**The Wholeness of the Church**
**2 Corinthians 13:11-14 (ESV)**
June 4, 2023
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Praise God. That is what we. Have in Jesus Christ. It's why we. Follow him together. Amen. We do so through. Through singing his praises and praying in his name, we're going to read his word. Together, finish our series through Second Corinthians God's word and 2nd Corinthians, chapter 13. The final verse is here. Before next week we begin a series through the lives of Elijah and Elijah. Back in first and Second King. So we're going to look at faithful living and faltering times. That's where we're headed. But today we close the series ministry. Welcome to the mess in these last verses. Paul's final letter? You hear his heart, heart coming through, as you often do in the end of a letter or in a final parting or greeting from someone. And it's no different here. The heart of Christ given to us through his word. And that will draw some. Some application for us to learn and to live out ourselves as a church family. Here's how it goes in in verse 11.

*Finally, brothers rejoice. Aim for restoration comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss all. The Saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

Please be seated and pray together. Father, we thank you that we can come to you and approach your throne. The throne of grace with boldness because we belong. We belong to you and you to us as our God and your spirit dwelling in us because of what's been done through Christ, nothing of our own we bring. It's a work of grace that we've brought into this fellowship, and, Lord, we long to share that with one another. And call others to respond to this command, to repent and to trust in Christ and receive the gift of eternal life and family, and in him would help us to be a place where that is expressed and experienced deeply and shared broadly in Jesus. Name we pray.

Lots of people want to be a Navy. It's considered a rare honor, one of those difficult and skilled roles, and I was listening to an interview with a a Navy SEAL, former Navy SEAL, and he acknowledged many people expressed him often that they wanted to be a a seal. Want to serve in the military in that way and he. Always asked them why. Because there are lots of people with shallow reasons. People who wanted to look cool and be able to tell people that they were a seal, and on and on, and he would ask why and then follow it with. Are you ready to die? Are you ready to die? The point is that it's going to be tough, way too tough to do it just to be cool. It's gonna be so tough it may cost you your very life. You need to know why.

And in fact, the intense training is designed to prove that out. They tend to graduate about 20% of those who start that training, so 80% they expect to quit 8 out of 10 people who start end up not finishing that they often ring the quitters bell. They say I'm done. I'm out. It's tough. If you're going to engage with a program like that, you need to know why you're doing it. What's the attrition rate for ministry? How many people quit? I'm not talking about full time. I'm not talking about pastors. If it's their job, I'm talking about true ministry, which is for all believers. We could just call it doing church.

How many people just stop doing church? Not stop going to church, but they stopped doing it? You know they , stop helping, serving, being kind, reaching out, having people over, sharing the gospel, the work of ministry. That's the job of everyone in the church family, you and me, when we enter into that, what's the attrition rate of people who start to get involved? They start witnessing or join a group, or they're serving or counseling, disciple and then they experience the mess, and then they. Just ring the bell and say. I'm out. This is too much and they may keep going to church, but they stopped doing it. What's the attrition rate? Because of that mess, it is high.

It is high because it's tough. And pause proof of that. He seemed like a glutton for punishment. You read the list of what he went through in Chapter 12 and he said how? Is this guy still going? Why does he? Do it. I mean this this hard Ministry of reconciliation. And yet he still has the gumption to invite others and join him in the. Mess of ministry. Why is he still at it after all the persecution? After all the sacrifice? And then you look at that the product and it's this. Church at Corinth and you look at the results and they're stabbing him in the back. They're struggling with sin and suspecting him of wrongdoing. The very act of sacrifice for that good. And he's adoring the mess of. Ministry for this. He doesn't need this. He could be done. He could quit, but he doesn't. He continues to brave the challenge of ministry. There are plenty of people to. Choose the quick church.

They decide they're done with the mess of ministry now, some actually leave, but a lot just remain. They just start to sit on the sidelines. They get off the field, they become spectators. They're still in the stadium, but they're just not staining the uniform. We could do all sorts of ministries, too, where we step away not just at church in the church building, per say in our ministry to our spouse or our children, our family, our neighbors, we take a few kicks, few stabs in the back, a few hard words. We see some chaos at home or in our neighbors and how they respond to us. We get scorned or rejected or ridiculed. You feel the mess and we just say I'm done. I quit kind of taking a break from ministry. We're not talking about a season of rest. We're talking about quitting. And it is tough. It is a mess. It's tough so.

That question comes back. Why? Why do we do it? Why brave the mess of ministry? For all of God's leaders from Moses to Paul, same for us as it was. For them, why do it? And it has to be this. Because you want God. Because you want God. That has to be it. You do ministry, you embrace the mess. Not for you, not even for other people. You ultimately do it for God. If you're gonna do it for real, if you're gonna press on and brave the mess, you have to do it for him. Because that's what it takes to be near him. That's what it takes to be known and to know. You can't have God otherwise. A closeness with God. You have to brave the mess. Gospel togetherness. What God brings through bringing us into a church family, what he calls us into ministry. It is messy.

 But the truth is that you never have to face it alone. Because it is there that you will find God. That has to be what drives you. Braving the mess of church and family and ministry is what it takes to have God to draw near to what God's calling in you, you into to express love to people in need. Because that's what God is like, and that's where he's from. So how badly do you want to be close to God to be by God? Enough that you're willing to brave the mess. I mean, what would? It look like to make this kind of commitment.

What does it involve? What does it take to continue to engage and enter into that mess time after time and take? All of the hits. If you want God, you have to brave it and you need some strong reasons or reminders to keep going. That's what Paul gives the Corinthians here in his final clothes, and we'll draw out a few for us this morning. And the first is very simple, we'll. Say it like. This you want to have God, you want a brave ministry, you need to do it because there are no easy outs. There are no easy outs. As much as we would wish, there's a simple way to escape the pain of ministry when things get messy there. Are no easy outs. And this is because what we call the bond, the bond that we uphold, the deep bond in in verse 11, really just one word.

Paul says brothers. Finally, brothers, and it's easy to skip over that word. But here's the bond that we're talking about the thing that keeps us united, the gospel togetherness that we have is. So Deep Paul uses. This word, brother. There's lots of different kinds of bonds, you know, there's Elmers Glue, there's super glue, there's industrial epoxy and there is it adhesive. And some bonds are short lived. They kind of just come apart easily and other bonds they couldn't come apart even if you wanted them to. You think about relationships and bonds. You think about things that bond us, like shared affinities. We like the same sports team, have the same hobby, or maybe proximity.

You know, we live in the neighborhood together. We're roommates. But there's unique kind of bond that comes from being born out of the same womb and growing up in the same family as siblings. Bond as as siblings. Deep bonds formed. Through friendship or playing on the same team or being soldiers in the unit. But often those bonds we use to describe the depth by calling them the. Bond of brotherhood. Something unique that God uses this to help us understand our connection or bond with one. Another to deep. As brothers, and this is the word Paul uses brothers and I've heard more than once those stories of older siblings looking forward to getting a new baby brother. And then Mom brings them home and also the baby brothers, a little bit noisy, a little bit cranky, a little bit stinky and smelly and messy, and they say. Can we give him back? Life doesn't work like that. And that's also. Part of the beauty of it, isn't it? Of family, the bond goes deeper than you're feeling. He he's your brother. Like it or not, they can think he's your brother. And there there's sometimes bad choices, hurts challenges. But we affirm the simple truth, and it speaks volumes, brother. And you see Paul saying that finally, brothers.

Brothers and here's this lesson basic but profound, painful relationships in church community. They do not invalidate the legitimacy of a church family. Painful relationships in a church community. They do not invalidate the legitimacy of a church family. This is a deep bond that Paul is appealing to and you think about painful relationships. We've read through this letter. We've had a series, we've seen a lot of pain, a lot of brokenness, but Paul is not unwilling to use the word brother. It's a bond that holds true even when it's tested a genuine spiritual family bond, and if you'll allow me. I'll flip through. We can go back to chapter one.

We'll flip through this letter and just remind ourselves of the kinds of issues that that this kind of serious spiritual bond is able to endure, sustain and even transcend. The first might be a simple one is just the issue in chapter one, verse 16 of unmet expectations unmet expectations. Paul he knows he had wanted to visit. Remember that he had wanted to visit, but it ended up not being in God's plan. What was best. And so it was a disappointment and it ended up being a source of suspicion. For Paul's enemies and friends alike, as many unmet expectations can be. But he didn't back down from that, he didn't succumb to shame or at their pressure or suspicion. He still calls them brothers. That now that my expectations about relational pain, relational pain, you see chapter 2, verse one, Paul said. I had made-up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. He knew that this has been a hard thing.

They've been relational. Pain and his genuine spiritual family bonding Christ has not broken Despite that he. Knew it was sharp. So sharp that that that it was. And yet he still calls him brothers. Not that, but in her distress, Paul is experiencing inner distress. You look at chapter 2, verse four, he says. I wrote to you out. Of much affliction. And anguish of heart with many tears. So I was crying about it. I mean this was. Really getting to. Me and it still doesn't, even in a deep in her distress, he doesn't let that upend their bond in Christ. He still calls them brothers. He also is aware of satanic schemes, satanic schemes in verses, Chapter 2, verse 11, and then he references it again in Chapter 12 verse. Seven.

That Paul. Says. Look, I know Satan's at work. We're not ignorant of his designs. He's at work and there's some relationships and the need for forgive repentant sinners and struggles in that and. And Paul said, look, we're not ignorant of his schemes and he still calls them brothers, even though there's challenges, spiritual warfare and even gospel opposition. If you look at chapter 4, verses 3 through 4, he knows that the gospel he says is veiled to those who are perishing, that there's opposition to the Gospel Ministry that they're doing, he understands. That, and yet he's they're brothers in in this challenging environment, but he also is able to transcend in, in, in this bond physical trial physical trial. You look at chapter 4, verse 16 or chapter 6 verses 3 through 4 or really chapter 12 verses 24 through 33. And remember all the trials that had gone through. All the pain.

The suffering that he's experienced and these wealthy Corinthians have been protected from. But he doesn't withdraw and lose the tenderness of the expression that they're still his brothers. And then there's even fleshly accusations hurled at Paul. You remember chapter 5, verse 12, again in chapter 10, verse 2, where he's referencing. Look, there's people who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. They think we're doing this all in our own strength for our own glory. Despite all those accusations and suspicions, Paul doesn't descend into dark suspicions of his own and withhold his title of brother. He has concerns, yes, but he's honest and he's still open hearted and calls them brothers. And there's an issue. There of Chapter 7, verse nine of past sin. Paul had dealt with serious sin. If you read the 1st letter to the Corinthians there. And Paul references it and. It brought grief. You said, but I rejoice not because you were grieving, but because you were grieved and repenting like. I'm glad. I'm thankful that you've repented of that sin.

But sometimes knowledge of a past sin can cause us to withdraw or pull away, or withhold that that that call of brotherhood and the example of Paul here is to. To express still brothers, not avoid the stain that someone has given to Christ. And then there's this issue of other churches. In Chapter 8, verse one, other churches. You remember Paul, he says. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that's been given among the churches in Macedonia. He references how the Corinthian church had had pledged to give financial support to the church at Jerusalem. So the Jews. Here's a Gentile church pledging to give. Report to Jews. Showing their bond of togetherness in Christ and , Paul said, look. You inspired others, the. Churches in Macedonia, they were ready. To go. In fact, they've kind of they they've. Lapped you, in a sense, they're already giving and these other churches are doing amazing things and you, you. Good, almost. See like. Well, are we descending into a comparison or competition? But Paul is not worried about that. He understands the Union that they have in the body of Christ and he still is, is actively trusting that God's at work in those churches as he is here and gives them expression brothers, even though there might be a bit of a delayed commitment. If you if you look how it keeps going in chapter 8 verses 11 and then Chapter 9, verse 5, Paul references that they'd pledged the money, but they hadn't followed through all the way yet, and Paul doesn't withhold the title of brothers until they fulfill this commitment.

No, the family bond holds fast. There's also those deceptive influencers in Chapter 11 verses 13 through 15. Those men were false apostles, deceitful workmen disguised. Paul knows that those men were at work and influencing, but despite their presence, which he confronts directly. He's not afraid to still refer to this precious church families, brothers. Even though there is started to become the seed of dark despite dark suspicion, dark suspicion in chapter 12 verses 15 through 16. Where Paul had never taken financial compensation from them and he'd served them free to not be a burden. But they had started to give in to some dark suspicions that he was doing so out of a tricky scheme that he was actually selfish underneath. And he says, I was crafty. You say I got the better. Of you by the sea. But despite all that, he still calls them brothers. And you see that there's social strife in chapter 12, verse 20, social strife, he says. I'm afraid that when I come, you might not find me as I wish.

I might not find you as I wish. There's gonna be quarrelling or jealousy. Anger, hostility, slander. Gossip, conceit disorder. This is kind of strife in the Community, chaos and even in that concern he doesn't withdraw from the church. Namely, this expression of brothers. And then even this issue in Chapter 12, verse 21 of moral compromise of moral compromises is I'm afraid that that I, God, maybe humbled me before. You may have to mourn over many you have sinned early or not repented of the impurity. Sexual morality, sensuality, the practice, moral compromise. He's ready to grieve. He's ready to mourn, to be humbled. But even this issue of some moral compromise in the church doesn't cause him to withdraw his expression of brothers to the whole. Now he does take it seriously. And last, I'll just say the matter of public discipline of public discipline in chapter 13 verses one through 2, that the stakes are high enough that Paul has to deal with this issue of public discipline, that the sin, if it becomes serious enough, evident enough, unrepentant enough, it must be cut out. When sinners refused to repent after multiple confrontations, and then Paul understands the call that Jesus gave in Matthew 18 to publicly acknowledge they're not living as a follower of Christ, they're not walking as a brother. Paul knows that they're right on the doorstep of this reality, some of them.

And so he acknowledges this issue of public discipline. It had occurred in in Corinth before and it may have to need to occur again. And that might be the kind of thing that would be so distasteful and shameful, and Paul would just distance himself from them. But he doesn't, he says, brothers. Now this does bring up two issues on this point. On an individual and a corporate level on an individual level. 1st, is there a time when an individual is to be disciplined out of a church and that you're not to call them brother? And then and then second on the corporate level is there some time when the church becomes so compromised in some way, whether morally or doctrinally or practically, that you need to leave and break fellowship? Are those situations true? And I think that there there's a lot of wisdom and discernment needed in how we navigate those things, but they're realities that that exists and the scriptures speak to that they're really of different texts and different sermons for another time. We need discernment as we wrestle with those things, and there are times, even when we're when we're called.

And we must. Leave an assembly or where we must avoid someone who is drawing others into sin. These are acts of clarity for the reason of gospel credibility and of church purity. But it it's always done with this goal for the glory of God and with this aim towards restoration, aim for the good of God and the eternal good of others. We need great discernment and their other texts. As I mentioned for other time. But here what we're just acknowledging when we look at the end of. This letter is how. Many issues had gone on in Corinth. Paul was not afraid to step in to him, to speak to him, to address them, but at the end, when he closes, he is not withholding the expression of this deep bond, calling them brothers. The heart of Paul is really manifest here in Second Corinthians Chapter 7, verses 2 through 4 where it says make room in your hearts for us. Says we've wronged, and no one we've corrupted no one. We've taken advantage of no one. He longs for them, he says. I don't say. This to condemn you for I said before, that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. You have to die together and to live. Together, this is a deep bond. That, that, that Paul expresses, I'm acting with great boldness towards you and I have great pride in you.

And I'm filled with comfort in our affliction. I'm overflowing with joy and he recognizes, despite all the challenges and the mess of what's going on, correct, there are no easy outs. They're all no easy outs, painful relationships in church community don't invalidate the legitimacy of a church. Family and we need wisdom to navigate difficult interpersonal issues and communal issues, yes. But there are no easy outs and it comes back to the truth of the gospel. Think of all the sins that humanity has thrown. In God's face. Even the very people of God and the rebellion the Israelites committed over and over and over, and praise God, he did not withdraw his covenant to love. He fulfilled his promise. He sent his son to die on the cross for our sins in our place while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. You ever, God, who's united us together as one with one another, but ultimately in him, through a bond that is so deep it is utterly unbreakable. That's what it means being Christ.

We try to reflect that reality with one another. And as a church family. But this is the truth that's going on, ultimately, is that we've been brought into the family of God. This was a love so scandalous it distressed people, even Jesus own biological family had concerns. Memory sharing, this gospel message and preaching, and people were pressing. His family came. They're trying to talk to. Roman and his mother and his brother stood outside in Matthew Chapter 12, verse 46, and they're trying to talk to him and the guy says, hey, your families looking for you. And he says, who are my mother and who are my brothers and stretching his hand over his disciples, he said here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. He's driving a point about the tide that's so deep about his followers that that are his in in following his Heavenly Father.

This is the mission of Christ, and in bringing these people into the love of God that you can see it in his prayer at his deepest moment of need. What's coming out in in the heart of Christ right before he's about to enter the cross and you see really God, having a conversation with God, the inner mind of the sovereign. John 17. And look at the prayer of Jesus. What was on his mind? You can see him praying for God to fulfill what he intended and promised to do through the cross to bring his. People into the. Special love and unity of Oneness, the bond that he had enjoyed as father, son, and Holy Spirit from all eternity past. John, 17, you look at Jesus saying for their sake he's praying for his disciples. There I consecrate myself. That they also may be sanctified in the truth, but I don't ask for these only not just the disciples here present with me, but also all those who will believe in me through their word. That is, you and me. OK.

I pray for them that they all may be one, just as you father are in me and I in you, that they also may be in. Us. Why? So that the. World may believe that you sent me. The love of God that we're invited into in Christ. This is what the gospel means, what it what it means in Christ. This bond that we have. This is what we've been brought into. When Paul celebrates in Romans. After 8A passage, we know so familiar. But think about it, he says. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, the family language, in order that he might be the first born. Among many brothers. And you think about the glory that that. Starts to talk about and the security that we have in that bond and he says, what are we going to these things if God's for us, who can be against us, who's going to bring a charge against us now? And who's going to separate us from the love of God in Christ? Can you can look and he says nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the bond we have in Christ.

The spiritual family bond that not even the angels are permitted to enjoy. The Angels long to look in. Angels can be around God, but not in this way. This is only for family, for brothers. Angels still cover their face and their feet, but we with unveiled face, behold the glory of God and the face of Jesus Christ. And this is what the writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews chapter one and two, that that he talks about how Jesus and he says that he sanctifies those who are sanctified or he who sanctifies sorry and those who are sanctified. They all have one source. And that is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers. Not ashamed. Praise God that that God didn't take the easy way out and write us off. He's committed to his love, this bond that he is brought about through the work of Jesus Christ. He doesn't pull back from the mass. That's him entering into it. And so this example of Paul reminding us of the stakes of the gospel, that there are no easy outs.

This is a deep bond that we uphold and we're not looking for an easy way. To write off relationship with someone. We're not looking for the easy way out. We're recognizing the beauty of what it means to be brothers, and maybe you've never experienced the transformation of the gospel and you don't understand this bond. Or maybe you need to take the step of baptism or membership to publicly proclaim. Yeah, I believe I have been made a brother, been born again through the work of God and the gospel. Or maybe you're wrestling with some of the pains that the Corinthian church went through. And maybe just need this reminder that our place in God's family transcends those things that we're we are secure in Christ. Or maybe you're just tired and frustrated at things that people are doing and you sort of just feel tempted to ask. God, can we just keep that person back?

We give them away. We need to remember and cherish the reality. There are no easy outs and praise. God that that old shoe, not only for others, but for us that we have something special to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Praise God for church. Family committed to that, that that even those painful relationships in the church community doesn't invalidate the beauty and legitimacy of a church family, that there are no easy. But if that means anything is going to have to show itself practically. It's going to have to show it all practically, and it's going to be it's going to be tough, it's going to be hard. But there's one thing it is not and is not optional. It is not optional leaning. In is not. It's the divine call that we to lean into these relationships. There aren't easy outs and leaning in is not optional. We this deep bond is going to be upheld. Through a hard call, a hard call that God has placed upon us, a call that we're to obey. He's a duty. He's asking us to fulfill a task to carry out to honor this call, to lean into relationship even when it's hard. And that's one of the most difficult things to do. Lean in.

We all remember when Joseph's brothers were jealous and their anger. These are brothers who they couldn't find in themselves to speak a word of kindness. They just couldn't do it. They couldn't make it happen and you probably remember in your own childhood, you know, or as a parent or as a grandparent, you watch around the pain of a young child's face when they have frustration and they're upset at their sibling and you try to tell them talk. To them about it. And then like, give them a hug. See if you can get. Him to lean in. You can make him. Hug, but you can't make him lean in.

They just don't want to do it so hard. And we, we laugh at kids. We didn't grow out of that. We didn't grow out of that like, well, this is this one's hard. OK, well, we're going to be in church together. But look what Paul says. You just sort of give some commands rapid succession, that sort of strike. They're like ripples or waves that just push us in our heart to push us. No lean in lean in, he says, rejoice, aim for restoration. Comfort one another agree with one another. Live in peace. It's almost rhythmic and grease he's leaning is not optional. Come on. He's like nudging. Go, go, go, go together. This is the hard call that we honor. There's five ways that stand out. We'll just touch on them briefly. The first, he says, rejoice. This is one way to lean in, rejoice always, and it's not a sarcastic jab. It's not a superficial. It's not like he's writing just these hard words and letters.

And unlike blessings in Christ. He's really genuine and he speaks from credibility he suffered. He knows it's hard, but he still calls them to rejoice because of what's what we just talked about and the gospel is true that we've been brought into the family of God in Christ. We have reason to rejoice. Say yeah. But things are hard. Do you have reason to rejoice? Has God brought you in? Is there anything that can separate you from the love of God? Was it was what we saying just true? Do we have? Reason to rejoice. Yes, we do always, Paul says. Rejoice, we just ran through 15 issues that were going on the church. I'm sure some of them are own excuses.

Maybe all of them and I would suggest that we've experienced all fifteen of those things in in ways not just as a church as a. Whole, but in the last year. And your post says you can rejoice, rejoice, lean in, rejoice second, restore as best you can restore as best you can says aim for restoration. Aim for restoration huge part of the letter, chapter 13, verse 90, says we're glad when we're a weak. You're strong. Your restoration is what we pray for. That's what we're aiming for, and the idea of being mended or fixed. It's like a dislocated finger being put back into place. I I played sports, had a couple of dislocated fingers, very uncomfortable. Very painful. In fact, when your finger gets dislocated and had the elbow get dislocated, it feels like it's not a part of your body anymore.

Like a member. Like floating out there. Like, whoa, that hurts really bad. And the idea of restoration is to put. It back and you, you put that finger back, you put that elbow back and the truth is you put it back. The best you can. I ended up getting taken to the doctor and the doctor was like, what did you do? I was like, well, I tried to. Put it back. It's like you're not supposed to do that. Like, I couldn't help. It was floating out there. I just grabbed it. But because of that, there's, you know, my finger is a little bit different in size. My elbow hurts every once in a while, and every once in while it flares up in a really weird way. I'm like, what's going on? Oh yeah, I remember I had that injury.

And church it can be like that. There's flare ups, there's pains, there's hard. We do the best we can sometimes like. Well, it's kind of just always hurts a little bit, but we did the best we can. We're aiming for restoration even though it flares up, we need to be gracious with each other, but sort of the heart of Paul in in Romans chapter 12, what he says is far as is possible. It depends on you. Live peaceably with all. Don't avenge yourselves and ultimately don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good look. Restore as best you can. Some things might hurt, but aim for restoration.

The best way you. Third, reassure where needed, reassure where needed pulses comfort one another. Comfort one another. Now they've been exhorted by him, he said some hard words. He said some hard words, and they've been difficult, but he still wants them. To be comforted. And in fact, you kind of go back and you remember the opening of the letter in chapter one that Paul had called them to, to experience the comfort of God, the God of all comfort and all mercy. Like live this out, he's the father of all. Comfort and mercy. And as you share in Christ sufferings you're to share in his come. Reassure one another. You're going to need to reassure one another in the love of God and in your love for one another. Comfort each other.

Rejoice always restores best you can reassure when needed forth, reconcile where disagreement divides, reconcile where disagreement devises agree with one another, agree with one another the ideas be of 1. Mind be of 1 mind and the pursuit is to unite ourselves or to get in tune or to harmonize around the mind of Christ, to be in step with the spirit. And we have to go to God's word for that and to let him set the priorities of what matters and to strive to be united around what God makes important, and then also. To set aside what Romans would describe as just preferential issues to set those aside and to unite ourselves to the revealed will of God and be of 1 mind of the essential matters, reconcile according to truth, where disagreement begins to divide, and that's going to feel like. What Paul describes in Galatians Chapter 5 and then later James would write in James three the fruit of the Spirit. When we're in step with the spirit we're experiencing and he will bear the fruit of the spirit. And there's one aspect that Paul Keys in on here and that is peace.

He says live in peace. Last, we could say that you rest when you've done what you can, rest. When you've done what you. Man rejoice, always restored as best you can reassure where needed, reconcile or disagree divides, and then rest when you've done what you can. Live in peace. Don't feed the fighting. Don't fuel the fire. Don't listen. Listen to gossip or slander or participate in strife and that. That's not to say that we're pulling away. This rest is a leaning in kind of rest. The living in peace kind of rest because there's a pulling away where we say, well, I'm just going to be at peace, but we nurse a grudge or bitterness where we have a selfishness that often just can't help but come out through a lack of joy or complaining. And it's a, it's a pulling away at which we're saying, well, we're not at war, but we're sort of at a Cold War. Paul says, look, don't be at war, not even a Cold War.

Lean in and live in peace. And sometimes that does mean that you have to rest when you've done what you can and trust that ultimately this is all up to God. But God wants us to address the brokenness in our church family with the most restorative ends within reach. Because leaning in is not optional. This is the hard call that we honor, and there's no more obvious example of. God's heart and prior to take initiative and leaning in the mess of ministry than in in him sending him his very self in Christ, coming in in God the Son, living as a man and bringing the Ministry of Reconciliation.

That's what the gospel is all about. It's what. Jesus did. This is how it looks to do ministry. We braved the mess because it's not optional. We lean in because it's not optional. Maybe there's someone that God would bring into your own mind, or have on your own heart place where either there's some step that you can take, or maybe just a way in which you need to rest and. Give it to God. And just to express that person, look, I'm leaning into you, maybe there's no more steps I can take, nothing more I can. Say, but you just, you know, my heart is. Open to you.

May God help us to do that because it's. Not an option. It's not an option. Praise God for a church family where people do that. People lean in, even in hard things that people lead in. To me, I've seen people lean into one another. I've seen openness be expressed, and even when there's disagreement there's, there's still an expression through the spirit of peace. Praise God. It's a. Yes, but that's what church family is. And it's a hard call. It's one that we honor. It's one that we honor. But you say, well, what about if it doesn't? I mean, why risk it? What if? The person does respond well. What if they? I don't know what's going to happen? And the truth is, you don't.

You don't know what's gonna happen to ministry if you lean in. You don't know if someone. 'S gonna just spit in your face. You don't know that, but you lean and not because of what you you're worried what? What may or may not happen. You lean because of what you know will happen. You lean in because you know this is when. That shows. This is when God shows up. Look at the promise there in verse 12. Boss says lean and you do these things because this is when God shows up, he says. And the God of love and. Peace will be with you. You lean in because that's when God shows up. That's where he is. Look, the restorative efforts, they secure God's good presence in a distinctively precious way. God's presence to bless in such a precious way, his love and his peace with us.

This is the sure care of God that we enjoy when we lean in. I remember I was. I was not quite a teenager and we were helping this family move and I was on the in the truck and the father puts this Dolly under refrigerator and then kind of tilts it back and then says here hold this had to get things ready and he goes away and I'm holding the fridge. And then, as he's leaving, he gets distracted somewhere and I can feel the fridge just slowly starting to come back. Going back. Hey, hey. You're here. And. No. No answer. I'm starting to yell. He's gone. This thing's gonna crush me. This is how it ends, Fritch. Now praise God. There was there was some other furniture and it kind of like propped up on the furniture before I got crushed. And I'm sitting there yelling. And he comes back and he's like, what are? You doing? I'm like, what were you doing? You left me all alone.

I'm not even a teenager. Sometimes it's like that's how ministry is like I'm leaning and it's like, oh, this is so hard. I am going to be destroyed. That's just gonna leave me here and get destroyed. This person, they're gonna they're gonna say somethings gonna break my hearts gonna. Bring my feelings. Gonna break my families gonna break my life. And the truth is, that's not what happens. Ministry would be hard, but you do not do. It alone, it's where God shows. That is where he is just like a father who sends his kids. Go try to reconcile or go ask for forgiveness from that adult and you go in there and think this is gonna crush me. But the father is there and he's like. I want you to take that.

Step of faith. I will swoop in and the moment you need me, I'm there because that's my heart. It's what I want. It's what I'll show up and this is this is God. He's the God. And you see who he is. The God of love. And peace. And then you see where he. Is he is with you? Restorative effort secure his good presence in a distinctively precious way. This is the sure care we enjoyed when God shows up. The defining marks of Christ. Not only he was here, present with us. You see Jesus. But after he secured victory on the cross, he rose from the grave. And then here Jesus is in ministry and he's like, I'm going to go back to. Heaven to be with the father. And they said like no, don't leave.

We need you with us. Your God, Immanuel. Your God with us. And he says no. It's a good thing that I. Because what? It's not going to leave you alone. In fact, he goes and then he sends. The spirit to be with us. This is even better. God with us in dwelling, each one of us, us in him, and he in US. And now here God is at work, and he bears the fruit in US and through us, love and peace. Praise God.

Where do you need hope? Where you're feeling crushed? And you think I don't know if I can lean in? I don't know what's gonna happen. Where do you need hope to remember? This is when and where God shows up. Remember that hope it's a sure care that you can enjoy. Now, how do you know it's really happening? How do you know it's really happening? I'll say something. Now be careful with this. But I'll say it like this. Social distancing is out. Social distancing is out. Here's what I mean by that. Verse 13, he says, greet 1. Another with a holy kiss. Greet one another with a holy kiss. There's a kind of social distancing, and I'm not talking about medical social distancing.

That's what on our mind, we think about all these things, but there's a social distancing that's happening long before any kind of pandemic. The kind of distance where this avoid and unable to express genuine love to. People in the church family. Where we're just able to. Kind of. Avoid and not express acceptance and openness. And Paul is pushing us together here and saying don't do that, greet one another with. A holy kiss. This is a pure love that we're to express and purity, not so much in the in the sense of sexual purity. We're talking about think relational purity. Even though there's an element of that, but relational purity that this is genuine, it's sincere that this is a this is a an expression of love. And I think there was a. That he he's using a cultural expression of love that was there. And we recognize that in endearment.

And here's an expression of love that should be open and genuine. It should be hypocritical or just some kind of polite etiquette. That there's a a politeness that you say hi, whether it's a, a greet one another with a a, a high or a wave, or a handshake, or a fist bump, any kind of. But it's just sort of a fake plastic politeness plus says no, it should. Be genuine it. Should be holy. That there's an acceptance between you because of Christ. I remember I was on the trip with my wife. We're near the beach. We're walking on the beach front and we had to park far away because there were parking restrictions and you couldn't park down there and you get a ticket. So we're walking down to the beach.

There was another. Gentleman walking with his kid. And as we're walking there getting close, there's a police officer that's driving there and pulls up and we're waiting for the light. To change and the kids excited. He says. Dad, look. A police officer. It's like waving and the dad smiles and waves, but through his smiling teeth, he says, yeah, he's busting people all over the place. He's busting people all over the place. That's like, yeah, I'm not happy to see him. He's smiling and waving. Not happy to see him. The kids like, oh. Kind of. So to see the bitterness there. Now we can do that at. Church all the. Time we can be there. Our kids are coming in happy. We're waving hey. Hey brother, so and so. It's like, yeah, that guy's making mess all over the place.

Hey. Hi, sister. Sounds like, yeah, she's talking to people all over the place. And we just poison with our own hearts, with other peoples, and we're not genuinely greeting one another with. The holy kiss. An expression of welcome acceptance where say you belong to this family, to Christ that belong to you. My heart is open. To you. Genuine expression of love and it's impartial and universal you sees as all the Saints greet you because they're hoping openness is towards you. Look, we all could hesitate. There are Jew and Gentile issues here, strong cultural issues, huge cultural issues that are getting into morality issues. Is this preference is it's not. There's these other churches and Paul’s like. Guys what we have in Christ? Greet one another with the Holy Kiss all the Saints. Greet you. We're together. Praise God and refuse to give into the kind of social distancing that you use and. And it's not just a physical one. You think about how it was. Ultimately it manifested through the unholy kiss of Judas. Who came and greeted Rabbi, but it was. A kiss of rejection of betrayal. So it's not. Like that.

Genuine kiss of welcome, of acceptance of love. This is what we have in Christ. We look around, these are the these are the people, cause a kiss, a greeting. It forces you to acknowledge the faces of the people that are part of this gospel togetherness. And you say, well, there's a little bit of, I mean this is all real life and there's a mess in in that person's life. And that person's life is a mess in my life and. We're all just. A big mess, Paul says. One another and realize, whoa. The glory of God.

This is where it happens. And in the end, we'll just close it this this way and the end, what drives us, what moves us ultimately is that in the end, it's all actually about God. It's all always actually been about God. See what Paul says. He closes. He says the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. And there's a sense of the Trinity being referenced here and the amazing uniqueness of the God of the Bible and the scriptures.

But that's not the primary point. It's just sort of pouring out of Paul. The main thing that he highlights here is grace. And then and then love and fellowship, he knows this is what they need, and it's all found in God. That's sourced in God, the greatest gift you could ever have is God himself and. May God, God the son, provide you with all the grace, the undeserved favor that you could ever need. May God the father pour out his love. The love that that would send his only son to die and rescue you from your sins and his judgment would, would God the spirit bring you the fellowship that unites and brings together the kind of love that God. Has known the kind of grace and fellowship, the devotion that God has expressed in in the power of the gospel. May you be able to embrace this great gift. All of you.

That's Paul's wish. For this church that the place where God wants to unfold, the wonder of his Trinitarian glory, of who he is most clearly is in his church. Church of Corinth. Church of Bethany. Praise God for the wonder that he's revealing and calling us to enjoy. Where do we need to give him praise and remember who it's actually all about? And perhaps you're laboring under the law, or you're burdened and you're either feeling judged or you are judging and condemning others with expectations of law.

And we need to step into the grace of Christ. Or maybe instead of God's love for repentant sinners, you feel it disgust and a disdain. Or maybe instead of fellowship of God's spirit, you feel a withdrawal and isolation and dependence or division, or you feel lonely instead of wanting to gather to see, people laugh and enjoy. You're hoping that people get hurt and divide and. We need to heed the call of God to remember who this is all about anyways, and where the praise actually should go. It's always been about him. And praise God, I believe we are church family growing in that praise, longing to step into that because he is what it's actually all about.

I was at a church and there was a an individual who oversee the facilities team and this church would have conferences and people would come each year and get really busy, all kinds of people showing up, and there be lots of trash and it would be busy week for the team and so for a clear vision of why they did what they did, he made T-shirts and those T-shirts they said I love trash. Trash means people. I love trash. Trash means people. When we think about messes, there's a sense in which we say I love messes or ministry because it means people. People made in the. Image of God. Lasting and value, we're investing in eternity. That's what makes it worthwhile, ultimately, that this is for God, because church and family, it's can be filled with messy people, relationships that will be hard because they're sinners, same as having kids.

But if you want family, if you want church family, you have to brace the mess because there's no other kind. Messy is the only kind that there is no other kind of ministry exists. You say, well, my ministry or my church family or my family at home I. Mean it's really messy. This church family, this is full of messes. And that's true. That can happen. I think the church at Corinth is sort of an example for us. So we say why brave it? Why take on the risk? It's because they're in the mess of Gospel ministry more than anywhere else on Earth. You will come to experience and enjoy the fullest and most glorious expression of God. And if there's anything that can make a mess as dreadful as the Corinthian Church, or as dreadful as us, worth the challenge, it is that and to all who are drawn to brave it.

Thank you for, the gift that we have the grace, the love, the fellowship that is you. You've given us your very self. Lord, fill our hearts with your love. Fill our minds with you, and the knowledge of you and what you've done in Christ. And help us to sing and then to partake of communion and togetherness. Because of the gospel in a way that brings you the. Glory you deserve. In Jesus name we pray.

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