We Have, We Are, We Will!

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Date: 16 November 2025

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.! Church, I love you. I thank you. You just got a preview of my funeral because I didn't tell John what to sing but I think we'll just start with those one day.

And we've got flowers, we've got somebody saying something nice, we've got my favorite hymns, so you still got to show up when that day comes, I hope. But what a sweet, sweet time today.
Well, there are a thousand memories and a thousand thoughts going through my head right now and have been for the last several weeks. You know, most days in life and most days as a pastor are pretty normal.
Most years pass by with a balance of great blessings and a few challenges. But in some, as I think back over the 25 years the Lord has given us here, it is just, it's just gratitude that I feel.
It's just joy and I feel honored to have been able to have walked this journey with you these 25 years. As John mentioned a moment ago, I don't know what the future holds with health and life and all those kinds of things.
[1:31] I'm not presumptuous in that regard. If the Lord were to answer our prayer, my prayer is that I would be at the halfway point. I'm 52.

I've been here 25 years. I'd love to do this 25 more. I've got a lot of the Bible left I'd like to preach and then hand it off to somebody younger and better than me.
And I'll go sit where you're sitting and be whoever that person is, greatest fan and the best church member I can be. But I've got no heart or desire to do anything other than what I do.
There's never a day that goes by I don't wake up and think, I can't believe I get to do this. And I get to do this here. And I get to do this with these people.
This is just the absolute joy of my life to be able to do this. While most of the days for the past 25 years have been very normal, there are a few memories that have stood out to me.
[2:28] I was not prepared to see me in my MC Hammer outfit in the video there. That is going back a ways. That was, what we think, 23 years ago and probably 55 pounds ago, something like that.

It was a while ago. But there are a few memories that do jump to my mind. My first Sunday at First Baptist Church of Mustang was the third Sunday in November 25 years ago.
This Sunday 25 years ago. It would have looked something like this as far as the family that we had at the time. This is me and Marcy and Cale, who at the time was about one and a half.
Today that one and a half year old has a one and a half year old, which is amazing. My first Sunday, of course we were in the old building and I didn't know anyone.
And so during the welcome time, I came down to, I was sitting over here in the other building. I came to greet people here and a guy named Jeremy shook my hand.
[3:39] And I said, nice to meet you, one of our teenagers. And I turned around and a guy who looked exactly like him named Jacob shook my hand. And I thought, these two guys look just alike. And then a young girl named Candy shook my hand and said hello.

And I turned around and a girl who looked just like her named Randy shook my hand. And they looked just alike. The first four people I met in a service were twins. And I thought, what is going on in the water in Mustang?
Everybody looks just alike. I served as the associate pastor for three years. And then exactly three years later, same Sunday, November, changed roles to senior pastor.
And that season was unreal because from November of 23 until June of 2004, I had my old job.
I had my new job. We were doing two full-time jobs, preaching three times on Sunday and Sunday night with my new job, teaching the Sunday afternoon class with my old job.

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[4:46] And we were also in the process. We had started that spring of preparing to build our worship center. And preaching at that time would have looked something like this around that season.

This is the old building. That's with my two boys there, both of them who today have their own babies. It's just crazy to think of that in my own mind.
We started a season we called the journey as we were building this building together. And so many people worked and planned.
So many people gave to that. So many people made that possible. We had heave-ho offerings, sack lunch Sundays, spare change Sundays.
And some of you that were around back then remember, we were doing everything we could because this was such a big project for us. And our church just came together to make it work.
[5:45] Here's a picture from our groundbreaking day for this building. What if you look real, real closely in the background behind me, you see a young boy who has fallen over with his legs up.

That is my youngest son, Benjamin. Groundbreaking Sunday. We broke ground in June of 2004. We moved into this building in April of 2006.
But there's a Sunday that stands out to me. It was Sunday, May 15, 2011. We'd been in the building for five years. And we're working very hard to pay that debt off.
We wanted to borrow as little as we could and pay it off as quickly as we could. And it was just family after family after family that just did their part.
We had no excessively large gifts during that time. We were just common, ordinary church families that just banded together to embrace sacrifice.
[6:53] And on May 15, 2011, we were having a heave-ho Sunday, hoping for God's grace to pay the debt off. And so at the end of that service, our money counters were back there counting the offering.

And at the end of the service, I got this text message. I've saved it all these years. It says, we set a new record, 137,800 that was given to heave-ho.
And on that day, by God's grace, through the exceedingly generous giving of our people, we paid the building off that day. I was getting ready to come up and announce that, but our church had never seen an offering like this.
And so I asked our music minister to do one extra song so I could go back and double-check that this was right. Jerry Wentworth sent this text to me.
And I went back there and I said, I want to double-check before I announce this. Are you sure this is the heave-ho offering? And he said, we are positive. And we paid off, by God's grace, our debt for this sanctuary that day.
[8:01] And that's a day burned in my mind. A few years later, we began work on our children and preschool building, a campaign we called our Generations Campaign.

Here's a picture from groundbreaking that day with me and Raymond and Dalvin. Shovels in the ground there as we're breaking ground on that building. And that was an exciting season, but it was really difficult because, if you recall, if you're with us, we were not only building a new building, but we were having to tie in and remodel to our current building.
And so we had stuff everywhere. We had our children had to meet in the gym for a while. We had classes meeting in hallways and closets. And it was crazy.
And because of doing remodel work, we never knew on any given day what room was going to work, where power was going to be on, what part of the building we'd have access to.
And I remember meeting with Jeff when we were going through this. And I said, Jeff, here's the deal. It's okay if you're stressed out. It's okay if you're overwhelmed. It's okay if I am. But we can't be that way on the same day.
[9:08] One of us has to be excited about what we're doing. And so I said, if you're having a tough day, you let me know. I'll smile. If I come into your office and I'm struggling, I'll let you know when you smile. But we can't be overwhelmed at the same time.

It was such a thrilling season for us because you guys remember that we're around at that time. We were forced to be flexible. We were forced to just roll with it.
And by God's grace, patience and flexibility are two of the things I love about our people so much.
Another season that stands out to me was in 2024 when I was doing the Through the Bible.

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I told my wife that I was going to do these daily videos. And it was a much harder task than I imagined. This was, we were actually on our pastor's retreat here. And I was outside filming this. My wife likes this because you can see my computer propped up by a pot that we found to try to get the computer level. And I recorded those daily videos at church, at home, in airports, out of the country, on trips, wherever we were.
[10:18] And that was a season of my life where as I read the Bible and tried to make some teaching notes through the Bible, you've heard me say before, but I wanted that to be a blessing to you.

I wanted that to be something we could record and have forever for people to have access to. I'm blessed by even new members who have told me recently that this year as we release those every day that are still keeping up and following those.
But my real heart in doing this, as I've mentioned before, was I wanted to have this done so that one day, if they wanted to, my grandkids could walk through the Bible with grandpa.
And so while this got a little bit tougher than I thought it was going to be and more consuming than I thought it was going to be, what made me excited to do this every day was just thinking one of these days, if they choose to, my grandkids, Lord willing, can pull this up.
And whether I'm here or gone to glory, whatever the case may be, they can walk through the Bible every day with their grandpa. And so that was a season that I'm so thankful for.
[11:22] And as John mentioned a moment ago, as the Lord has just grown our family, to go from that first picture with just me and Marcy and Cale, she was pregnant with Benjamin when we came here.

And this is the family the Lord has blessed us with so far. This is Mary and Benjamin with Rosie Mae, and then Cale and Bailey with Sutton Michael.
And these are our people. This is my family. This is, we came from where we were to this. And I'll tell you, if you want to just know what a joy of all joys truly is for a pastor, it's to get to raise his kids in a church where those kids would grow up and say, we want to be there.
And I've told you before, but the highest compliment I can pay you as a congregation is that my sons, who knew how you would treat us and knew what we would think of you, knew all the details, all the behind the scenes stuff, would say after seeing all that for all their life growing up, would say, this is where we want to raise our family.
I can pay you no higher compliment than to say that my sons, who watched how you treated their parents, said this is where we want to do great commission work as a church.
[12:40] And for me to get to just walk down the hallways and see my kids and my daughters-in-law and our grandbabies, there is just nothing sweeter than that. I do also feel just a desire to thank men and women I worked with who used to work here that maybe have retired or have moved away or have gone on to other ministries.

I'm thankful for their contribution. Certainly want to thank all the men and women I work with today. Tomorrow morning at 8.35, our staff will meet in our conference room as we do every Monday to read the Bible, to study the Bible, and I will be looking into the eyes of men and women who love Christ and who love you and are far more than just co-workers with me.
They are truly family and brothers and sisters, and I love them dearly. And even in our congregation today, we've got others who have worked with us in the past, and I'm so thankful for their immense contribution.
Thankful for our deacons. You hear me say this all the time. It bears repeating. Our deacons have been nothing but a support to my family, nothing but love and gracious encouragement to us.
I'm so thankful for them, and I'm thankful for every one of you and what you mean to me, what you mean to my wife, just the contribution you've been to our life.
[14:08] You know, even before I'm a pastor here, I'm a member here. This is our church. This is the place we're just members of. We're Christians like you. We love the Lord like you, and to get to be a member of this church and the blessings that come from being a part of First Baptist Mustang is such a thrill to me.

I will say, John got this part exactly right. Whatever doors the Lord has opened for me, it allowed me to walk through for a season, and that can come, that can go. I hold those things very, very loosely. There is nothing more thrilling to me than to stand here in this church, behind this pulpit, with you as we open our Bibles to hear from God every single week.

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And you make that a joy. You also make it a challenge. You actually make it a much bigger challenge than you know. Your depth of knowledge, your expectation to be in the Word.
And I mean that in the greatest of ways. It's such a thrill. It's also a tremendous challenge to me every single week. But you love the Bible. You love to hear the Word.
[15:21] You graciously, gladly open your Bible Sunday after Sunday and have been so kind to listen to me teach verse by verse through God's Word these 25 years.

With the Lord's help and because of your encouragement in these 25 years, I've been able to preach every verse of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Galatians, in Philippians now.
I've preached every verse of Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.
My math is right. That's 19 books of the Bible that I've been able to preach every verse with you.
Old Testament, you've encouraged me as I've preached every word of Ruth and Lamentations, Daniel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, and Malachi.
28 books of the Bible that we have looked at every word in that text these last 25 years. And one of the reasons why I pray for 25 more is while we've covered a lot of ground, we've got a lot to go.
[16:39] And I'm getting older, not younger, but it has been the thrill of my life to be able to to do that. And of course, I want to say also, as John mentioned, there is no earthly blessing greater to me than the blessing of my wife, Marcy.

And what she has meant to me, sitting on the front row Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday as I travel, almost always there with me and if there on the front row listening to me and I could not do this without you at all.
I wouldn't want to do this without you and I couldn't do this without you. And we've still got lots of goals if the Lord allows it. I've got a writing project I'm halfway on.
She reminds me all the time. I need to get to work to finish that. I'm trying. We'll get to it soon. She is just the greatest, greatest encouragement. I struggled with where to go in the Word today. My first thought was just saying Philippians and just plow along.
And I asked Marcy about that and she thought that might be a little tone deaf to the moment. And so, with that in mind, I began to wrestle with what text would express my heart and kind of capture where we are as a church because in my mind and Marcy's mind today is far more about for us, it's just about us praising God and thanking Him for you.
[18:06] Thanking Him for the joy of being connected with you. And so, I probably started five or six messages for today and began work and writing and studying in a text and making some notes and put them aside.

And then, two weeks ago, when she said, you ought to do something just for the moment, just for the season we are in, I was reading through 3 John. In the midst of reading through this short one-chapter book, it captured my heart and I thought, this is what I want to share on this day.
So, if you've got your Bible, open with me please to 3 John. And I see in this short book of the New Testament five things that believers ought to do that I believe we have been doing, I believe we are doing, and I pray we will continue to do year after year together.
So, I want to turn here to 3 John for some time in the Word this morning and this is just my heart to you as your pastor, as your friend, as a fellow church member of what I believe we do together today and what I pray by God's grace we will always do together.
If you want to take notes for this morning, I've got five things I want to share. Number one, let's walk together in truth. Let's walk in truth.
[19:35] And you might just put beside that let's walk in truth, put beside that this is our purpose, alright? As believers, as a church, we walk in truth together, this is our purpose.

3 John, the elder to the beloved Gaius whom I love in the truth. So, John is the elder here, Gaius, a prominent member in that local church.
Gaius is a distinctly Roman name. It's also one of the most common names in the Roman Empire.
He says, Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul.
John here is expressing concern for the whole man. He prays for his physical health, he prays for his spiritual health, and the problem in our culture today is so many people are very concerned with their physical health or their physical appearance and completely neglect their spiritual condition.

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But look what he writes. Verse 3, I rejoice greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth as indeed you are walking in truth.
[20:43] truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth. Let's walk in truth together.

This is our purpose as a church. I had no idea that that video was going to be played today. I haven't heard that in 20-something years, but it's just ironic to me that what I was saying in the video was praying in anticipation of the salvation and baptism of my sons.
I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. That's the heart cry of every parent. That's the heart cry of every pastor.
That those that you love and those that you labor to teach and shepherd would walk with the Lord.
If you were to ask me to this point, what am I most grateful to Jesus for?
That one's pretty easy. That He gave us two imperfect sons with two imperfect parents. And those two sons have married two beautiful, imperfect ladies and are walking with Jesus.
[22:08] There's nothing perfect about my family. It never has been. Never pretended it was that way. It's not. But to be able to see my sons walking with Jesus, leading their families, to have two daughters-in-law who love Jesus, there is no greater joy.

Of course, as this letter is written here in 3 John, he's not speaking about biological children. Apparently, Gaius is someone brought to the Lord by John, and he is saying, as your spiritual father, there is nothing greater in my life than to see you walk with Jesus.
And this resonates so much with me because my greatest thrill as a pastor is to just watch people grow and mature in the Lord. And I feel that both ways.
25 years ago, some of you were already here, already serving, already leading, long before I came, and you're still here serving, still here leading, and to see faithful brothers and sisters still being faithful is such a thrill.
It also is a thrill to me to see people who weren't even believers yet who have been converted here and today have been trained and equipped and are walking with the Lord. I have no greater joy than to see people walking with Jesus.
[23:25] So here's my prayer for our church with that in mind of walking in truth together, that we would continue to walk in truth, continue to live according to God's purpose, that we would continue to love the Word, and in that way, keep our lives simple.

Love Christ, obey His Word, and serve each other. Let's walk in truth together. That's our purpose.
A second thing that I see in this chapter is that we are to work in love together. Let's work in love together. And this is our promise to each other.
I get this here from verses 5 to 8, Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testify to your love before the church.
You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God, for they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth.
[24:36] We work, and we work in love. This is our promise to each other. Let's be faithful to work, to do gospel work, and to do our work in love.

We are to partner with each other. We're to partner with other churches, other believers, to do kingdom work and take the gospel to the neighborhoods and to the nations. I won't belabor this point much because we actually, last Sunday in Philippians, this was the exact theme of where we were in Philippians 1, the element of our partnership in the gospel, but let me just remind you of the importance of working in love.
A love for Christ, a love for each other. That we're not just people who do ministry, but we do ministry with people we love, and we serve in love.
It's hard to put into words for me, but when I look around our staff meeting and our conference room, I look around our table and all the people who are sitting there, love, love these people. These are the people I want by my side to celebrate joy, and these are the people I want by my side if I'm burdened. These are the people that I want to do ministry with.
[26:04] These are the people I want to spend time with. It's not just that we do work, it's that you're doing work with people you love. There may be more than this.

I see four of you here who have been a part of our team. There may be others if I would be able to see all of you who have been a part of that, and I feel such deep... Five. There's five.

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No, you're still here. You're still here. I was talking about people who aren't here anymore. I do appreciate you too. But so many of you who are a part of our team and have been a part of our team, and it's never been about just people doing a job.
It's about people who really love Christ and really love you and really love each other, and I just want us to faithfully continue to love the truth and do gospel work together.
So, as our church grows bigger, we have to, in one sense, always grow smaller, meaning as the Lord brings more people here, we've got to continue work to make sure that we are still building individual relationships.
[27:11] That's critically important. If the church continues to be blessed by the Lord with numerical growth, that's the Lord's work, so be it. We've never been a church that's worried much about attendance other than the people who it represents, and if we don't know the people who are here and love the people who are here and work with the people who are here, we're going to miss what God has for us, and my prayer is that we would walk in truth and work in love together.

Here's a third thing I see that I pray for. This is maybe a harder one. Let's warn in grace together. Let's warn in grace together.
You might put beside that protection. There's a sense that we are to be protecting each other. Verse 9, I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.
So many believe that John wrote a letter to the church that Diotrephes got his hands on and destroyed it. It may be that Diotrephes goes to the same church as Gaius, may be a neighboring church.
Whatever the relationship is, John wants to make sure Gaius does not follow the example of Diotrephes in any way. There's a sense of warning.
[28:39] And while we are walking in truth and working in love, we are also to warn each other in grace. Part of faithful parenting is teaching your kids and loving your kids and spending time with your kids.

And part of faithful parenting is warning your kids. It's both of those. And John, as he expresses his desire that they would walk together and work together, also takes time to warn of the dangers that exist.
And it's very frightening because the person he is warning about, Diotrephes, is not someone from the outside. He's someone who goes to church.
He's someone who's on the inside. What was Diotrephes' biggest problem? Verse 9, it says, Diotrephes loves to put himself first.
It's pride. It's demanding your own way. It's inflexibility. It's actually maybe even worse than it sounds because this phrase, he loves to put himself first.
[30:00] That language, that in the original text, that only exists one other place in your New Testament. It exists in Colossians 1.18.

Let me read it to you. Speaking of Jesus, he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything, he might be preeminent.
The only other time this language is used in the New Testament is to speak of the preeminency of Christ. Here is Diotrephes called out, literally, for wanting the place that rightly only belongs to Jesus.
Jesus. And this is someone in the church. And so, this is a somber reminder that part of our ministry together, yes, it's walking in truth and it's working in love, but it's also warning each other in grace that we are to love each other enough to protect each other, to help each other, to hold each other accountable.
How interesting is it too, historically, that it seems Diotrephes got his hand on a letter and destroyed it, something written by John, and while we don't have that in God's providence, that is replaced by a God-breathed, Holy Spirit-inspired New Testament epistle that forever calls Diotrephes out for his own sin.
[31:46] sin. The Lord does not take pride lightly. We must warn each other against sin.

We must love each other enough to not just see ourselves as a group of individuals who drive to the same building a few times a week, but we would truly see ourselves as family.
So much family that if someone is in sin, we would love them enough to go to them and to warn them. You won't do that with people you don't love.

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It actually takes deep, deep affection for someone to love them enough to warn them about their sin. And one of the hallmarks of a faithful church is that the brothers and sisters in that church love each other so much in the name of Christ so much that we would be willing to warn each other to, with grace, confront each other where there is unrepentant sin for the sake of the name of Jesus and the good of our own lives.
Verse 10 says, so if I come, I will bring up what He is doing. this talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that, He refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.
[33:20] The problem with the atrophies is He wants to be first place. And so it seems from what we can know here that He saw other preachers, other leaders, other people as a threat to His power, as a threat to His influence.

And so He fought against the good that other people were laboring to do. And this is someone inside the church. You know, I give glory to God today because in the church staff the Lord has blessed us with today, there is not a single person worried about themselves first.
Not one. Our staff cheers for each other, encourages each other, supports each other. Our staff members find genuine joy when something great happens in somebody else's ministry or in somebody else's family or because of somebody else's leadership.
There's not a single church member I know of that I have ever thought here today is serving out of a desire to just be recognized or to be praised.
Our members here serve because they love Jesus and because they love you. And if we ever think to ourselves, well that's just how it always is, just look at 3 John.
[34:57] That's not how it always is. Many churches, including the church John is writing to here, is having to deal with someone who wants to put himself first.

He wants his own way to rule the day. He wants his own opinions to always be the one that's carried out. So much so, he's willing to put others aside and try to tear them down for the sake of his own kingdom he's trying to build.
Now I work with staff members who want nothing more than to see Christ glorified. I don't take that lightly.
I tell our staff, those who are either younger chronologically or maybe just newer to ministry work, I'll tell them all the time that it's just not like this everywhere.
It's hard to know that unless you've been in other circumstances. I'm grateful that we've got people on our staff who have known nothing other than people who love each other and support each other and lift each other up, but I'll tell you it's not always like that.
[36:12] And 3rd John's an example of that. But one of the things as a church, if we are going to be faithful, that we must be willing to do is with the heart of grace, warn each other about sin or disobedience or spiritual blind spots so that we do not mess up our lives.

Galatians 6 speaks to that. You who are spiritual, if you see a brother caught in sin, and restore him in a spirit of gentleness. With grace, go to someone who is in sin and warn them.
That is deep, deep love. So let's walk in truth together. That's our purpose. Let's work in love together. That's our promise.
Let's warn in grace together. That's our protection. Here's a fourth. Let's witness in obedience together. Let's witness in obedience together and put beside that, this is our pattern.
This is to be the pattern, the practice of our lives. Look at verse 11. Beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God.
[37:28] Whoever does evil has not seen God. Verse 12. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony and you know that our testimony is true.

It's the witness of his life that he is a man that walks in obedience. So there are four men that we know who they are in 3 John.
John, Gaius, Demetrius, Theatrophes. All four of those men are a part of the church, although one of those men is not faithful at all.
We have to witness in obedience. It needs to be the pattern of our life. Not just that we attend church, but that it's the pattern of our life that we are obeying what the Lord has called us to do.
This speaks to our public witness together. That the way that you act outside of this church reflects on each other.

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[38:35] The way that I act outside of this church reflects on you. The way that we conduct ourselves. The way that we handle blessings. The way that we deal with adversity. All these things.

We need to have a public witness together that says Jesus rules over our lives. This reminds us as a congregation that going to church is a part of our life, but just this physical address is by no means the extent of our Christian witness.
It's how we live beyond these walls that let the world know that we love Jesus. My prayer is that it would continue to be the pattern of our lives outside these walls that we would live in obedience. That we would witness of Christ obediently. And it would be the pattern of our life as believers, as brothers and sisters, wherever we go.
At the restaurant, in the car, at school, at home, at the ball field, wherever we are. That people would see a consistency in how we live, and how we talk, and how we treat each other.
[39:46] And it would show it's the pattern of our life to love Jesus. And then one final thing from 3 John, and that is let's worship in person together.

Let's worship in person together. You might put beside that the word presence, that we have our physical presence that's a part of our relationship.
Look at verse 13. He says, I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face-to-face.
That language there, face-to-face, literally means mouth-to-mouth. That we are looking at each other and talking mouth-to-mouth. Because he knows that there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction.
Now, the end of 3 John, I recognize, this is not expressly talking about congregational worship. It is talking about the joy of being face-to-face with your brothers and sisters in Christ.
[40:53] And so I want to encourage us to remain committed to worship in person. And that means congregational services, but we worship in other ways. We worship as we are together in Sunday school.

We worship as we are together in discipleship groups. We worship as we are together in choir practice. We worship as we are together in hospital visits. We worship with all of our lives as we are together, face-to-face, literally mouth-to-mouth here.
This is relationship. This is closeness. This is affection. This is not letting anything take the place as much as possible of the joy of being with your church family.
Hebrews 10.25, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends each by name. Church family, we are not just strangers in the same building.
[42:02] We're to be family. Greet each other by name. We need to know each other. Introduce ourselves to each other. Get to know our lives and our testimonies.

People of all different ages. People of all different backgrounds. People that are in your ministry and not in your ministry. The whole part of the ending here of 3 John speaks to the beauty of relationships.
You're together face to face. You know each other by name. And can I just say that the way that you do this, the way that you love church, the way that you love gathering in person together, the way to do that, the way to be committed to attending worship as a congregation is not to just simply find more willpower to get up and go to church no matter what.
It's to value the things of God so much that there's no place you'd rather be than with God's people worshiping the Lord. Faithful church attendance is not so much about having to say no to other things as much as it is loving Christ above all else and loving His people so that your heart's greatest desire is to say, that's where I want to be.
And so I say to us this morning, let's continue to do these things that we have been doing, including let's worship in person together.
[43:37] So together, let's do what the Scripture calls us to do. Walk, work, warn, witness, and worship.

25 years ago, I moved my family to this church in this city because we knew this is what the Lord had called us to do. We left a church that had been super kind to us.
In fact, in God's sweet providence, completely unprompted, one of the things that happened this week on Tuesday is I ran into some friends of mine that work at the church I was at for seven years

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before we came here and totally just providentially were together and we ended up going to lunch Tuesday and I got to spend time Tuesday with the staff of Emmaus Baptist Church where I served for seven years where Marce and I got married and I was just so thankful that on this week where I'm thinking about this, you know, mile marker in our life in ministry and church that I got to spend time with the leaders of the other church who helped get us where we were to learn the ropes, so to speak.
But these 25 years, it's been the great honor of my life to serve you and I want to say as I close that never one day of those 25 years have I been the head of the church that belongs only to Christ. Ephesians 4 reminds us that we are to speak the truth in love and grow up in every way into Him who is the head into Christ.
[45:24] In fact, one of my great joys is how non-indispensable I am.

You have great pastors here. You have faithful men who know the Word, love the Word, can serve, preach, and lead. I told our members' class last Wednesday, if I drop dead tonight, don't worry about next Sunday.
You'll be fine. The head of the church is still here. It's always been Christ. It will always be Christ. And we have a plurality of faithful pastors who will love you and lead you and serve you and teach you.
So, I do want to say as we look at 3 John today, this is my prayer for us. It's what we have been doing. It's what we are doing. I pray it's what we will keep doing.
I love you dearly. And I'll just conclude with this prayer for you from Ephesians 3. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.
[46:44] Amen. Lord, we thank You today for Your kindness. I thank You personally for the privilege of being a member of this church, the blessing of these 25 years serving here.

And above all else, we thank You that Christ, Your Son, is the head of this church and the head of every true church. And we pray we would live for His name and His glory alone. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Thank you.

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