The Church: Our Membership (Pt. 2)

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[0:00] We are continuing this morning our study on the church that we are looking at this fall semester! As we consider different elements of church life and what the Bible says of how we are to function! and operate and serve and administer as a local church. We looked last Sunday morning, 1 Corinthians 12, 27. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. So just as a reminder, as we think for a second week about church membership and what it means to be a member of a church and why we do that, what are the theological implications of that, what are the practical outworkings of that, let's just remind ourselves from last week of this simple truth that we are a body, we are a family, and we are individually members of that body. That reminds us that we are all coming to faith in Christ individually. Nobody comes to faith in Christ through the faith of their spouse or through the faith of their parents. You have to individually know Christ as your Savior, but as you are brought into a relationship with the Lord, you're saved into a family. You're not by yourself.

And the Lord in His wisdom and goodness has given us the church. As a Christian, you are a part of that universal church, and yet the Scripture calls us to be a part of the local assembly, that there are local churches, local assemblies all throughout the world, and we want this local assembly to be a biblical, God-honoring, Christ-exalting church. So there's three things we're looking at last week and this week. Last week, just by way of review, we talked about how members think. There's a way that we got to think about the church and think about ourselves and think about our membership. We looked at Acts 20, verse 28, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, that God has established leaders in the church. We've looked at that a number of weeks ago, that the Lord gives pastors, elders, overseers to a local assembly, and their role is to lead and to serve, to oversee the church, and they have a specific flock given to them, that they are accountable to the Lord to lead. And as we think about church membership, we remind ourselves that this is to be a dual blessing and a dual responsibility, that your being a member of our church should be a blessing to you, and it should be a blessing to our church.
This is how we want to think about membership. That as you join the local church, it ought to be a blessing to your heart and a blessing to your family. There are blessings you receive as a member of the local church that you would miss out on if you weren't a part of it. And that church ought to be blessed because you're a member of that church. That church should be stronger because you are a part of it. It's been well said in a book on church membership that it is a formal relationship between a church and a Christian characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church. This mindset that exists so prominently in our culture today that we're all just kind of free agents. That's the way our culture often views church membership, that we're all just free agents. We just go if we want to go and stay home if we want to stay home and go to this church and go to that church and watch this church online and this idea that there's no commitment, that there's no expectation. We can all just each do our own thing.
But one of the real beauties and one of the joys of being a part of the local church is that you enter into a covenant relationship where you say to a local group of believers that we are together in this work of the Great Commission. That we are together in loving each other and caring for each other and watching over each other. And if your goal is to honor Christ and to finish well and to bring glory to the Lord Jesus, then one of the sweetest gifts you'll ever receive is to know that there are people who are running with you and watching over you and you're helping them and they're helping you. That's how church membership is to be. That's how we're to think about it. That we're here to love each other, to help each other, to connect our hearts and our lives, our time and our service, our ministry together. And that we should strengthen each other and we should strengthen the church.

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So just ask yourself, am I thinking biblically about my involvement and my responsibility to this local church? We want to make sure that in all things we're thinking biblically, not culturally, not thinking first about what is convenient or what is easy or what is simple, but first thought for us is what is the most God-honoring way that we can live? That's how church members are to think. Second, we looked, at least we got started last week on this one, how members behave. We're looking at this passage in Galatians that Jeff read to us. I invite you to turn back there if you would with me this morning back to Galatians. And the first word we looked at of how members behave is that we must behave with humility. Chapter 5 of Galatians, verse 26, let us not become conceited, provoking one another or envying one another. That we don't want to be conceited people. We want to be humble. And that's important because if we look down on people, we won't serve them. We want to be servants here at this church. We want to live our lives to help each other and to serve each other. Then if we are conceited, we won't be servants. Arrogant people don't serve.
[6:53] And so we've got to make sure that we look at our lives the way that we're told to. In Philippians 2, it says, have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus. And it describes how Christ was a servant. That's how we're to behave humbly in a servant. And it warns us to not be envying one another because if we're envious of somebody, we won't want to serve them either. So we behave with humility. And then we looked secondly last week at we behave out of a sense of protection. Chapter 6, verse 1, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. When the New Testament speaks here in Galatians 6 about protecting each other in the church, I want to show you this. There are really two ways we think of our protection. First, we protect each other. Then look at the end of verse 1. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

So we're to help protect each other and to help protect ourselves. We hear this when you fly on an airplane in the announcement that nobody listens to. Something about some like oxygen mask comes down, right? You remember vaguely hearing someone say this while you had your AirPods in? And they tell you to put the mask on yourself and help your children and those around you. And the idea is we're supposed to help each other and we also have to take steps to protect ourselves. In the New Testament church, these two things fit perfectly together. Because if I help keep watch over myself and if I am guarding my own life and my own actions, it helps our church be stronger. And part of how that happens is by you helping keep watch over me. When you are faithful and obedient to the Lord, our church is stronger. And part of how we do that is you've got friends who love you and are praying for you and helping to keep watch over you too. This is both and. We want to protect ourselves and we want to protect each other. And if there is someone who is caught in sin, it says to go restore him in a spirit of gentleness. This reminds us that we are to love each other enough and to care about each other enough that if one of us is stuck in sin, struggling with sin, that we are to do something about it.
In far too many churches, when somebody is stuck in sin, they get talked about, laughed about, gossiped about.
But few people will love them enough to go and seek to restore them. This is how church membership ought to work. That you ought to know each other enough to know if one of your brothers or sisters are caught in sin. And if they are, you ought to not just know them enough, you ought to love them enough to actually go to them and call them out of that sin. And it tells us to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. We do this with love. We do this with concern. We do this with compassion. One of the real marks of a faithful church is that its members care about the spiritual condition of each other.
A New Testament church is not simply where a lot of individuals show up at the same building, sing the same songs, read the same verses, and take the same notes, and go home completely independent of each other. That's not a New Testament church. A New Testament church is a family. It's a body.
[11:15] It's brothers and sisters in Christ. And they love each other, and they care for each other, and they serve each other, and they try to protect each other. So much so that if someone in the family is stuck in sin, instead of just gathering together and talking about them, or laughing at them, or observing them, or criticizing them, that we had actually organized to say, let's go to them and call them out of that sin.

Then with gentleness, and with love, and with grace, and with compassion, let's call them back to a place of repentance. And that demands relationships, and that demands love, and frankly, that

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demands some courage from the body. But that's how members are to behave. And keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. We also want to be not only humble as we live, and we want to have a sense of protecting each other. We also want to have a sense of helping each other. It tells us in verse 2, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. We're to bear the burdens for each other. This again, demands relationships because you can't bear the burdens of people you don't know.
You have to know who they are. You have to know what they're going through. And this church needs to be an ever-increasing place where its members are seeking to bear the burdens of each other.
If you don't have friendships within the local church, you can't bear burdens of people. It's impossible. This demands that we are striving to build relationships with each other.
If you only come on Sundays, or if you come kind of late and sneak out kind of early, and you never let your life get intertwined with the other members, then you can't bear each other's burdens. Now, I understand there are some people, some personalities who would say, I don't really want to bear someone's burdens, and frankly, I don't want somebody knowing about my burdens either.
[13:46] And there are some people who just say, I kind of want to go through life. I'm just on my own. I'll come to church, and I'll sing, and I'll listen, and I'll shake hands, but I don't really want to get involved in people's lives. I don't want people knowing what I'm going through, and I don't want to have to help people through their mess. I just kind of want to stay to myself.

If that's you, let me just graciously say to you today that the New Testament's clear here in verse 2. This is not optional for the believer who wants to honor Christ. It's very clear.
Bear one another's burdens. This is the way we are to live. We're to be a burden-bearing body. And one of the beauties of the local church is when people are just so quick, not only to meet the needs they see, but actually to take the initiative to see how they can help other people. We want to bear each other's burdens. There's so much good going on in people's lives, and so much to celebrate, and so much to be thankful for, and joyful for, and we want to rejoice together. But on any given week, there are so many needs within the church family. There are so many examples of people in our church right now today who are physically sick and need help, people who are in the hospital and need prayed for and visited, people who have family issues that are very difficult and challenging, people that have financial needs, and we could just go on and on and on, and that's always true.
And one of the great ways that members ought to behave in a New Testament church is that weekly we would say in our own hearts, whose load can I make lighter this week?
[15:54] Who could I send a card to this week and just tell them I appreciate them? Who could I text today and just tell them I'm thankful for what you do? Who could I pray for that's hurting?

Who has been in the hospital that I could take a meal to them and just serve them? How can I just be the hands and feet of Christ as someone this week to try to lighten their load?
And you know, I think even in saying that, it's easy to think that's something for the older members of the church, but children and teenagers. If you're a part of the church, this is you too. Bear each other's burdens. Make it normal in your friends that you spend time with to talk about the things of God. Make it normal with your friends to ask them, how can I pray for you? This isn't stuff that's just for old people like us. This is stuff for you. If you're a believer, you're in middle school, you're in elementary school, if you're a part of this church as a member, your role is to bear burdens with each other. Ask your friends how you can help them. Ask your friends how you can pray for them. Mom and dad, let me encourage you. Involve your children. Involve your teenagers in teaching and training them what it looks like to bear burdens with people in the church.
I remember as a young boy, my dad was taking me and my brother to mow the yard of this older lady in the church. And we were going to mow and weed eat and all this stuff. And I was kind of excited because I thought, I don't know, you know, how much we're going to get paid. But, you know, I'm a young kid. I need some cash. And so, I was kind of excited. And then I found out, oh no, we're just helping.
We weren't hired. We're just helping. It wasn't as much fun. But I got to learn as a young person what it looked like to try to go bear burdens of people. I've been the recipient of that from members of the church here who have helped me and supported my family and helped us in times of need.
[18:13] And I've tried to give that back in return. And I've been able to enjoy both sides of that. And that's the way that the church is to be. Let's be a burden-bearing people.

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So, as we think about how members are to behave, let me just give you a few questions to write down and to think about as we strive to live this out in real life. Number one, just ask yourself, am I bearing burdens of people in the church? Am I helping to bear burdens of people in the church? Who are you praying for this week? Who is it that you are lifting their name up before the Lord in prayer? One of the greatest gifts you can ever give someone is to sincerely, fervently, truly pray for them by name. It's one of the great ways to bear the burdens of somebody.
I just want to encourage you to look this week to say, who in our church can I serve? Whose burden can I help to lighten this week? Maybe it's someone in your Sunday school class that you've not seen in a while. Maybe they're going through something you're not aware of. Check on them. Pray for them.
Let them know you love them. Maybe it's someone in our church that you know is hurting or grieving. You think, I haven't said anything. I don't know what to say. I don't want to say something weird. Well, what happens if we think that way is we end up unintentionally just ignoring people. That's not bearing their burdens. Talk to them. Love them. Let them know you're thinking of them. Let them know you care about them. Maybe it's calling one of our staff members in a ministry where you work in and volunteer to just to say, is there anyone that has a need this week I don't know about that I might could serve. I want to encourage you and challenge you to have eyes that are looking for ways to bear burdens of each other. So, that's the first question. Am I helping bear burdens of people? Number two, am I helping facilitate ministry in our church? Am I helping facilitate ministry in our church?
[20:28] If we are to be protecting each other, if we're to be bearing each other's burdens, we've got to be not just thinking of people, but we've got to be doing things. We've got to be active in the work of ministry. And the third question to think about as a church member, am I doing the work I want my church to be doing? Am I doing the work I want my church to be doing? We talk in a members class about this all the time, that everybody wants to be a part of a praying church, but the only way a church is a praying church is if its members are prayerful people. If you want to be a part of a praying church, get busy praying for people in our body.

Everybody wants to be a part of a friendly church. The problem is, everybody wants to be a part of a friendly church, but few people are willing to take the initiative to be friendly. I don't mean in our local church here, I just mean in general. But if you want to be a part of a friendly church, then you've got to be willing to do that work to make friends, to talk to people, to initiate conversations. Everybody wants to be a part of an evangelistic church where people are sharing the gospel, but a church is only evangelistic if its members are actively sharing the gospel. If you long for our church to be more evangelistic, then pray this very week for the Lord to give you opportunities to share the gospel. Let's make sure that we're individually doing the work we want our church to be doing. We could each ask ourselves this question. If all the members in the church were as committed to the church as I am, would our church be stronger or would our church be struggling?
If people all served the way you serve, would our church automatically have more servants who know what to do with or would our church be struggling? The same thing is true financially. I'm not talking about the amounts, just the measure of stewardship. If all of our families gave and supported the church financially the way that your family does, would our church be stronger than ever and more money for ministry and missions than ever or would our church be in real trouble?
One of the ways that membership causes us to think and behave is to take responsibility individually for our role within the body of Christ. And it's so tempting, it's so tempting to sit back and just always assume someone else will do that. Someone else will volunteer to teach that class. Someone else will be faithful to give, provide for our needs. Somebody else is going to pray for these people who are sick. Somebody else is going to share the gospel. Someone else is going to go on that mission trip. It can be so tempting to sit back and say, it's a big church, a lot of people. Someone else is going to do that. But here's the way biblical membership leads us to behave. I want to do the work that I long for my church to do. That's how each of us ought to think, because we are individually members of one another. Let's do the work that we all long for our church to be doing. And that doesn't mean that we need everybody here to teach Sunday school. That's not true. We just need people to use their gifts however they're gifted. But it's not where you serve, it's the level of commitment with which you serve. In the same way when it comes to worship through giving, not everybody has to give the same amount. It's not about that. It's just about the level of stewardship and of obedience, of investment. If our whole church served like you, gave like you,

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loved like you, would our church be stronger than ever, or would our church be on life support. Well, let me encourage you with this. If you have come to realize that maybe you're one, maybe you didn't mean it this way, maybe it happened over time so slowly you didn't even recognize, but maybe today as you evaluate this, you recognize that you're one of the ones that kind of tends to think somebody else will do that. Somebody else will teach. Somebody else will give. Somebody else will help.
[25:06] Can I just invite you today, jump in and help us. Maybe you've come to the place where you recognize, you know what, I've not really been serving. And our family's not really been giving.

And I've not been quick to do the work I want our church to do. If that's you, then here's the good news. Our God is always the God of a second chance. And He forgives, and He's patient, and He's loving, and what He calls us to do is for our good. So one of the great beauties of this day is this could be the day where you and your household say, you know what, I want to be a part of what we're doing. I don't want to just watch. I don't want to just come and sing and listen.
I want to be a part. I want to bear burdens of people. I want to help to protect people spiritually. I want to help to do the work and be a part of the giving of what the Lord's called us to do.
I don't want to just sit back and expect someone else to do it. I don't want to just sit back and enjoy the benefits of the church only. I want to be a part of what God's called us to do. If that's you, the good news is that the Lord graciously has allowed you this very day to make some changes in thinking, make some changes in priority, and join us as we keep doing together what God has called us to do.
Our church is so thankful for every one of our members. Our church is so thankful for every one of you who gathers here with us week after week and is a part of the great commission work He's called us to do.
[26:52] But we do need every one of you. We do. We need every one of you to faithfully use your gifts, however God has gifted you, for His glory.

We need you to use your time, whatever time God has allowed you to have, to be able to invest in kingdom work. We need you. And we're thankful for you.
And this is a dual blessing. Our church will be stronger as more and more of our members get engaged in the life of our church, and you'll be blessed because you'll be doing what God has called you to do.
So that's how members think. It's how members behave. Let's look at one last thing. How members move. How members move.
This is my least favorite part of church membership. Church membership isn't always for a lifetime. Sometimes we move.
[27:53] Sometimes people move away for a job, move away to be closer to family. Sometimes it may just be a need to be a part of a different church. I love when people join our church.

I grieve when people move away. But it's a part of it. Our church membership is a covenant with each other, but it's not always till death do us part.
Marcy's stuck with me. She doesn't get to join some other family. She's in this till one of us has gone to glory. Church membership's not that way. Some of you are new members of ours because you've just moved here, and we like it when people take jobs that move them here.
We don't like it when people take jobs that move them away. But it happens. It's a part of it. And there's a way that I want you to think about the importance of church membership that includes even how you would leave us when that time comes.
Or if you're a guest of our church, you may have a membership somewhere else, and you're thinking about joining our church. I want to make sure that you leave that church in a way that upholds the honor of church membership.
[29:17] Let me give you a few words to write down about how to leave a church. One, leave slowly. I'm thinking here just about the idea that you don't want to leave a church the first time you get your feelings hurt.

Don't leave the church the first time that a decision is made that you don't agree with. Leave the church slowly. Can you imagine if pastors in a church left the first time they got their feelings hurt? I mean, churches would be calling new pastors every 14 days. And that's just because of bylaws. You have to have an announcement. It would be every day in some place if you could. Well, same thing with members.

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Don't leave the first time you get your feelings hurt. There's going to be decisions that are made that aren't your preference, there's going to be things that are done in this church or any other church you're ever a part of. And it may not be exactly the way that you would have preferred it to be, but we want to leave slowly.
Too many people change churches because they have unrealistic expectations. And frankly, too many pastors leave churches because of unrealistic expectations. Too many men go into ministry and they feel like that everything's supposed to be smooth or easy.
[30:35] Everybody's supposed to follow. And it's all going to be, you know, wonderful. And then those expectations aren't met. Just understand, no matter what your role in the church is, don't be quick to leave that church.

If it is time to leave, our second word is to leave, surely. In other words, if it's time to leave, then deal with that.
What you don't want to do is get where you're upset with this church and you quit attending, but you still come every six weeks. Then you went to that church, but you don't really like that church.
And you end up, before you know it, it's been two months, six months, two years, and you're not really a part of any church. If it's a case where you're moving, you're taking a new job, you're moving to be closer to family, whatever it may be, then that's its own situation.
But if you are a part of a church and you just think to yourself, I think we need a fresh start. Or maybe there's just another church where you feel more at home, or another church where you feel like that's where the Lord wants you to be.
[31:49] That's okay. I just want to encourage you, if you're going to leave, to leave for sure. Meaning, if you leave one church, it's time to get plugged into a different one.

To not just drift and float, because the Bible still calls us to be a part of that local assembly. Thirdly, leave softly.
Leave softly. Most of the time when people leave a church, it's because they've taken a job in a new city, and so it's easy to leave. Or sometimes they leave a church because they're going to be closer to home, and there's no controversy.
But sometimes people leave a church, and they're upset. And sometimes when people are upset, they want to leave loud. They want to cause trouble. Now, we've been so fortunate here.
God has been so kind to us, and our church has worked so hard to protect the unity of the bonds of peace. But it's because God in His kindness has allowed us to think about these things and to strive for these things.
[32:56] It's not accidental that unity exists among a church. But sometimes people strive to stir that up, and they want to leave loud.

Leave softly. Proverbs 15.1 reminds us, a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. And a lot of people sometimes in churches all over the world, when they leave, they get mad at their pastor, they get mad at their Sunday school teacher, they get mad at their friend, they get mad at this decision that was made, whatever it may be.
And they want to leave and blow that place up. In the olden days, you just went around and stirred up gossip and strife on the phone.
Today, you get your phone out and you just go bash that church, bash that ministry, bash that pastor, whatever it may be. Let me remind you that the church you're bashing is a church purchased by the blood of Christ.
and you're talking about the bride of Christ. You leave a church, this church or any other church, leave softly.
[34:17] That church may have done something wrong. That decision may not have been the wisest. Your opinion, your preference may have had a lot of merit. But don't use your words to tear down the bride of Christ.

Let's remember who we are. We are part of one body, individually members of it, 1 Corinthians 12 told us. Let's care for each other, even in our leaving.
If it's time to leave a church, leave slowly. Leave surely. Make sure you're ready to go attached to another church. Leave softly. Let me give you one last word here.
Leave in a straightforward way. Here's what I mean by this one. Let people know you're leaving. We're a family.

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People move. It happens in families. But part of that love relationship and connection is that we care for each other. Marcy and I raised two sons.
[35:35] They don't either want to live with us anymore. There came a time when it was time for them to move on. But how tragic if I would have come home and said, Marcy, where's Cale?

Oh, he moved out. What? He didn't tell you? No. No. Yeah, he's gone. That would seem so crazy. Happens in churches every single week.
And I get it. People think to themselves, well, I told so-and-so. I assumed someone let everybody know.
Or, I put it on Facebook. I assumed everybody saw it. Or, it's a big church. I'm not going to be missed. Or, I didn't really serve anywhere or do anything, so I didn't figure anybody really cared. We're a family. And it may be time for you to move on. There may be a new job and it's the right job to take.
[36:42] But if that's the case, let us know. Let us help pray you through that. Let us help pray for you as you look for a new church in your new city. Or, it may even be that you're not moving physically, but you feel like it's just time to be a part of another church.

That's okay. Let us know that. Let us make sure we can leave with prayer and supporting you and loving you and we'll pray with you and pray for you as you find a new church.
When people come to a new members class, if at the end of that class they don't want to join our church, they don't feel like it's the right fit, that's perfectly fine and I would love to help pray with them as they look for another church even in our own city.
We're not in a competition with other churches. We want to pray for them. If it's another church the Lord wants them to be, that's wonderful. We'll celebrate with them as they find that church home. It has been some of the saddest days of my life when I have found out that a family of our church moved away and didn't tell anybody and they've been gone for a week or two weeks and they didn't even tell us.
They're not being malicious. They're not trying to be difficult. I mean, they're busy. They've got details and they're thinking to themselves, I don't want to bother the church. I don't want to distract the pastors, whatever it may be, but let me just remind you, you're loved more than you know and you're a part of our heart more than we could ever express and we're a family.
[38:19] Imperfect, for sure, but a family. And your family's prayed for regularly by our staff by name.

And there are Sunday school teachers who are praying for your kids by name. And there are Awana teachers who invested in your kids and they still think about them and care about them. There may come a day where it's time to leave this church for any number of reasons. And when that day comes, let us know.
Let us know where you're going. Let us know what you're doing. Let us know how we can serve you. Let us know how we can be praying for you. You're a part of the family. The New Testament, as we looked at last week, used the metaphor of a body.
And I know it's so tempting sometimes to say, you know what, I'm not in front in ministry or I'm not someone that has a lot of responsibility compared to others and I'm just a small part of the body.
[39:29] You know, I'm not the eyes and I'm not the hands. I'm just the little toe. Oh, well, if you woke up today with your little toe missing, you may not die, but you'd have some concerns, right?

It's a part of the body. Can I tell you, if you're a part of this body, you matter. Not based on how much you give, not based on how long you've taught, not based on how big your Sunday school class is, not based on how many solos you've sung.
You matter because you're a part of the family. We care about you. And it may be that today you're visiting our church and you're wanting to join our church and as you go through the process, if that's what the Lord's will is, we'll rejoice in that.
But even in the church that you would be leaving, honor that church by letting them know. Honor the church you're leaving. This isn't just for our church.
This is how I want us to think about membership in every direction. Sometimes it's time to move. It is. But move well.
[40:54] Move with grace. And move in a way that would honor the Lord. I think about our church, even just the last couple of days.

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I had the privilege Wednesday to be with our Awana kids on Wednesday nights. And I was there with this room full of kids in our kid zone, getting to spend a few minutes teaching them.
And we talked about these things, being involved, being a part of the game, being a part of the work God has called us to do. And as I was teaching these precious students, I look around the room and we've got all these adults.
And it just struck me in a fresh way how these adults, getting no paycheck, getting no recognition, just week after week, where they're supposed to be.
Loving these students, teaching these students, modeling the Christian life for these students. And I thought, what a sweet thing to be a part of the body of Christ.
[42:05] Yesterday, the group of our deacons who were able to be here came to church to do ministry. A group of our deacons spent their Saturday changing air filters up on the roof, cleaning out debris, moving stuff that didn't need to be here anymore down to the shed building, cleaning out the prop room, going and ministering to our homebound members in their home to love them and to pray for them and even the part of our family who can't gather with us trying to remind them that we love them and we care for them.

Our deacons at our church are servants. They're not power-hungry men. There's not a deacon in this church, not one, who has ever been grief to me.
Ever. They love you. They want to serve you. And it's a sweet thing to be served by a group of deacons who want to minister in that way.
Friday, Saturday, and even this morning, I was told by church members about other needs within the body. People who have already heard about needs and already doing things to bear their burdens.
and I thought to myself, what a sweet gift to be a part of a church with members who care for each other like that. Last Sunday night, we had our members meeting and my favorite part of it was getting to, I was just sitting right there, I normally do, getting to see on the platform here, we had our age-graded staff, so preschool and children and youth and college, and just literally watching them talk about their partnering together to try to help serve children who turn into teenagers, who turn into young men and women and just watching this shared responsibility and shared care and shared joy about how our ministries don't compete or fight with each other, but partner together because we are all a part of the same work.
[44:18] And I thought to myself, what a joy to be a part of a church that's served in this way. I want you to know as a member of our church, you're loved.

And you're needed. And you're part of us. And some of you feel that and know that and experience that and others of you would say, I don't know that I feel that.
I don't feel like I have the connections or the relationships. I don't know that I feel the kind of love and burden bearing you're talking about. I want you to.
And maybe there's things our church can do better and maybe there's things that you can do better and probably both those things are always a bit true. but in the end, we share the same joy and we share the same responsibility.
And as long as the Lord has us as a part of this local church together, let's continue to lock our arms together to worship Christ, to serve each other, to bear each other's burdens, to help each other.
[45:43] And like families, sometimes somebody bugs you. It's biblical. Happened in Philippians 4. Look it up. It happens.

Keep working. Keep praying. Keep striving. Keep saying to yourself, I want this church to be stronger because I'm a part of it.
And I want my life to be better because of the people that I've linked arms with. And ultimately, church membership is not about your benefit nor mine.
It's about the glory of Christ. Christ, the one who died for us and purchased our salvation with his own blood and in his grace and kindness has called you out of darkness, out of sin, out of death, and has given you everlasting life.
If we would remember the gospel, how could we ever serve with any other motive than joy and worship at the goodness and the kindness of God?
[47:11] The Lord has given me in my life a lot of gifts that I'm thankful for, all of them undeserved. Salvation is first.

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First, he has given me a wife for a lifetime and we've enjoyed a richer time together than I could have ever dreamed or imagined.
He's given me sons and now my sons have kids and my family and each direction that I'm so thankful for. And right after those, the sweetest gift of my life has been to have been a member of this church.
I say member, not pastor because I'm first a member. And I don't know what the Lord has for the future but if there comes a day when I'm no longer the pastor here and I'm still living and alive, I will be right here as a member of this church being blessed by each and every one of you.
I could never adequately express what it means to me to be a member of this church. And it's because of the people that the Lord has assembled here.
[48:41] And I can tell you on behalf of our staff how much we love you and appreciate you and I can tell you on behalf of my family how much we love you and appreciate you and I can tell you as just one member here out of hundreds of members here, I'm just one out of many whose life has been blessed because of the members of this church.

I'm just the fortunate one who gets to look you in the eye and tell you how much I love you and how thankful I am. All the rest of you would do the same if given the opportunity. God has been good.
Let us joyfully live out what it means to belong with each other to the glory of Christ. Lord, we give you praise today and thanks for the blessing of the local church.
I pray, Lord, that you would help each of us to be a part of the work that you've called us to do. Help us, Lord, we pray, to make the most of the privilege and opportunities and blessings you've put in front of us.
Make us more loving. Make us more caring. Cause us to be more generous with our time, with our resources, with our willingness to bear burdens.
[49:57] All of it, that your Son would be magnified among us. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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