Life in the Body Pt 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 February 2025

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[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. You can be seated.

Often on Sunday nights we take time to move around and shake hands and talk to people you don't normally see. However, we are trying to keep our church held together away from sickness one week at a time.
And so we're not, don't talk to anyone tonight, all right? Don't shake a hand. Don't look directly at somebody. Just look straight ahead. I try to avoid people today as best I could, not have anyone coughing on me.
Our children's department had so many teachers that were out today. So while we've been talking about being friendly and all that kind of stuff, just suspend it for a week, all right?
We know what's in your heart. Don't hug anyone. Don't shake a hand. Don't slide to talk to people or don't smold for a week. Don't move on like high school dudes and move on, all right? I am thankful for so many people who taught today as a substitute teacher.
[1:09] We've got so many teachers and every Sunday takes just such a massive amount of people. And from what I'm told, the people, the teachers that are sick or teachers that are sick kids just kept mounting up one after the other.

and so a number of schools closed this past Thursday and Friday just because they don't have enough teachers to be able to be open and so as I mentioned this morning, if you know people that are sick, people who are normally at church, who are normally in their Sunday school class, who normally sit around you that are missing, maybe check on them tonight or tomorrow and make sure they are doing okay.
It is a heavy, heavy season of sickness. So hopefully as bad as it's been, we can get over it in just a short amount of time and in our area of the state move past that.
So a couple of quick apologies. The second service, won't know what I'm talking about. I didn't mention this, I did in the first service. So just a quick back story. This past week our pastoral staff and wives were on our annual retreat and on our retreat we try to accomplish a few things.
The ladies meet in the morning for Bible study while the men are meeting separately for planning and evaluating and those kinds of things. Then we all came together to study. This year we studied through 2 Timothy, four chapters there.
[2:32] So we walked through a chapter at a time and studied through that book together. We eat meals together and play some games together. Whether it's part planning, part prayer, part Bible study, part just relationship building.

And the last number of years we have gone bowling. This year instead of bowling we did laser tag. And I was called out on a group text this afternoon.
And so I'm publicly, I'm not saying who it is, Lacey. Publicly want to be clear that Lacey was in the top five of our laser tag.
Now I don't know why it's important to some people to keep score. We're just there to have a good time. And I don't honestly know what I said in the first service, but apparently I said something or insinuated that she didn't do well or their family didn't do well or something like that.
She said she would accept a public apology, so I'm publicly apologizing. She said Facebook lie, but this is the best I can do here. So I'm just going to tell you how this worked, all right? First place was Jeremy Davis, and then Joey, and then Jeff, and then Lacey, and then Chelsea.
[3:49] Sixth place was John, and then Aaliyah, and then me, and then Shauna. That's nine. We'll leave whoever wasn't mentioned to your discretion.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

My wife on the text said, you think it was bad being left out. How about being publicly shamed for being last? So that's why I'm not mentioning your name as last. So last year, Jeremy was the only pastor to lose to his wife in bowling, and this year he won first place in laser tag.
So, yes. Congratulations. First place in a child's game. Very good. Congratulations. So anyway, are we good, Lacey?
I don't want to be on your bad side. All right. Very good. So she beat me. She beat a number of us. And if you're keeping score, if you're keeping score by couples, last place by a pretty long part was Mrs. Staten and I.
So it's all right. It's all right. We'll practice. We've got a year to practice. And Marcy's always convinced her gun doesn't work. This happened a few years ago. Hers is the only gun that never works.
[5:05] It's crazy how that happens. Anyway. 1 Thessalonians 5. 1 Thessalonians 5. So we're looking at this ending here of this letter.

And if you've been with us and following along the last number of months, you're familiar with the flow of what he's been talking about and teaching them. Much of it dealing with the lifting of the church, the return of the Lord, the day of the Lord, the judgment that will come.
And here at the very end, verses 12 to 28, he gets highly practical, which I think is a really beautiful thing to understand. That in the body of Christ, we don't choose between doctrine and application. They should always fit together. The things that we learn doctrinally must be lived out and expressed in our obedience. You don't ever want to be in a place where the emphasis is purely on doctrine in the sense of leaving out that there's not a follow through of that.
Whatever we're learning, whatever we're studying, the expectation should be there's a follow through from that. There's no obedience to that. There's a practicality to what we learn.
[6:25] On the other hand, you don't want to be in a place where they just talk about everything is relevant as if doctrine's not relevant. That's often the unspoken part of that, as if the doctrine of the things of the Lord are irrelevant to our daily lives.

Then what 1 Thessalonians 5 reminds us of would be that the things that we learn doctrinally ought to be put into action and have an influence on the way that we live our lives as the body of Christ. So in verses 12 down to the end of chapter 5, it's very practical things about how we are to live life within the body of Christ.
Three specific things in verses 12 to 15. We looked at just the first one last Sunday night. And so the first thing he mentions is that in the body of Christ to honor your leaders.
Honor your leaders. Just by way of review, let's look at verse 12. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.
[7:41] So you honor your leaders for a few reasons biblically. One is that they are to labor among you. And we looked last week at that word that means to labor, to work hard, to work to the point of exhaustion.

That those who are going to be leaders in the church and servants among the body of Christ are to be laboring, working, diligently working.
They not only labor among you, but the text says in verse 12 that they are over you in the Lord. That does not mean boss.
That does not mean dictator. That does not mean their way or the highway. That means that their God-given responsibility is to call you to the Word, to know the Word, to believe the Word, to obey the Word, to follow the Word, to pass it on.
And that where they are teaching biblically and living biblically and serving biblically, you ought to follow them. They're over you. Not in the sense that they're better than you.
[8:45] Not in the sense that any pastor has a closer connection to God than you. But in the sense of their motive ought to be to serve you for your own good.

Again, 1 Peter 5 is helpful as it tells us, shepherd the flock of God among you as God would have you. So pastors ought to be serving in a biblical way according to the things that Scripture teaches. And any faithful pastor and leader in a congregation ought to never try to say that because of their position or because of their education or because of their experience that they somehow are closer to the Lord or that somehow their opinions are better or more godly.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Their role should not be to demand their own way. Their role, God-given biblical role, is to serve you in such a way that you know your Bible more and love Christ more because of their ministry.
And you follow them, not blindly, you follow them with an open Bible so that as you follow their teaching, you become closer to the Lord.
[10:05] A third thing that we looked at last week is that they are to admonish you. They're to warn you. They're to correct you. You're to honor your leaders in part because they're willing to correct you.

It's an interesting part of pastoral work. Do you love people enough to tell them what is good for them even if it's not what they want to hear?
That's a good test. Not just for young pastors, for old ones too. Do you love your people enough to admonish them, to correct them, to tell them if they're doing something wrong?
It's not going to make you more liked and more popular. It's just that you are wanting to be a faithful shepherd. And if the pastor or the leaders in the church are not willing to admonish and to correct and to teach and to instruct, then the problem is they become man-pleasers rather than God-pleasers.
And then the fourth thing is that they work for the Lord to serve you. Look at verse 13. And to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.
[11:25] In the Bible, pastors work for the Lord and serve the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 9.14 says, In the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

So, it's a biblical idea that the church would help support those who lead. But the reason the church does that is so those men are freed up to serve you.
To serve you. To be shepherds. To dedicate their life to the body of Christ.
One of the things that I love and treasure here is how we've got so many people on our team that have been here a long time.
And that speaks to a lot of things. It speaks of their love for you. It speaks of their dedication to you. It speaks of the joy that you are to serve.
[12:36] Among our ministry staff, we've got two of us that have been here over 20 years. Two others that have been here 14 years or more. And that speaks to the joy it is to serve.

It also speaks to this reality that you want your leaders to want to serve you. I work with young pastors a lot through the seminary.
And one of the things I will often try to talk to them about is the importance of loving your church. Loving your people. Not just loving your ministry.
Not just loving your work. Not just loving your study. Not just loving to preach. But loving your people. That's incredibly important. Now verse 13.
Esteem them very highly in love because of their work. So this is a two-way road. Biblically speaking, those who labor among you, who are over you in the Lord, verse 12, are to be working hard for you and serving you and teaching you and helping you.
[13:52] And the church is to show them love and to esteem them. Now why would the Scripture say to esteem them?

Well, it tells you because of their work. The work needs to be biblical. The work needs to be honoring to Christ. The work needs to be done with a pure motive.
The work needs to be done out of love. And I can tell you, tomorrow morning at 835, when our staff meets in our conference room in the first part of our meeting, there's 14, 15 of us in there.
We'll read the Bible out loud. We'll do Bible study. And we'll talk through a few issues and a few things. And I can tell you, without any reservation whatsoever, that every single person around that table loves Christ and loves you.
That does not mean that our opinions are always right. That does not mean that every decision we make that we can't chapter and verse is always perfect.
[15:00] That does not mean that you can't disagree with us without being a problem. Of course you can disagree with us and that's not being a problem. But you do need to know that the people who the Lord has placed here to lead and to serve love you.

Not their career, not their resumes, but love you. And I can tell you with complete integrity in my heart that for our entire staff, our building staff, our office staff, our ministry staff, love you immensely and care for you so much.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And with our pastors this week, we spent a bunch of time together talking through things and we were trying to make a couple of decisions and it was interesting because we all have the same heart and motive, but we're making decisions we can't chapter and verse.
And we're trying to look under every rock and we're trying to decide if we make this decision, how does it impact this group? How does it impact this ministry? If we do it this way, what ripple effects does that create?
What unintended consequences does that create? And we're talking through those things and listening to each other and challenging each other and not correcting as if someone's wrong, but just providing clarity to what is being said.
[16:21] And in every single conversation, opinion we had at our retreat, one thing that was so clear is that everyone speaking into these decisions is thinking through the lens of how can we honor Christ and faithfully serve our people.

That does not mean we do it perfectly. That does not mean we don't at times need to learn and improve. That's always true. But I can tell your leaders love you.
And I'm blessed to get to serve with a team like that. So, life in the body, verse 12 and 13, honor your pastors.
If I were talking to just pastors, I would say make sure you work hard. I would say make sure that you serve your people. I would say make sure you give your life away to them. If I were talking to just church members, not to pastors, I would say where you've got pastors who are biblical and godly and helping you to listen to them, to follow them, not blindly, but with an open Bible, to be a joy to serve and to esteem them highly because of their work.
That's the biblical language there. The second thing though, when you think about how the body of Christ is supposed to live together, you not only honor your pastors, secondly, you help each other.
[17:50] Verses 13 and 14, we help each other. Be at peace among yourselves and we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Let's look at the specific ways that we're called to help each other. Number one, he says be at peace. Be at peace among yourselves. Now, verse 13 is not a brand new thought from verse 12. In fact, if you look at verse 13, the first half, esteem your leaders highly. Very next sentence, be at peace among yourselves. So, while you help each other by being at peace, if you connect the dots in verse 13, one of the ways you honor your leaders is by being at peace with each other.
Now, that may or may not make perfect sense to you, but it makes perfect sense to me in this sense. When the church is at peace with each other, your leaders are freed up to study, to pray, to teach, to disciple, to minister, and to serve.
But when the church is not at peace with each other, now the leader's time is given over to conflict management and putting out fires over and over and over.
[19:31] You may not think of it this way, but this is true, and it's biblically true in this text right here, that one of the ways that you, without even knowing it, so faithfully, minister to and encourage your leaders, is by being a church that dwells in unity and lives in peace.

I've got friends of mine that talk about how their whole weekly schedule is just filled up dealing with troublemakers and difficult people, and people are complaining about this thing and upset about this thing, and it just takes up your whole week.
I've been there. I'm not, I mean, I know what that's like, but I've got to go back a few years, praise the Lord. It's been a long time. And one of the ways that you serve your leaders is by being a church that lives in unity.
We're not perfect. No one thinks that we are. But as a congregation, when our members dwell in unity, our pastors, our leaders, our, our, our, our, those who are striving to, to guide the church are freed up to do what we are uniquely called by God to do for the good of the church.
So, in my week, Monday's the exception to this because of our, our staff meeting, but the rest of my week, generally, my mornings are, are given to the Lord and study.
[20:55] My afternoons, given to people for meetings. And, and that's the way I, I've tried to organize my schedule for years. So, with a few exceptions, most every morning, I am, in my study, working, laboring for you to, to pray, to study, to, to be in the word, to strive, to teach you biblically, try to help you and to serve Christ by feeding you his word.

If the church is filled with conflict and fighting and strife and friction, then I've got to be called out of that study.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And now, I've got to deal like the rest of our pastors would have to do if that were true with just conversation after conversation, dealing with problems and headaches over and over and over.
One of the ways you serve your leaders and honor them and esteem them is by being at peace.
I should also say that there are those in our staff who part of what they do, I know, is deal with some things and help take care of things that frees me up to be able to spend time.
And so, I know that and I'm grateful for those who, who do that. but you help each other and you help your leaders when you live in peace just as the word says.
[22:26] Again, look at the end of verse 13. Be at peace among yourselves. That's not hard. Now, chapter 4, verse 17, dealing with the nuances of being caught up together in the air, that might take a little bit of study and time and effort.

But it's not real hard to understand what it means to be at peace with each other, right? We get that.
The doctrine that we learn has to be lived out in the most practical ways imaginable and one of them is we are to be at peace.
Second, look at verse 14. But we urge you, brothers, admonish the idol. Give a word of warning to the idol.
Now, notice, this isn't just to the leaders. In verse 12, those who are leaders among you are to admonish you. But in verse 14, we urge you, brothers, to admonish the idol.
There is a role that all the church plays together to make sure we all stay in line. I don't mean stay in line in the sense that everybody has to have the same opinion. Yeah, that's a fake unity.
[23:32] I mean that we stay in line in the sense of making sure we keep our eyes on what matters most, that we're focused on the things of the Lord, that we're looking after each other for the well-being of our own souls.

In this verse, admonish the idol. The word here for idol is a word that's used outside of biblical literature to describe a soldier that has become out of rank.
The soldier that got out of line. Admonish the idol. The job of the church, the members itself, is to care for each other, to look after each other, and to make sure that we all stay in line.
And let me be very clear here, I don't mean stay in line meaning you do what we say. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about let's all stay in line to make sure we're all in the Word, reading, praying, obeying, honoring.
You don't have to fall in line to do what I say. You don't have to fall in line to just do whatever our pastors say because it's something we came up with. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about in the context where you have a church where the leaders are serving you well, loving you faithfully, honoring Christ by laboring hard among you, and as the church membership, all of us, strives to be at peace with each other.
[24:56] Part of how we stay at peace with each other is that we are helping each other, and when someone gets out of line biblically, when someone starts to stray in their life, that we would love each other enough to disrupt that and to call them back to a place of repentance.

And when you say, well, what business is it of yours how I live? Well, that's a very easy thing. That may not fit the culture.
That may not fit your own perspective or desires, but biblically, as the body of Christ, we all have a responsibility to make sure we are following the Lord.
That's what it means to be a part of a church family. Galatians 6, Brothers, if anyone has caught any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.
Somebody's not honoring the Lord, love them enough to go to them and admonish them. Admonish the idol, admonish the soldier who is out of line, who is living in disobedience to the Lord.
[26:12] How else can we help each other? Back to verse 14, admonish the idol and encourage the faint-hearted.

A biblical church helps each other by encouraging the faint-hearted. That term there, fainthearted, literal rendering would be small-souled, S-O-U-L-E-D.
Someone whose soul is shrinking is the word picture here. Encourage the faint-hearted, the one who is weak, the one who is discouraged, the one who is down, the one who is struggling.
Be on the lookout for people to lift up. This is the role of the entire church.
One of the things that can happen in the church, particularly if a church is doing pretty well and the church is growing and giving is good, one of the things that can happen is this idea of let's just always hire ministry out.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[27:35] Let's just always pay a person or hire a position and what ends up happening if the church has that mentality is the thought becomes, I'm a church member, I don't have to do anything, that's part of why I give to the church so we can pay other people to do the work and ministry.

That's completely contrary to Ephesians 4 where the leaders in the church have a specific task to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. So if your idea is there's people who are struggling, there's people who are weak, there's people that are discouraged, there's people who have gone wayward and that's the pastor's job, that's not a biblical idea.
The pastors have a role in that of course but for all of us it's our responsibility to love each other enough to encourage each other. If you look at churches around our state, I don't know this but I'm quite confident in this.
I would bet if you took any church in our state that's our size in attendance, that we are the smallest pastoral staff of any church our size in this state.
I don't know that for sure but I would bet I'm right on that. And part of why that's true is because we have so many members who are doing the works of ministry.
[29:14] Because our church understands that ministry is not just for the quote unquote professionals. that the pastors have a role to teach, train, and equip but all of us as the body of Christ have a role to play.

That's extremely important. Don't ever think to yourself that you're just a church member. You're part of the body of Christ.
You've got spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit if you're a believer resides within you. You're not second string. You're not JV. You're not anything of that.
We are all a part of the body of Christ. All called by the Lord to do the work He's given us to do. And part of why our church can be structured the way that we are is because we've got so many people who are faithful to serve in the church and to use their spiritual gifts for the glory of Christ.
That's how it should always be. So be on the lookout of who you can encourage. There's a fourth thing he says. Encourage the faint hearted.
[30:25] Keep looking at verse 14. Help the weak. Help the weak. Help those who are straying into temptation. Help those who are caught up into spiritual error.

Let me give you a great cross reference on this. Hebrews 12 verses 12 to 16 says, therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.
Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it become defiled.
Our job as believers is to be encouraging people to help people. And so I want to just challenge you and honor you.
the challenge is to say for our church to function as we should we need every single member in our church serving as God would have them.
[31:47] And the encouragement I want to give you is that we've got so many faithful servants in our church and the Lord allows us to do the ministry we do. And not all of our ministry is done just within the walls of this church.

church. We use our spiritual gifts beyond the walls of this church. And we need to be doing the work of ministry everywhere that we can. Be at peace and admonish the idle and encourage the faint hearted and strengthen the weak.
And there's a fifth way we can help each other in this text and that is to be patient with them all. It's the end of verse 14. Is that a hard one? As you serve as you encourage as you help as you admonish as you deal with those who are faint hearted as you deal with those who are weak the very end of the verse in verse 14 be patient with them all.
You've got to do ministry with patience. You've got to teach with patience. You have to disciple with patience. patience. You equip with patience.
You parent with patience. And just so we're clear on the passage and the context here this is not always talking about being patient with those who are easy.
[33:10] I mean the text itself is telling you that this is those who are idle. These are those who have gone out of line. These are those who are faint hearted. These are those who are weak. Be

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

patient with them.

Be patient with them. Honor your pastors and help each other. Be at peace and admonish the idle. Encourage the faint hearted. Strengthen the weak. Be patient with them all. And there's a third thing that he gives us in just a practical way to live these things out and that is that we are to handle frustrations well.
We're to handle frustrations well look at verse 15. See that no one repays evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
Do not repay evil for evil. In the church part of why we have to be patient is because we're dealing with sinners.
[34:19] In a marriage part of why you have to be patient is because you married a sinner. When you're raising children part of why you have to be patient is because you gave birth to sinners.

When you're teaching a Sunday school class you get to teach with all patience and instruction because you're teaching sinners. And to make it even harder the one who is teaching the one who is parenting the one who is discipling they themselves are sinners.
So now you have sinners married to sinners sinners and sinners teaching sinners and sinners equipping sinners. And so we've got to be patient.
But when someone is unkind to you see that no one repays anyone evil for evil. This is not easy. But this is what the body of Christ is called to do. Who we're called to be. the way you respond in frustration will always say far more of what you believe about God than it will the person who has offended you.
[35:29] Do not repay evil for evil. And then he says at the end of that verse but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

I want you to notice and pay attention to the word seek. Seek to do good. So if you go back to the childhood game of hide and seek, hide and seek doesn't work.
If the one who is the seeker, the seeker, if he doesn't seek, the game's no fun. You're hiding and no one's looking for you.
That game becomes very boring. And after 30 minutes you come out and you say, well, what's going on? And the guy who's supposed to be the seeker is just sitting there on the couch watching TV.
Well, the goal wasn't to hide. The goal was to hide so that someone could seek you. Hide and seek only works if someone is seeking. Otherwise, it's just lonely.
[36:34] Well, in the same way that in hide and seek, your job is to go after people and to look for people and to look behind the couch and look inside the closet.

Why? Because you're seeking them. You're pursuing them. You're chasing them. You're looking out for them. You're trying to find them. In the same way, the text says, seek to do good.
Look for ways to do good. Be active in saying, who can I help? Who can I encourage? Actively seek to see how you can be a blessing to somebody else.
I've said many, many times here that it's one thing to be the kind of church member that when somebody tells you a need that you respond to it, that's good, that's a blessing, that's wonderful. But it's even a greater blessing when you're someone who seeks ways. to serve. I remember, this is a long time ago, but sweet lady in her church calls me.
[37:49] She was so upset, older lady in her church, and she said, Michael, I'm really upset with you. She said, I was in the hospital and you didn't come to see me.

that's true. I didn't know you were in the hospital. Who did you tell? I'll never forget her answer. She said, I didn't tell anyone, but you're the pastor you should know.
I don't know what kind of insight you think I've got with the Lord, but it doesn't really work that way. I don't get secret messages. I don't know. Well, we laughed about it and I think we ended on good terms.
She says, I say that, that sounds kind of strange. I said, yeah, I think I agree with you on that. I think it does. But you know, there are times today where there's needs in our church and I want to know about them as best I can.
I want to be aware. I want to be helping. I want to be praying. I want to be serving. But if every need had to run through me, we couldn't do anything. If every act of ministry had to be something that our pastors or our staff knew about, it wouldn't work.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[39:04] There are times, so many times, I'll find out there is a need and that need's already been met by the time I've even heard about it. Now, I want to be in hospitals.

I want to visit our people. I want to write cards to our people. I want to serve our people. I'm not I don't want to get out of any of that. That's why I surrendered to this 30 years ago.
I want to do that. But if the idea of ministry is that I have to do it for it to be real ministry, then that's a church built on a person and a personality and that church will fall.
If I'm gone on a Sunday morning or someone else is preaching on a Sunday night, you're not getting the second string, you're not getting the backups, you're getting other pastors in our church who love you, who love Christ, who labor in the word and serve you.
God. And one of the things we have to do is continually make sure we are seeking to do good. All of us, not just one person, not just a group of us, that we're all looking for ways to help, looking for ways to minister, looking for ways to encourage.
[40:28] Now, I have no doubt there's 500 members in our church, probably more than that. We could call and say, here's a need we have, could you help us with this? That would quickly say, yes, of course I will.

But how much better if those same 500 people were just actively seeking, looking on their own, who's hurting that I can pray for, who's in the hospital that I can visit, who's needing a meal cook that I can prepare, and our church does that so beautifully.
You do that so beautifully. We had a funeral Friday, we had a funeral Saturday here, we got back from the retreat, and we were getting ready for those funerals, and so many people in our church had served even while I was out of town, I was trying to get ready for that funeral from a distance, for both of those, by the time I got back in town, I'm doing the part that I'm supposed to do, but so many other people have served and have helped, took meals, wrote cards, went by to visit, prepared meals here, just the body of Christ serving.
Seek to do good. It's good to respond with kindness when someone tells you of a need, it's even greater to seek to do good.
Be committed to do good, it says, to one another, and to everyone. There's not a lot of wiggle room there to get out of this one, is there?
[42:10] Seek to do good to each other, he said, oh, by the way, and to everyone. Who do I have to be patient with? Just everyone. Who am I supposed to serve? Just everyone.

It's important that we live in the body the way that the Lord has called us, to live. Don't repay anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good.
So we've looked at the word seek, what about the word right before seek? That may be the harder word. Always, always seek to do good.
Don't be the kind of member that does something good, that serves someone, and then thinks to yourself, good, now I'm done for a while. Just keep serving.
Keep giving away. Keep loving. And it's not always going to be perfect because the people you're serving are sometimes the idle, and sometimes the faint hearted, and sometimes the weak.
[43:14] And don't you think if the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say, be patient with them all, that's a bit of a warning here that he says that because you're going to need it.

Because it can be difficult to do ministry. It can be difficult. But always seek to do good. Often, in the circles I run in with some things I get to do, you know, someone will make mention of years I've spent here at this church, and I try to always be quick to say, I've been here a long time, and there's people who were already teaching Sunday school before I got here who are still teaching Sunday school today.
There are people who are already serving here long before I came, that are still serving today. I've been serving here for 24 years, but there's people in this room been serving not just the Lord, serving this church longer than that.
And what you're doing is you're just always seeking to do good. I just want to encourage you, always, seek to do good. You say, well, when do we get to graduate out of that?
Well, the text says, I don't see that verse, we don't get that one. We just keep doing it. The way you serve may change, the area that you're invested in may be different, that's fine, but never stop seeking to do good to one another and to everyone.
[44:49] so what does he say? Well, serve everybody, look for ways to serve everybody, and always look for ways to serve everybody.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

This is the biblical expectation of how the body of Christ dwells in unity, which takes me back my mind to Psalm 133, verse 1, behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.
It's good and pleasant. One of the things that our staff retreat this past week, our past retreat that we did, one of our sessions we were finishing up in a portion of 2 Timothy, and someone there had shared about just their love and joy being a part of this staff at this time, and the blessing it is, and several of us chimed in on just what a blessing it is to serve right now with these people in this time, and people were getting kind of weepy and teary because we recognized we're all far from perfect. None of us would say anything other than that, but we recognize that among our pastoral team, this would extend for sure for our ministry staff, for everyone who's a part of the team here, that these are days where we dwell together in great unity, and it is good and it is pleasant.
It's good and it's pleasant. Now, I've been doing this long enough that it hasn't always been good and pleasant for 30 years.
[46:27] I mean, it's not like every day of ministry's always been a joy. That's not true. It has been a joy. It hasn't always been easy. That would be a better word to use. There's always been joy there, but I think that one of the reasons why Marce and I especially, as I just think of our own family here, are so thankful for what the Lord's allowed us to be a part of, is because we recognize not that we're better, our church is better, we don't mean it that way, but it's just not like this everywhere, and I know that.

one of the benefits of being 50 years old is walking through a few wars, living through a few battles, and when you see that brothers are dwelling together in unity, as Psalm 133 says, it is good and it is pleasant.
But as we close, I do want you to understand how pivotal all of us are in this, because if our staff meets tomorrow at 835, and we're reading through the scripture together, and we're doing Bible study together, we've got a preaching Zoom with a guy tomorrow I'm really excited about, that's going to be an encouragement to us, and we come out of that meeting room and it's been a morning of prayer, and of reading scripture, and of study, and learning, and teaching, and encouragement, and we come out of that room, and the first thing that hits us is that we each have four or five messages to put out of people who are angry, or complaining, or bitter, or difficult, or causing trouble, and stirring up friction, it doesn't matter what we decide to do, we can't do what we are called by
God to do if we're going to go spend the rest of our week as spiritual firemen. And I want you to understand that when I say these are good and pleasant days, I don't mean because of a group of a few people.
I mean because these are days where this church, by God's grace, has chosen as best we can as imperfectly as we are to honor our leaders, to help each other, and individually to handle frustrations well.
[49:00] None of us are perfect at it, we understand that. But when we do what God's word says, the theology becomes highly practical.

biblical. Why would we do all these things we've talked about today? Well, because of the theology of chapter 5, 1 to 11.
Christ is coming again. Our time is short. These are serious moments with real needs. And we want to live today with the end in mind.
Amen? The theology of understanding that doctrine now permeates everything that we do. It's the way that it should be.
So help each other, seek to do good, and never forget the blessing it is to be a part of the body of Christ.
[50:08] Christ. I've never belonged to a perfect church. I've never pastored a perfect church. If we did, I would ruin it.

If we were all perfect, I would stick out. But I'll tell you what I have had the privilege to do, and that is to be a Christian who's a member of a local congregation that weakly enjoys the blessing of being ministered to and served by the body of Christ.
And it is good and it is pleasant when the church dwells together in unity. And the only unity that counts is the unity that comes from obeying the scripture.
May the Lord help us to continue to live that way. Lord, we are grateful today for your word. I pray that it is helpful for us. I pray that it is a word of encouragement as we have studied what you would have for us this evening.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Lord, we are reminded tonight of so many among us who are sick, either themselves or with sick family members, and we do pray, Lord, for healing and health and physical restoration for those who are in need.
[51:34] We do pray, Lord, for those who this weekend have lost loved ones, and we pray for the comfort of your Holy Spirit there. We pray, Lord, for the ministry opportunities that await us this week, that we would be faithful, that we would be patient with all, and that we would always seek to do good to everyone.

May that not just be things we affirm, may that be truths that we live. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. God bless.
You're dismissed.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host