool. Everyone hangs out. Worship songs are played. You can cruise over to beyond, get a cup of coffee. But back in the day when you were living in that era, when you got baptized, for some of them, it was a death sentence. It was like automatic economic, social marginalization and oftentimes even physical persecution. And so this guy, he says this about baptism. He said Christian baptism was a one time right. That functioned to mark the separation of the initiate from his or her pre-Christian past and to signify transition into membership in the new faith community, the ecclesia.

[00:18:36] And that is what this community is. We are redeemed together. We are justified together. We are forgiven together. We are created new together. Our needs are met collectively by God together. We love God together. We are loved by God. Together we are perfected. Together we worship one God. Together, we reject the worship of false gods together. And we will live with each other together forever. Amen. I want to also say to you today and this this probably is the more, you know, assumed approach to take the unity that we have is created in Christ Jesus. The unity that we have is created by Jesus Christ. It is a unity that's been purchased. What do I mean by that? I mean that the unity, the oneness, the singularity that we have as the people of God was blood bought. It was blood bought. It was divinely done. And if it was divinely done, then it's a supernatural unity that we have. Like never, never condescend to the place where you reduce our unity to things like, well, we dress the same, you know, or we talk the same or we think the same, or we have the same tastes, or we shop at the same stores, or while we're unified because we have the same political opinions, or we're unified because we're educated the same, or we have similar personalities. None of those things have anything to do with the unity that we have in the Body of Christ. We are unified because we are in Christ. We put our trust and faith in Jesus. We've been born again. The Spirit of God has immersed us into the church supernaturally. Look, picture it like this. All of us have gathered together today and collectively as believers.

[00:20:27] This symbolizes the reality that God has put His arms around us. He's put His arms around us, and He's pulled us all together. And we're unified. We're interconnected because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes, you know, we have the tendency to associate with people who are just like us. And I would say to you, the diversity that we have in the body of Christ is so much more beautiful than any of that. The beauty of God's diversity and creation is most perfectly pictured among his people. Second thing today is this We are deeply interconnected. If you have your Bibles open, go to verse 14. And I'm going to read from verse 14 down to verse 26. We are, because we're in Christ, we are deeply interconnected. Paul says, for in fact, the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? Answer. Answer the answer louder. Yeah. And if the ear should say, because I'm not an I, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing now would be one weird looking body. I'll just tell you that right now, one big eyeball, the whole body were an eye where would be the hearing. If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling. But now God is set. The members, each one of them in the body, just as he pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now, indeed there are many members yet one body and the I cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head of the feet.

[00:22:10] I have no need of, you know, much rather those members of the body, which seem to be weaker, are necessary. In other words, you need them. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable on these we bestow greater honor and our on presentable parts have a greater modesty. But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body having given greater honor to the part which lacks it. Check this out that there should be no schism or division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And then in verse 26, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. The second thing that I believe the scripture says today and let me let me just say this. All right. All we're doing today is reading the Bible. We're reading the Bible, and we're letting the Bible speak for itself. Like we don't need to go to some, like, leadership seminar to understand what the church is supposed to be about. Because God has said it like loud and clear. It is plainly said in the Word of God, and we're recapturing the vision that God has for His people. The truth is this when you put your trust in faith in Jesus Christ, you immediately were deeply interconnected with other brothers and sisters in the family of God. I love the way that Paul describes this, right? I mean, describes it in a sense where it is clear from this metaphorical use of the body that we need each other, we need each other. We're so deeply connected. We are so interconnected spiritually that you can say it like this.

[00:23:48] We can't live without each other. Paul In Colossians chapter two, verse 18, he describes this unity in really beautiful terms. I want to give you the framework of it. First, he describes the unity that we have in the church in the framework of a warning against divisive people. Because, you know, there are sometimes in the church people who are divisive. I'm not talking about people who, you know, you're working through difficult situations with and you might have a disagreement with them. I'm talking about people who have an absolute intention of separating or dividing brothers and sisters from each other. And so Paul says this about that person and about our unity. He said, Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and the worship of angels intruding into those things which he is not seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Love the description there. Right. So we have this whole description of this person who is causing unity, disunity. Excuse me. We'll talk about that in a minute. And not holding fast to the head. From whom? All the body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows with the increase that is from God. So Paul says to the church, Colossians, there were people in the church at Colossi who were saying, Well, you know, about this and that, about the gospel and this and that, about Paul. And it's better for us to be focused on these peripheral issues. And it was splitting the church. Paul says, Let me tell you something about that person. That person is cheating you. That person is ripping you off. That person's coming to the table and conveying a message that makes you feel like you're missing something. And the reality is this if you go down that road, you will be missing something.

[00:25:30] You will miss the reward that God has for you. And that whole veneer of humility, right? That outward show of of humility towards you is, in fact, just a veneer, because inside that heart is filled with pride and self-centeredness and is talking about things that they really know nothing about. And not only are they things that they don't know anything about, they're all peripheral issues. They're not essential issues. And they're absolute focus on these nonessential issues prove something. It proves that they are disconnected from the head. It proves that they are disconnected from Jesus. You know, let me just remind us today, there is one head in the body of Christ, and that is not the senior pastor. It is not a group of pastors. It is Jesus. He is the head of our church. He is the one who has authority. He is the one who says how is going to go. And when people come along and they distract you from Jesus and they distract you from loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And they're so consumed with peripheral issues that are way out on the edge and some sometimes so far out on the edge that that you've got no business being out there leading you to a place where you are distracted from the Lord. Understand that that person is not serving your best interest. That person is disconnecting you from what matters most. And that is just the simplicity of focusing on Jesus Christ. Look, I don't know about you guys, but I can mess my life up so easily, right? I just. It is just enough for me to stay focused on the Lord like that. That is enough. I don't need all these other things distracting me from that.

[00:27:21] And I'm sure you don't either. I think one of the greatest threats to God's church today is denying the unity that God has created for us because we need each other. You know, I'm a fiercely independent person, and I've grown up with this idea that that, you know, I don't need anybody. Some of you are just like me and some of you I know. And so I know you're just like me. And then some of you, I can tell just by how you roll at church. But I am one of those people. You know, I was raised I was raised like this, fiercely independent. I don't need anybody. I don't need anybody's help. Like, if I got an issue or a problem, I'll figure it out by myself. You know? And the fact is, kind of a little cynicism goes along with it. You can't trust anybody anyway, because the second you try trust somebody, they're going to end up letting you down. And the danger of that is that you start to live your life like that. You live independently from the body of Christ. It has taken time for me to learn to live interdependent dependently with you. All right. And I just want to say to you today, I need you. I need you. I'm not ashamed to say it, and I'm not looking for it back. Okay. And some of you are like, well, I'm not saying that I need you, Pastor. Okay? It's cool. It's cool. I get it. I get it. But we need to get to a place where we recognize that we do need each other and God is intended the body of Christ to be just like that. And yes, sometimes I get deeply concerned about the way we talk about our collective gatherings together.

[00:28:59] You know, sometimes I hear Christians say things like this, hey, where do you go to church? Will I attend? You know, I attend Calvary Chapel, Las Vegas used to be Calvary Chapel, Spring Valley. Now it's Awaken Las Vegas. I'm not sure what the name is anymore. I just really like the church. All right. And and sometimes our terminology is like that while I attend church, and I'm like, what does that even mean? You attend church? I mean, when people talk about attending church, to me it gives a picture of like a you're in a football stadium and you've got your ticket and you've gone and you've got your popcorn and your Diet Coke and you're not spending any money on a salad, that's for sure. But you might you might you might get a hotdog later on. And then you go and you said in your nice little comfortable, cushy seat and you're watching everyone else play the game, right? I mean, you got the team down there, you got the coach, you got the ancillary staff that is all working together to entertain you because that's really what it's about. It's about entertaining you. And I think sometimes the terminology we use for our experience of the church sets us up for failure. It does. You're not attending church. You're not just attending church. You don't just roll in and get your drink and find your comfortable spot. And you know you got that spot. It's not too loud. It's not. Is that you saw it. It's not too cold. It's not too warm, it's not too crowded. And so then you just sit and you take in, you consume, you get all that you want, and then you walk out and you just attended church.

[00:30:23] And that is not the will of God for you. That is not the will of God. No, you are on the field, brothers and sisters, you are in the game. You are supposed to be in the game. God has called you to be an active part of the local body that He has engaged you in. You need to be on the field in the game, engaged and plugged in, engaged and plugged in. And that on a consistent basis. On a consistent basis, some of you I doubt that like totally offended you. Right? And especially someone online today, they're like, dang, I knew he was going to say that today, the day I'm going to get an email for sure. That day I miss church. We took a survey a couple of weeks ago and this was one of the questions that we asked. We asked how often with what consistency people and I think we use the word attend it's my fault. That was for sure an error. We'll scrap that for the next survey. But we asked the question about the level of consistency. And for our church, about 58% of us engage. Am I saying to attend engage weekly in our Sunday gathering? 58%. Now, the good news is that is 28% higher than the national average. So the national average has been dropping significantly over the last two decades. And while 58% may sound good, I would really rather have it be 100%. I know there are times. I know there are times where it's like, man, something serious comes up or you go outside and, you know, there's your car and it's got four flat tires or, you know, there's there's a thing like that. But the truth is this 40% of people come to church, gather together with the people of God once or twice a month, once or twice a month.

[00:32:19] And you will never get what God wants for you out of that type of consistency, you know? For our life groups, there are about 26% of us engaged in a life group. And remember, that can be not just a small group that meets in the home and does the curriculum that I write every Sunday. But you might be gathering with with women in the women's ministry or men in the men's ministry. We have youth life groups. And so, remember, that's the picture. But about 28% of us are locked into a life group. And I will say, like the good side of that is this. You know, we didn't have life groups four years ago and we really made it part of our DNA. We were intentional about starting this life group movement in the church, and we're we're about 70% away from reaching our target because we want everyone here to be plugged into a life group. It will radically transform and change your life. Now, those of you who are argumentative are thinking, well, you know what, Pastor? I may not have quantity time, but I got quality time. I may not have quantity time. I may not show up every weekend, but when I do, man, it's game on. It's game on. And it's good. It is good to go. And, you know, you're one of those people who learn that misnomer so many years ago when you were justifying, you know, when you were justifying your workaholic attitude. Right. Because that was what was being said. Hey, listen, it doesn't matter about quantity time, as long as you have quality time with your kids. And that's just a bunch of nonsense because you can't have quality time unless you have quantity time.

[00:33:58] Do you do you understand that today you can't really develop relationally? Right. We're not talking about just attending. We're talking about developing relationships in the church. And you can't do that unless you have quantity time. That is absolutely intentional. Paul says this in the verses that we just read verse 26, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. So in other words, listen. One measure to really identify whether we're as connected as we ought to be with one another is that we feel what each other feels. We feel what each other feels. All of us are journeying through life, and when we're connected the way that we're supposed to be, I'm going to feel what you're going through, right? I'm going to feel what you're going through. And you are going to feel what I'm going through. Now, you might be sitting there thinking this, Well, I just don't know. I don't know what other people are going through. And I'm saying that's the problem. That right there is the problem like that statement, that reaction, that response identifies what the problem is, and that needs to change. If we were the Addams Family. Right. If we were the Addams Family and I know some of you are like, well, you're Uncle Fester for the Addams Family, Bobby. Well, I'll tell you what. I'm not cousin it, that's for sure. Right. And for those of you who don't know, he was covered with hair. So that's that's not me. But but if we were the Addams Family, that person that I just talked about, that's like, well, I don't know what anyone else is going through. Your hand, you know, your hand.

[00:35:41] You know that that hand, that disconnected member of the body, that is just it's just so weird to look at it. It's just like floating out there and it's unknown. It's disconnected. And that's, you know, that's the way that you're living among the people of God. And that today needs to change. The third and final thing is this in verse 27-31, individually we discover value as we use our gifts to serve the body. Check this out. Verse 27. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually and God is appointed these in the church. First Apostles, second prophets, third teachers. After that, miracles. By the way, God still does miracles today. Then gifts of healings. Let me remind you today that God still pours out gifts of healings helps administration's variety of tongues. Tongues is still a gift among the people of God. Today, he says, are all apostles. What's the answer? No. Are our prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Are all workers of miracles? No. Do you all have gifts of healings? No. Do you all speak with tongues? No. Do you all interpret? No. But then he says, earnestly, desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. And he is going to talk about love in Chapter 13. So the final piece here is this We ought to be serving the body of Christ through the use of our spiritual gifts. And individually, there's a lot of personal discover personal value that we discover as we do that. You know something I know you're wondering today. Listen, Pastor, why why are you down on the floor? Why was worship led from from the floor today? I think so. I think sometimes we carry this distinction or this separation.

[00:37:43] But I'm not speaking like religious terminology, high church religious terminology. We have a distinction between the the clergy and the laity. You know, we we think that there's this big difference between the pastors and the worship leaders. Right. You guys are the ones leading the church. You know, the church rituals and things like that. Maybe you're a little closer to God. There's a special work that God does in your life. You're up here, we're down here. And so we just come and, you know, you fundamentally do the work because you're nearer to God. And and, you know, we carry that sometimes in our mind. If we have a religious background, maybe in a deeply traditional denomination or we're part of the Catholic Church, you know, that sometimes is the way you think things actually operate. You know, maybe in our modern contacts, maybe that's not us. And so in our modern context, we might think there's a difference between paid staff and then everybody else in the church. Right. I mean, we're blessed to have this opportunity to have a staff that is paid to to serve the Lord and to serve the congregation. And sometimes what happens is this like we think the paid staff is up here closer to God, and they have the spiritual gifts and they're doing the work. And since they're doing the work and there's such a difference between me and them, I'm just going to kind of sit back and, you know, attend and not really participate. And first, you might be thinking today, well, that's absurd. But the truth is this there is a direct correlation between the size of a paid staff and the decreasing level of people serving in the church like that. That's like.

[00:39:23] Data. It's established. People think they're looking at someone who's being paid to do the work and they're like, Well, I guess I don't have to because, you know, they're doing that or something like this. Well, I don't really have anything to offer anyway. They're all that, and I don't even know what my spiritual gift is. So I have nothing to bring to the table. And that is not true. That is not true. Look, you have as much to offer as I have to offer. You have as much to offer as Miriam has to offer. As one of our worship leaders, you have as much to offer as any of our pastors have to offer, whether it's Tony or Brandon or Alec or Jim. This whole idea of seeing things in graduated levels does not come from the Word of God. In fact, you know, John says in Revelation chapter one, verse five and six, he can check it out later for yourself. He purposed through his sacrifice to cause all of us to be kings and priests to the glory of God. And so I want to encourage you today. I want to encourage you today. You have something valuable to bring to the body of Christ. I don't know if you noticed this, but when I do come up onto the stage to teach, you know, I walk up. By those stairs. And I do that for a reason. And one of the reasons is this I don't want to just pop out magically from behind the curtain like it's the Wizard of Oz, right? I mean I mean, where's pastor well pastor's back secluded in this little, you know, hospitality room. And he's controlling everything from from behind the scene. And then all of a sudden, you know, here we are.

[00:41:03] We're just the people. We're just, you know, we're just the lowly people. And then he poof, he pops out from behind the curtain and then drops the message and then disappears again. And we just we just never see them. Like that is not the heart of this ministry. And that's not my heart either. I intentionally walk up the stairs. This is my conviction. I intentionally walk off from the stairs because I want you to know there is no difference between us. There is no difference between us. I am just like you. I'm living out the calling of God of my life. And I'm trying to do it to the best of my ability to use the gifts and the calling that God has given to me and to serve you as faithfully as I possibly can. But but. But I come up and I go back down because. Because there's no difference. Everyone here has a spiritual gift. And you know what? We're here today. I mean, there's reasons why we're on the stage, obviously, because it's easier visibility. There are technological things that we deal with that being on a stage helps with. But we are down today because we want you to know there are no levels. All the ground at the foot of the cross is level. And so so today everyone here has a spiritual gift. You have one or more gifts that God has given to you. I think it was easy for the early church to understand their spiritual gifts because they naturally lived in community. They naturally did life together. They served together. They didn't need a spiritual gifts test. They didn't need to take a spiritual gifts inventory because they were doing life in stepping out in faith as a way of life.

[00:42:49] And as they did that together, they discovered what their gifts were. You know, one of the questions that we had on our survey was this How many of you are serving in a ministry at the church? And let me just say this, all right? We're not reducing serving in ministry to just serving in one of the ministries or departments here. I understand that that's not the case. But 28%, according to the data, 28% of us are serving in some ministry, which is 7% lower than the national average, 7% lower than the national average. And the national average has been dropping precipitously and it dropped a lot after the pandemic. So this is what happened across the board in all churches, right? Every church is having a hard time getting people to volunteer in ministries. And so there was the pandemic. We everybody, for the most part, shut things down for a certain period of time. And then there were all of these reasons that people had to not really engage in the way that they were serving. And I'm not going to address those reasons with you today. I'm just going to say to you, the pandemic is over. The pandemic is over. That era is over. And whatever has been holding you back from stepping back into serving God, you need to address that and you need to get back on the field and you need to get back engage in what God has called you to do. Romans 12:4 says this. There are diversities in gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord, and there are differences of activities. But it's the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all for to 1 is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit to another, the word of knowledge through the same spirit to another faith by the same spirit, another gifts of healings by the same spirit to another the working of miracles to another prophecy to another discerning of spirits to another different kinds of tongues to another the interpretation of tongues, but one and the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills.

[00:45:04] So listen, there's no difference. If you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you are qualified to step out and to use your gift for the glory of God I got. Yeah. I'm wrapping up with this. I gave my life to Christ at Calvary Chapel, Costa mesa, a long time ago. And I was so rescued. I was so rescued. I mean, you guys know my story. I was in jail, assaulted a police officer, I was a party, or my life was a total mess. And he rescued me. He delivered me. He saved me. He accepted me when I did not deserve to be accepted. And he forgave me and and washed me clean of my sin. Clean of my sin. Brought me into this new community and gave me the gift of everlasting life. And for me, it was like, God, how can I how can I not serve you? How can I not give you my whole life? How can I not just be in a place where I say, Lord, here I am open hearts and open hands to you because of all that you've done for me. And I just took steps of faith. I didn't know what I was doing. I took steps of faith. I got involved in the college and career group, started serving God in that capacity. I would go to prayer meetings and pray for the needs that were in the church at the time. Harvest Crusades happened in Southern California. And so six months into my faith, I was a follow up counselor for people who were giving their life to Jesus Christ. You know, they had they had, like, no standards back then at all, which which was great. I went on missions, trips, I went on missions trips on the college campus at UC Irvine.

[00:46:39] I joined a group called KCM Korean Campus Missions, and they were like, full. I pick them because they were all in for the gospel and I was the only white guy in there. Like, I mean, it was awesome. We get in a big circle and it's like Koreans all across in the big circle and then white, you know, white, tall, white guy with hair and combat boots because I had hair back then. and for me, it was just like, I just want to serve God, right? I mean, who am I better to be a house, a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness? I want to say to you today, listen, maybe, maybe for some of you, you're like, man, I want to I want to serve. I want to take a step of faith. I just don't know where. Well, we need help in children's ministry, in middle school. We need someone to lead our grief share. We need help in the parking lot. We don't. When you get out of your car, we don't want you to drop out into a people less parking lot. We want you to be touched. We want you to hear someone say to you, Man, I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for coming. Thank you for coming. That it is the will of God. You made my day by being present among God's people. You know what that does? I mean, maybe you have no idea. I get up and have the privilege sometimes to teach the Word of God and to share the gospel. And the truth is this your word diffused the cynicism in that person's heart and prepared them. Because you know what? It took everything that they had to get on property.

[00:48:11] And then when they were getting out of the car, they're thinking, you know what, these Christians, they're all the same. They don't care. I'll probably walk in and sit down and never be touched once. And your presence as a greeter in the parking lot or in the lobby has the potential of diffusing all of that and causing someone's heart to be open to the gospel. It's a huge thing I want to say to you today. Your spiritual growth will be exponential when you serve God. Be willing to be stretched, be willing to be stretched. Stop sitting in that comfortable place that you've made for yourself that is marginalized you from the power of God. It's marginalized you from the power of God. You're like, Man, I love this country place. Sure wish God would move more. Well, guess what? Like guess what? Guess what? You're not experiencing him moving because you blocked him out. You created this little comfortable place for yourself. And God is saying, I sure wish that you would step out of that place and be stretched because I want you to experience more. I've got something more for you. I've got something more for you. Will you be stretched today? Will you take a step of faith today? Will you be encouraged today? Like Paul said to Timothy, he prayed for him that the spiritual gift that was in him would be stir up. Do not deny the gift of God that was given to you by the laying on of hands. But stir it up. And the word stir means to take from like a little tiny spark to the extent where it is a flame that is engulfing your life. In other words, we need to be on fire for God.

[00:49:49] Let's pray together, Father. Thank you. Thank you today for your faithfulness and your goodness. And you've spoken to our hearts in so many different ways. So many different ways. Today in this final prayer, we're going to close our service differently. And two things today. Number one is this. Maybe you don't know what your spiritual gift is. And I believe God wants to reveal that to you. Years ago, I was serving as an intern at the Bible College. I was running sound. That was my internship. And so at one of the service's Sunday night service after the Bible study, I was in the back running sound and the pastor said, Hey, we're just going to pray and we're just going to give an opportunity for the Spirit of God to move among us. And as I was serving the Lord, something unexpected happened. God spoke to me and he said to me, I've given you the gift of teaching. And am I saying it was an audible voice, but it was clear enough where I heard it and I thought, Man, that was a little weird and I really don't want the gift of teaching. And so I don't know what that was all about. And the service stopped and the pastor said, I believe that God has just spoken to somebody here, that he's given to you the gift of teaching. And so I knew. I knew. And in that moment, I said to the Lord, this is your gift that you've given to me. I will use this gift for your glory in any capacity that you desire. And today it may be that God wants to reveal your spiritual gift. In that way it may be more progressive revelation like you need to take some steps of faith.

[00:51:34] But today, if this is you and you do want to take those steps of faith, I want you to stand today. I want to pray for you. I want to pray for you. Maybe today you've been afraid. You've been confused. We're going to ask that God lifts that from you today. Maybe you need to lay down just the lifestyle of comfort. But if you want to step forward and faith and really see God, use your life. Stand up right now. Thank you. God bless you guys. Awesome. I'm just going to wait a minute. Sometimes it takes some time to settle in. Always sensitive to the person that is just struggling. You know, you're like, man, I'd love to do that. But my life, my life and you know what? You have to trust God with your life. I'm sure there are many things that you have on your plate. But. But you need to. Place the plate in his hands. And so stand up today. Give me the privilege of praying for you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Father. We bless your name and God so deeply grateful for every heart. God has not only been touched by your spirit, but just moved to the place of. Having open hands and opening themselves up to the revelation of the spiritual gifts that you've given in God to a new work, a fresh work, a mighty work, an empowered work. God, we pray today that that your truth would be superior over any lie that the adversary has spoken over their lives. God. We pray that your truth would break chains. We pray that your truth would bring liberty. We pray God. Today there'd be a rescuing from fear and from doubt, from unbelief. God, we pray for that unbiblical narrative that some of us just repeat day in and day out to ourselves, that we have no value, that we have no worth, that we have nothing to contribute and nothing could be further from the truth.

[00:54:15] God, we pray that you would renew the narrative. We pray it would be your word. We pray God. Where there's been darkness, there would be light. God, where there has been confusion. You would lift that cloud and cause there to be clarity and focus. God, where there has been complexity. Help us to replace it with the simplicity of following Christ with all that we have. And God, may you stir these gifts. Bring great revelation today. May you stir these gifts so that this church, your church called by your name, will be on fire with the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to reach the needy generation that you have divinely placed us in for such a time as this. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.