**To Him Be Glory in the Church**

**Ephesians 3:20-21**

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September 11, 2016

We’re moving from Romans to Ephesians just this one Sunday. As Steve alluded to in his prayer, this is my last Sunday with you for a time. The Lord, along with the church, has graciously allowed Kimberly and I to take a sabbatical, a rest away from the daily stresses and responsibilities, to think about some of the things related to ministry and life that will help us when we come back to be stronger, perhaps more clear, perhaps we pray, more of a blessing to this church. And so pray for that. If you haven’t read the *Broadcaster* article I wrote this past month, I would encourage you to do so. It lists six specific ways to pray for our sabbatical. It tells you a little bit more about some of the plans we have in that regard. But pray for us, won’t you?

I decided to sort of just share a pastor’s heart this morning, since I’ll be gone until November 20. So November 20 is the next Sunday that I’ll be with you. This morning, we want to just take a moment to look at Ephesians chapter 3. It’ll be really important to have a Bible today because we’re going to take these two verses, we’re going to talk about God’s glory in the church and we’re going to expand upon it throughout the letter. So, we’re going to read a lot of Scripture today. Most of it is in Ephesians. The verses won’t be up on the screen. You’ll want to have a Bible with you so that we can think about: How exactly is God glorified in His church? How do we lift up His name on high together as His people?

This comes as a doxology on the end of a prayer. In Ephesians 3:20-21, the Apostle breaks out in this great statement of praise to God after praying that the church would be able to comprehend the greatness of God’s love for them.

*20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

The church of Jesus is an amazing creation of God. She is such a creation of God as to be worthy of our deepest affection, our strongest commitment, and our love. The church is not man’s idea of how to join together as a group, as sort of a club. But the church is a divinely instituted work of the living God. God creates her in love for His own glory. That’s His purpose. And He devotes Himself to her fruitful existence and to her mission. Even as Jesus walked this earth, He pledged this to His disciple, Peter:

Matthew 16:18 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

“This rock,” I believe, is the rock of Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus’ commitment is “I will build my church.” This is Jesus’ church! The gates of hell would seek to hold the church back from glorifying God, from seeing Him in all His glory, from enjoying Him, and from communicating Him to the world. Those gates that hell sets up to rob God of His glory, to keep us from pursuing Him in great satisfaction and reflecting who He is to the world, those gates of hell will not prevail against it. And that’s only because Jesus Christ is building her. It’s not because we’re great. It’s not because we’re more powerful than Satan. We aren’t! But God’s Spirit is, and His Spirit indwells His church.

Jesus loves His church, and we know that because He died for her. That’s how deeply Jesus loves His church. He willingly gave His very life for her. It was for the church that God the Son took on flesh, born of a virgin. It was for the church that God the Son then walked this earth and ministered and taught the Gospel. It was for the church that He bled and He died upon a tree. It is for the church that He today acts as High Priest, interceding for the saints. God loves the church and all who are godlike love her too**.** For all of her warts and flaws, godly people who love the Lord, love the church that He created.

Sadly today, many Christians have such an aversion to “organized religion” that they have lost the wonder of God in the local church. I understand the temptation, but it’s important for us to listen to the Word of the Lord. Some modern Christians like to say things such as, “I love the Big C church, but not the little c church.” That’s an interesting phrase isn’t it? By this they mean that they love the church universal which is the invisible expression of God’s new community, located in all places and in every part of her history. But they do not love the church local, which is the visible expression of God’s new community located in a specific place and in the present time.

But these do not realize that no first century believer would even begin to understand what they are saying behind that statement. The New Testament Christian would not even think that it was possible to love the invisible, universal church and yet not love the visible, local church to which they belonged, to which they were committed. To be sure, the New Testament makes a distinction between the church universal and the church local, but the New Testament does not make a separation between the church universal and the church local. In the New Testament, the church everywhere is the church somewhere. That’s always the case.

So for instance, most of the books in the New Testament are written to a specific local church located in a specific place. And yet, these letters written to a specific local church, are intended to be read and received among all the churches located throughout all the world throughout all time. We ask the question, “Were these epistles, were these letters in the New Testament written for the Big C church or for the little c church?” The answer is “Yes!”

We can distinguish between these two expressions of God’s new community, but we cannot, and indeed we must not separate them. God chooses the same word, “church,” to describe both of these expressions of His unified people. Many times, Bible commentators in reading these letters, are unable to discern whether a New Testament passage that speaks of the church is referencing the universal church or the local church. The reason for this confusion is that these two ideas about the church are not sharply separated. They are joined together. There was no Christian in New Testament times who was a member of the church universal who did not also seek out and commit themselves to the church local. It’s important for us in our age to understand that!

The book of Ephesians is a letter that teaches us much about God’s heart and purpose behind His church. We discover what the church is and what the church is called to do in this great, great letter. In the book of Ephesians the church is described with four figures of speech. Just in this one letter, there are four metaphors that God uses to describe His church, here in the Book of Ephesians.

**1. The church as God’s beloved family.**

I told you that I’m going to ask you to turn with me to different pages throughout Ephesians, so we’re going to just do kind of a big overview and take this big picture approach to this one theme of the church being created for the purpose of bringing glory to God. We’re going to discuss why that is, what that is, and how that is.

The first figure of speech that we come across in Ephesians that relates to God’s description of the local church is that the church is His beloved family.

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

You’re no longer separated from God. “Fellow citizens” is the idea of the church being a kingdom. You are members of the household of God. You are members of the family of God.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

We’re members of His family. Family is the dominant word picture that God uses to describe the church throughout the New Testament. All throughout the New Testament we are encouraged to call God “our Father.” That’s a family term. And we’re encouraged to view one another as “brothers and sisters.” This word picture points us toward the relational love and devotion that we have first for God as our Father, and for one another as members of the same family, brothers and sisters in Christ. The spiritual family binds us together more strongly, surely and securely than the physical family does. You say, “Is that Big C church or is that little c church? And the answer to that is “Yes.”

1. **The church as God’s holy Temple.**

Ephesians 2:20-22 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

He’s speaking to this local church in Ephesus. This word picture points us toward our purpose as a church of having an upward worship of the Lord. That’s who we are. We’re people who worship God. We’re a people who relate to God, commune with Him as Father, and to one another as brothers and sisters. That’s family! But we are a people who are set apart for the worship and honor of the Lord. Our mission is first upward before it is horizontal out to the world. That’s the point.

**3. The church as Jesus’ unified body.**

Ephesians 4:4-6 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.

Ephesians 5:22-24 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

This body is the church. Jesus Christ is the Head of that body. The church is described as His body. This metaphor points us to the need of the church to submit to the direction and to the teaching and instruction of the Lord Jesus. We don’t lead ourselves. We don’t determine for ourselves the direction. We look to the Lord and say, “Lord, what would you have us to do? Who would you have us to be?” We cannot just decide what kind of church we’re going to be and then follow that. “This is what is going to connect with our culture. This is what we want it to be. This is what we like.” We don’t have those options. Instead, we listen to the Lord Jesus. “You are the Head of this body. We are simply following what the Head does. We are submitting to You.”

And furthermore, this metaphor also emphasizes our interdependence upon one another for the proper functioning of the whole. Paul is going to draw that out in his letter in 1 Corinthians more strongly. But each one of us are individual parts of the body. And each individual part is interdependent to the other parts. We need each other. This is not a “go it alone” type of faith. This is an interdependent faith.

**4. The church as Jesus’ precious bride.**

Ephesians 5:25-29 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

He’s using the instruction to husbands and wives to speak about the church. He’s really not talking about marriage. He’ll say later that he’s really talking about Christ and the church, to help us learn something about this church that’s really, really important for us to understand. Jesus, as the Husband, nourishes, cherishes, sanctifies, labors sacrificially in order to bring about a splendor and a glory to His Bride.

This metaphor points us to the immense affection that Jesus has for us, the personal nature of our relationship with Christ. And this is that we are a bride not individually. I am not the bride of Jesus individually, but I am part of the Bride as the church. It’s in the church that we have this kind of special relationship with the Lord, that we’re part of that. In love, He is working to make us beautiful, not just individually, but us together as a church, beautiful. He doesn’t just care that I myself personally am sanctified. He cares that we together are sanctified. Is that Big C church or little c church? And the answer is, “Yes.” It’s the wrong question to separate out the church universal from the church local. When we think of the church that way, we are tearing asunder what God has joined together.

I want us to look at this great doxology in Ephesians 3:20-21 now.

*20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul is talking to us as a church, not just us as an individual. This is “us” together. This is where the power of God resides, in us. Is the church for a little time and then passes away? No. It’s throughout all generations. The glory of God is going to be on display through the church and in the church forever and ever. If you’re taking notes, we’re going to spend a little bit of time talking about the glory of God being the church’s purpose.

*21 to him be glory in the church…*

God is at work in His church. He is at work powerfully in our midst. He is at work powerfully through Jesus, as Jesus loves the church and nourishes and cherishes the church. And what is His purpose? Why is God so invested in this thing called the church? And the answer is, God is pursuing the glory of His name. That’s it. That is the ultimate, central, key purpose. God created His church and designed it in such a way that it would be unique and powerful in its expression of His glory. This doxology and exclamation of praise to God is both a statement of what will be. So, this is going to happen. God will be glorified in the church forever and ever. God’s going to make that so, because He is going to sovereignly empower the church and work successfully toward that end. But, it’s also a prayer. It’s a prayer that when we, the church, read it we say, “Lord, please let this church, the church that I belong to, glorify You throughout all ages.”

Here Paul defines for us the purpose of the church’s existence as vertical. This vertical purpose unroots all of our selfishness, all of our self-centeredness, all of our self-focus because anything we belong to, anything we’re part of, we tend to start driving toward a self-focused, self-centered objective. And the church is of that nature as well. It is very tempting and possible for any one of us to be part of the church and to think very self-centeredly about the church. In other words, “What does the church do for me? How does it advance my agenda in this world? How does it bring me to my own self-will?” It’s possible for us all to do that. That’s where we all are. We have to fight against our flesh. And what God does, is right away He takes the purpose of the church and says, “It’s not really about you.” Now, you’ll be blessed as a result of it. He says, “Your joy is going to be in it.” So, don’t get me wrong. This is not also about a life of drudgery. But He says, “This is about My glory. And My glory is going to come about as I show you kindness. But remember that My showing you kindness is always all about My glory.” Paul says that this glory of God in the church is going to take place because of the powerful work of God through Christ, by His Holy Spirit, in us who believe.

The Bethany Mission Statement that we have outlined a number of years ago is simply this:

*Bethany Baptist Church exists to glorify God…*

We could put a period there. The rest of this statement is the means by which we glorify God. But we could put a period there. That is why we exist! That’s the only reason why we exist. If we don’t glorify God, there is no reason for us to meet Sunday after Sunday or for us to do anything as a church. Bethany Baptist Church exists to glorify God. And that is the Mission Statement of every true church, by the way. We don’t get to choose for ourselves why we think we exist in this community. We exist to glorify God. And that changes our perspective in remarkable and radical ways, because it shifts it from here on the horizontal plain of all the goodness of things that we could do in this earth, and it shifts us upward. Now again, as we shift upward, we realize the means by which God is glorified is by us expressing some very vertical works and missions related in this world, horizontally. But it is first and foremost an upward focus.

It is no small thing for us to lock in to the purpose of the church. The church’s purpose is not to meet human needs. That is the means to this end, but never the end. The church’s purpose is not to evangelize or to make disciples. That is a means to the end, but it is not the end. The church’s purpose is not to provide a place of fellowship. That is a means to the end, but it is not the end. The church’s purpose is not to give us a place of ministry where we can use our gifts and our talents. That is a means to the end. Here’s the end, and it is very significant for us to lock in. The church exists for the glory of God. It will change our experience with the church, I believe, if we grab on to this one amazing truth that God teaches us.

Paul began this letter with this emphasis. I want to take you back to chapter 1 to see this. In the first 14 verses, Paul is going to make this point over and over again. He wants to establish this truth that the church exists for God’s glory. That’s why God does everything that He does. It’s for the sake of the honor of His own name.

I’m going to start in verse 3 and we’re going to see three times the Apostle Paul in these 14 verses is going to express to us and teach us the purpose of the church. So, if you’re prone to writing in your Bible, and I think that’s a good practice, I would encourage you to just mark this and underline these three statements.

Ephesians 1:3-14 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…”

By the way, isn’t that an awesome way to start it? He’s saying God is happy. Happy is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He’s pursuing His own happiness, and He is infinitely happy. And what does He do out of His happiness? He blesses us. He makes us happy in Christ.

“...who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him…”

How did He pursue us to bless us? He chose us in Him. When?

“…before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...”

Here we go. Purpose! What is the purpose of all of this? He’s going to say the purpose. He’s going to state it. Here’s the purpose of His will.

“...to the praise of his glorious grace…”

That’s it! He says God does all of this so that His grace that is shown to us will be praised, will be recognized. That He would be glorified.

“...with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ…”

His purpose again, He’s already referenced, was to the praise of his glorious grace.

“...which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”

That’s the second time he says it. He talks about purpose twice so far. He says, “Here’s the purpose. That we, the church, would be to the praise of His glory, that we would glorify Him. That’s it! He goes on to say

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

In case we missed it the first two times, he says it a third time. Here’s the purpose for which God has done all this amazing work of grace in our lives. It is to the praise of His glory. That’s it! That’s why the church exists. It’s an amazing purpose! The church is the means by which God is glorified in this world.

What does it mean for God to be glorified? What does it mean for Him to have glory in the church? Glorifying God always involves two elements. The first is often missed. The second is often received. So it’s important for us to have both elements in our understanding of what it means for God to be glorified in the church.

First, that we, God’s people, are completely and wholly satisfied in Him.

Secondly, that we communicate to others through the way we live that He is completely magnificent, wonderful and satisfying.

In order to honor God through our obedience and service, we must first find ourselves satisfied by Him and happy in Him. When we think about the purpose of our life, we really have two options. There are only two options. There is the self life and there is the God life. So what’s my purpose?

The self life is always going to fill in various descriptions of what each particular self thinks is going to be most satisfying. So one person in self life would say, “Here’s the purpose of my life. It is to study hard, get a good degree, get a good job then, and raise a nice family. That’s the purpose of my life.” The self life might also say, “My purpose is to experience adventure. I want to experience this world and all the people in this world. And so, I want to travel. I want to have these experiences that are fun and exciting. That’s my purpose.” That’s the self life talking again. The self life might also say, “My purpose is to gain knowledge and to use it in a powerful way.” The self life might say, “My purpose is to be moral and to love my neighbor and to do my best at loving my neighbor.” The self life might also say, “My purpose is to just simply have as much fun as I possibly can.”

What’s the problem with all of those statements of purpose? And perhaps today, as you’re thinking about your purpose in life, one of those statements may fit your heart. Or perhaps there’s some other statement that is a statement of self life. What the difficulty with all of those? Some of those are noble things. What’s the problem? The problem is that all of these do not express God at the center. The purpose is separated from God receiving the praise for His glorious grace. That’s the problem. So, if our life’s purpose does not have at the very center that God would receive praise for His glorious grace in our life, then we are living for a purpose that is connected to ourselves and not to the Lord. And we miss out on why God created us as individuals. And the church then, corporately, would miss out on why God created us as a spiritual family, as the Bride of Christ, as Christ’s Body, as a holy Temple unto the Lord.

So someone says, “I want the God life. My purpose is to glorify God.” And I ask the question: What does that look like? For many, it seems that we would just simply do what God tells us to do. So to glorify God means that I set the self life aside and I do what I ought to do in accordance with what God commands me to do. And what I say to that is, that is not a life that glorifies God. You have one half of the equation, but you’re missing the fundamental first part of that whole equation of what it means to glorify God. We glorify God not by simply doing what we ought to do. That’s an off-centered way of thinking about what it means to glorify God. In this way of thinking, our glorifying of God is some kind of sacrifice of obligation on our part. We say, “Okay, God. I’ll give up what I want to do and I’ll start pursuing what You want me to do because you’re worthy. After all, you died for me. I guess it’s the least I could do for you.” That’s not what it means to glorify God. That’s called drudgery that doesn’t give God the honor that is due Him, the esteem of Him being the God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

God’s glory demands first that we seek and discover the great satisfaction of our life in Him. We would come to recognize that there’s no place of life, no place of joy that is outside of Him. He is the source of everything good and I want to pursue my joy, I want to pursue my good in Him. You’d say, “Well, where is that in the Bible?” I suggest that it’s everywhere, but since we’re looking at Ephesians 3, let’s look at this prayer to see that principle.

Ephesians 3:14-19 “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named…”

So he’s completing this section. He’s about ready to launch into this section of practical application of what it means to glorify God in chapters 4-6. But he’s rounding this out with this prayer. And notice the content of his prayer.

“...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you…”

He might give you something. This is what I’m praying. Not that you would give God something, that you would do something to bring God glory, but first that God would grant you

“...to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that…”

What? That you might do the will of God? No. It is so that

“...Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith…”

So that what? That you finally might get on to your obligation? No. He says so that… Here’s the whole purpose of all that I’ve been praying.

“...that you, being rooted and grounded in love…”

Does that mean our love for God? No!

“That you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge…”

You see, Paul knows that if you and I begin to know even a small measure of the infinite depth and length and height of God’s love for us, we will not have a problem moving toward doing His will. We will naturally say, “This is where my life is. God overwhelms me with satisfaction and it’s out of a satisfied heart that I desire to communicate to others. Here, I’ve found it! I’ve found the spring of the water of Life. Come look at the spring with me. I’ve drunk from it and I’ve been completely satisfied with it, and I don’t thirst anymore. Come and drink with me, friend.” That’s what it means to glorify God.

In order to glorify God we must first experience and find deep, increasing joy in His love for us. The key to our worship is our pursuit of our own joy in Him! When we find our joy in Him, it is then that we will proclaim Him broadly and wholly and we will obey Him because we know that obedience would rob us of the joy that we have found so very satisfying.

How is it that we can enjoy God more? The answer is: By grace through faith. That’s what the Gospel teaches us. By God’s working through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And that’s why we lean into the Gospel every day. If we are to worship God, we need God to supernaturally open our eyes to see His beauty and splendor and wonder. If we are to worship God, if we are to glorify God, we need God through His Gospel to make alive our hearts that were once dead in trespasses and sins. This is why Ephesians chapter 2 is so powerful. It’s why the Apostle Paul exclaims with such joy in verse 4. He says, “Here’s where we were.”

Ephesians 2:1-10 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive…”

That’s who we are, and that’s what is required of worship. It is that we would be made alive in Christ, satisfied by God. Simply being a local church doesn’t mean we will glorify God. We have a part to pursue. And what is our part? Like always, I didn’t want to leave you without doing what I always do, which is try to bite off more than I can chew. But here we go. There are seven faith commitments that the church makes to glorify God. And I’ll probably just reference these very quickly. I’ll kind of burn through them. But I really believe that the rest of the letter, I’m going to list seven, there are more than that in chapters 4-6. But the rest of this precious letter is given to show us how significant it is for each one of us to follow these principles and commands if we are to be a church that glorifies God. So let me just see where we go here.

**1. The church glorifies God by laboring to love one another and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Just write down Ephesians 4:1-3 and then Ephesians 4:26-5:2. The whole thing the Apostle Paul says, “I urge you to bear up with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” He says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us.” Our pursuing love for one another is not merely a benefit to the person whom we’re seeking to love. That’s not first and foremost. It is not merely a benefit that comes back to us. The reason why we labor so diligently to pursue the unity of the Spirit, is because it’s in that, that we find great joy and satisfaction in God, and we’re able to reflect His greatness and show others that He really is the source of life, to glorify Him. A church that does not love one another is a church whose joy in God is dying. A church that does not love one another is a church that is unable to effectively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to the world. And that’s why loving one another is so important. To Him be glory in the church!

**2. The church glorifies God by learning the doctrines God teaches us in His Word.**

In Ephesians 4, just down verses 13-16. He says that we’re no longer people who are “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.” We’re not children like that anymore. A church that glorifies God can’t be that because doctrine matters. False doctrine describes God in ways that are not true. And that’s the reason why false doctrine is so dangerous and why Satan is behind these doctrines that are contrary to that which is true, that which is right, that which is pure.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say after talking about how we’re “no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” He says, “We are a people who speak the truth in love.” What is he saying there? He’s saying we speak the Gospel, true doctrine, in love to one another. And I know some doctrine rubs against our flesh really roughly, but what he’s saying is that the church glorifies God by learning and teaching the doctrines of God faithfully in His Word. False doctrine will lead to false worship. So, true doctrine helps us to worship God rightly. To God be the glory!

**3. The church glorifies God by pursuing sanctification together.**

You might just jot down Ephesians 4:17-24 and Ephesians 5:3-11. God gives these letters to us so that we would put to death sin, that we would put off the old life, the old man, and we’d put on the new life. And that we would have a real transformation of sanctifying power of God’s Spirit at work in us. And he gives these admonitions. And they are to be read sort of quietly in our devotion time and we say, “That’s for me.” But the way that God delivered these letters that urge us toward sanctification, was not privately. He didn’t print out private devotions and hand them out at church and say “go read these at home.” He gave them as a letter that was given to the entire church. And he said, “Read this aloud. And when you’re reading aloud, look around and say, ‘we need to walk this path of sanctification together.’” We need to encourage each other and instruct each other and correct each other and even rebuke each other in love because we’re about the same purpose. And that purpose is that our lives would become more like Jesus. Sanctification is a team sport.

**4. The church glorifies God as elders/teachers labor to equip the saints.**

Ephesians 4:11-13 “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith…”

Now, He didn’t give the church shepherds to own the church. He gave the church shepherds/ elders. And by the way, the Elder ministry is always spoken of in the plural as well. It’s never just one Elder. It’s never, “He’s the pastor.” It’s “these are the pastors.” The word “elder/pastor/overseer” they’re all interchangeable. They mean the same exact office and ministry. And these people that God gives, these elders that God gives, are gifts from God to be used by God to labor among the flock in teaching, encouraging, and equipping the flock. The two primary ministries of a shepherd with his sheep is to feed the sheep and to protect the sheep. And here he’s saying in feeding and protecting we’re equipping the saints for the work of ministry. To God be glory in the church!

**5. The church glorifies God as members open their lives to elders/pastors/teachers, so that they would be equipped for service in God’s ministry.**

Again, it is not the ministry that is given to the elders. The ministry of God is given to the entire church. Elders are both shepherds and they’re sheep, at the same time. They are part of the ministry, and yet their role primarily is to equip the saints for the ministry. So we ask the question, who visits the sick? The answer is not the pastor or the elders. The answer is, the church visits the sick. Who feeds the hungry? The answer is not the pastor or the elders. It’s the church that does that. Who teaches the children? Who counsels those who are weak and weary as a result of discouragements in life? This is the ministry of the church. This is you all. There’s not one of us that owns this church more than others. This church is Jesus Christ’s church. And guess what? We all get to be part of it. That is the amazing grace of God toward us! But the church glorifies God as members open their lives to the ministry of elders. This is why constantly in Scripture, God is encouraging members to really honor and esteem the elders of the church. Elders that are not esteemed can’t feed and can’t protect. They can’t equip. And we can see how Satan is so easily at work to undermine and diminish the role of the Elders. Because if he does that, God’s not able to be glorified in the church. In all these things, Satan hates the glory of God more than he hates anything. And all of these principles Satan is at work to knock the church off center.

**6. The church glorifies God by committing to the covenant commitments that marriage places upon us as husbands, wives, parents and children.**

That’s that whole section from Ephesians 5 to chapter 6, verse 4. How we behave and relate in our homes fuels the worship of the church. These verses are not simply pieces of advice on how to have a happy marriage or how to have obedient children. These verses are given to us as commands by God so that we would learn how to glorify God in His church. So whenever that is disrupted, these relationships, the special covenant relationship between a husband and wife, a covenant made with God, the special relationship between a parent and their child, the children looking in obedience to the parents and the parents looking in love and patience and endurance and being careful not to exasperate. All of this is related not just to the privacy of our own homes, it’s related to what God can do in His church. And that’s why it’s so important. It’s not just so that we could have a happy family, but so that God would be glorified in His church. That’s what fuels our passion for this.

**7. The church glorifies God by praising and thanking God together in worship.**

Ephesians 5:16-21 “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit…”

Here’s what it means to be filled with the Spirit. You’re going to

“…addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Our praise to God, our singing to God is not driven by melody or tempo or instruments. Our praise to God flows from the life of the Spirit, of being filled with God’s Spirit and saying, “God, I want to have an expression of my great satisfaction in you, and it’s going to overflow in the way that I speak about you in song.” And that’s what I want my life to be. And do you know something? When you come to corporate worship and your heart is so satisfied in God that you’re ready to express that satisfaction to God in front of others, that’s what ignites a church in power to glorify God.

I’m so thankful for the work of God in my children’s lives. I’ll just speak about Jackson because he’s 19 today, so it’s his birthday. He’s away at college for the first time. But someone came to me and told me this story. I didn’t know this story, but they said that there was a person that visited a second time to Bethany. And they asked, “What caused you to come back?” And they said, “I saw a young man worshiping God with such enthusiasm that I had to come back to see it again.” Just think of how this whole church…that’s one kid. They didn’t know who he was. They just saw this young guy was so joyful in God and pouring out his heart to God. And I think, if that’s one kid, if the whole church would be so satisfied in God, it doesn’t matter whether we like the tune or we didn’t like the tune. We love the Gospel being proclaimed through that tune and we’re going to worship God. That when a visitor comes in and they sit behind you and they say, “There’s something happening. I’ve gotta come back because any people that are so satisfied in God like that, they’ve got a God that I need.” To God be the glory in His church throughout all generations now and forever. Amen!