



Message **Transcript**

A Plea For Unity

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Well, good morning. Thanks so much for choosing to worship with us. Hey, before we get started, I just got to tell you, first Tuesdays, which starts this Tuesday after Labor Day, is going to rock. It's going to be awesome. I encourage you all to be here.

And if you don't believe me that Satan doesn't want you to be here, do this for me, okay? This will be fun. As your pastor, take out a tablet or a sheet of paper, and between now and Tuesday night, write down all the reasons why you can't make it. Okay? Just write it down.

Especially on Tuesday. Start writing them down. You'll be amazed at the things that happen and the things that distract you. And by four or 05:00 on Tuesday, you'll have ten or 15 reasons why you can't be here. I'm telling you, come anyway, and you will be blessed.

If you're not, I'll give you all your money back. Okay? Just tell your neighbor that's visiting. It doesn't cost anything. So.

All right. So encourage to see you here on Tuesday night. And let's just go before the Lord before we hear from his word. Let's go before him. Let's prepare our hearts.

And if you pray for me, I think you can tell I got a little bit of thing on the throat that started last night when I started preaching. And I know it's because of what I'm preaching on, and so I'm not surprised. But pray that God would give me the grace to deliver the goods this morning. All right. So, Lord, we give you all the praise and glory.

The praise is yours. All the praise belongs to you and you alone. God, we lift up your name, your mighty and matchless name. And right now, Lord, we just want to thank you for your living and your active word, Lord, that not only encourages us, but challenges us, exhorts us, admonishes us, and helps us to be more aligned with who you are. And so, Lord, we want to receive that.

So, Lord, if there's anything in our hearts that would keep us from hearing you and putting into practice the things you show us, we just pray right now. We lay those

things at the foot of the cross. We'd give them to you, Jesus, so we could hear you clearly. And, lord, we just want you to know we love you, and we thank you for willing to speak to us this morning. We give you all the praise in the mighty and the matchless name of Jesus Christ and all God's people who are ready to hear his word this morning.

Agreed. And said, amen amen. I want to encourage you to open your Bible this morning to one corinthians, chapter one, first Corinthians, chapter one. We're going to begin in verse ten. One corinthians, chapter one, verse ten.

Now, in verse ten, things in one corinthians begin to shift. If you've been here with us the last two weeks, we've taken a look at the first nine verses. And in those verses, in those two different weeks we've looked at, Paul establishes his gifting as an apostle who's sent by God to establish the church, who gives grace and peace to all who are there. And then last week, we spent significant time talking about our identity as to who we are in Christ Jesus and the difference that makes in how God calls us versus how the enemy and the world call us. And if we understand and align with our identity, then we can live out who we are.

And I told you last week, the first nine verses, extremely encouraging, right? Paul writes to this church. That's messed up. Gives them extremely encouraging words. There's 437 verses in the Bible, the first nine, very encouraging.

Today we begin to talk about some of the things that need to change in the church in order for God to get his work done. So I hope that you have a receptive heart to what God has, because I know as I labored in study all week long and took a look at this passage over and over, I thought to myself, hmm, this is a hard one. This is a challenging word for our people, and we need to hear it. And my job as a pastor is not to concern myself with who's going to feel a certain way. It's to concern myself with what does God want to say to us.

And so, if you're ready, let's open up our bibles. First Corinthians, chapter one, verse ten. Because there's only a few verses. Let me read the verses that we're going to look at, and then let's unpack them together. Here's what Paul says.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all

agree and there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now, I mean this. Each of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I am of apollo, and I am of cephas, and I am of Christ. Has Christ been divided?

Paul was not crucified for you. Was he or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now, I did also baptize the household of Stephanus. Beyond that, I don't know whether I baptized any other, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech so the cross of Christ would not be made void.

Now, it's really interesting because when you think about this church in Corinth, there's a lot going on that's not good. There's sexual immorality, there's fighting, there's selfishness in every single way. There's relationships that are out of whack. Marriages aren't going well. I mean, all sorts of things.

And Paul is going to start his letter after encouraging them and their identity in Christ and the grace in which they share by talking about one thing that they got to get right first. It's the one thing that every marriage has to get right first. It's the one thing every team has to get right first. It's the one thing every country needs to get right first. It's the one thing every organization needs to get right first.

You get this thing right, it works together. You get this thing wrong, it doesn't function well. And here's the word. You ready for it? Unity.

Unity. Paul is making a plea for unity in the Church of Corinth through his word. Today, I'm making a plea to our congregation for unity. And Paul's going to talk about three different areas, three different things that we need to be aware of when it comes to the unity that we share in Christ Jesus. Now, let me say this because you'll see it in your notes.

I said unity involves a personal desire and a willingness, too. And that's not just words thrown out there. Now, listen to me. Look at me when I talk about a personal desire and a willingness to. Here's what I'm talking about.

In order for unity to happen, there has to be a personal desire. I have to want unity to happen in your marriage. You have to want unity to happen, for unity to be there. It doesn't just happen in your family. You got to want unity to be there.

It doesn't just happen in teams. You got to want unity to be there. It doesn't just happen in a country. You have to want unity to be there. It doesn't just happen in the church.

Let me just tell you something. There needs to be a personal desire on your part to want to see unity happen, but there also needs to be a personal willingness to, in other words, yeah, I'd love to see unity in our church. I wish those people would get it right. I'd love to see unity in my marriage. I wish my spouse would change.

I'd love to see unity in my family. I wish everybody else would figure it out. Love to see unity in our country. If that other political party would just get their act together right. There needs to be not only a personal desire to a want to, there needs to be a

personal willingness to, a resolve to that.

I'll do whatever it takes to ensure that unity happens as far as I'm concerned.

Okay, so this is not a message saying, what do you want? Would you like to see unity in the church? Because we could all just raise our hand. That'd be awesome.

And then we could all go home. This is not just a desire for it personally, but a willingness to say, what in me, Lord is keeping me and keeping us from being the best that we can be as a church unified under the lordship of Jesus Christ. So it's a message to all of us for God to accomplish what he wants, but to us individually, are we willing to put into practice the thing that God's going to show us through his word? This morning, and I've been praying for you, and I've been praying for this message. And I know for different ones of us, there's going to be different things that the Lord is going to bring through his word that are hindering our unity in our church, that God wants to speak to us.

And if he shows you those things, let me tell you why he's showing you. Because he loves you and he loves our church. He's not showing you to beat you up. He's not

showing you, oh, you're so wrong. I can't believe he's showing you to say, I love you and I love my church, and I want you to be a part of the unity with which I'm trying to build.

So unity involves this personal desire and a willingness to do three things. And the first is this, unity involves a personal desire and a personal willingness to align with other believers within a local church. Align with other believers within a local church. Now hear me on this. Notice what Paul says.

He says, now, I exhort you, brethren. Now, when Paul's saying, I exhort you, this word, exhort really means to come alongside. It's the same word that's used in John for the Holy Spirit. The paraclete, the one called alongside. That's what Paul is saying.

I'm coming alongside of you. I'm not just coming over you. I'm not just rebuking you. I'm not telling you. You're terrible.

I'm coming alongside of you. And what does he say? Brethren, brothers, sisters, I'm coming alongside of you. As your pastor, I'm exhorting you. I'm keeping you on the path.

I'm helping you to do something that is not currently happening in your local congregation. And here's what he says. I exhort you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So in other words, what Paul is saying, it's not my authority, just as an apostle. It's not me coming to you and saying, I know what needs to happen in the church.

Cause I'm the pastor. I'm telling you to do this. Cause I'm the pastor. I'm the authority. I'm the apostle.

That's not what he's saying. I'm exhorting you. I'm coming alongside of you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or I'm doing this for Christ's reputation, because God's reputation is at stake. So we got to get this thing right. So what he's encouraging the corinthian church to do is not because he's trying to make them change something individually that they don't feel comfortable with.

He's trying to get them to change, because Jesus wants to see this change in this local community so he can get his work done. So anything that you hear today in your own heart, personally, don't think to yourself, this, why do I have to do that? How come God's not speaking to them about that? Here's why God's speaking to you about it, because you're receptive enough to hear them, and God wants you to put it into practice for the sake of unity in our church. He says, I exhort you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, watch this one. How about this? That you all agree and that there be no divisions among you. Now, for all of you to say, I wish I knew more about the Bible. I wish I knew more about the Bible.

Just chew on that. For the rest of your life in the church. Listen to me. That you would all agree, and there would be no divisions among you, ever.

You're not listening. Did you see that in your Bible? He's exhorting them in the

name of the Lord, that you all agree and that there be no divisions. All agree is literally in the original language that you would all be saying the same thing. And this word division is schismata.

It's where we get our word, schism. That you would all be saying the same thing, and there'd be no schisms. There'd be no factions ever in the local church. How well is that working for us?

Saying the same thing means this, that whether I'm talking to the person out in the lobby, whether I'm talking to a congregant, staff member, elder, senior pastor, whatever, we're all saying the same thing. Well, what are we saying? We're all saying that Jesus Christ is Lord. And we're all saying the church is the hope of his glory. The church is the hope of the world.

We love our church. We love Jesus. We love our pastors. We love our congregation. We love God's people, and we love what God's doing in our church.

That's what we're saying all the time. That's saying the same thing. That's what we're agreeing on. You know, sometimes you'll talk to people outside the church. I know I do all the time.

And when people have had a limited experience of church and they don't want to come, what do they say? Well, I don't want to go to church. Church is just a bunch of fill in the blanks hypocrites. Where do they get that? They haven't even been here.

You know where they get that? They get it from you. Because we might say the same thing here. But then we go out there and we're like, yeah, my church is messed up. Hey, pray for our youth pastor.

He's this, hey, pray for our small groups. I don't even know why we have to do that. Hey, pray for our pastor. He's this. Pray for this person in my church.

They're this. And they hear us talk about one another in such a way that when we invite them to come be a part of us, they think to themselves, why in the world would I ever want to be part of that? It's disgraceful. The church is Jesus Christ's vehicle for the hope of the world. There is no other vehicle for it.

And if we speak bad about the bride of Christ, we ruin the opportunities we have to accomplish what God wants for us, and we shame the name of Jesus. Now, you might look and say, well, Jeff, where are you getting this whole church thing out of this? Okay, great. Glad you asked. Go back up to verse two.

Who is Paul writing to? To the church of God, which is at Corinth. He's not just talking about a universal assembly of people. He's not just talking about, yeah, I get along with christians in general, just not at that church. I get along with christians in general.

We're all the body of Christ. No, he's talking about, Jesus created the church. He said, I will build my church. The church is a local representation of the glory of God so that the world can see what it looks like to radically love God and love one another so

much that they would want to be a part of the God that we serve. That's what Paul's saying.

And he's saying when we're not saying the same thing, when we're saying that we're talking bad about our church or we're complaining about our church or we're saying bad things, we're destroying the work that Christ wants to get done through the vehicle of the church. So why does Paul start here? Because he understands that if the corinthians don't get this unity thing right, he can teach them about whatever else they want, and they're still going to lack. We got to get this one right. So the question is, how do you speak about your church now?

You might say, I'm visiting. I can say whatever I want about your church, right? What about your church? What about where you go? What about where you give your time?

How do you speak? And just so you know, it doesn't just mean I speak great about harvest Bible chapel of Denver, but I talk bad about that other church because that other church is who Jesus Christ died for, too. So don't come to complain to me

about another pastor and how he's that. And they're this and that church is that. Hey, Jesus Christ died for them, too.

And if they're not heretical, they're my brothers and sisters in Christ, and I pray for them. I love them, I support them, and I celebrate when God does a good work through them as well. Amen. That's what Paul's telling the Corinthians. Paul's telling, get this one right.

There's factions among you, there's schisms among you because you're not getting your way. You're not getting to get what you want to get. Now, look at this. That you all agree and there be no divisions among you, but that what? But that you be made complete.

Made complete. You can underline that in your Bible. Made complete comes from a greek word which means to be in a condition to function well. It's the idea of resetting a bone. When I was a junior in high school, I dislocated my left elbow.

They had to remove part of the bone of my elbow. I can't turn my hand all the way up. I can't extend my arm all the way out. But the doctors came in and they fixed it. They made it complete so that I could function again.

What Paul is talking about is that the church is made up of only one group of people, broken sinners. That's all we get. So I listen to Christians. If so and so became a Christian, the church would be, if so and so became a Christian, it's just another broken sinner in need of the grace of God that God needs to set free. Right?

He only gets to choose broken sinners. That's all God ever gets to work with. And what does God want to do with broken sinners? He wants to take what's broken and make them whole so they're useful for his service. God, when he called you to himself, didn't call you to himself just so that you could come to church and talk about your brokenness forever.

God wants to heal it so that you can function for him. God's a healer. That's who he is. And he says, hey, listen, this whole unity thing, when you're saying the same thing, and there's no divisions among you, but you'd be made complete. And what's he

say?

Having the same mind and the same judgment, same mind is the same internal thought process. Same judgment is the same action outside. We're all thinking the same. We're all saying the same. We're all doing the same.

And let me be clear here. Oh, that's just what church is. You're trying to make everybody the same. We're all. We're not the same.

You're gonna see, throughout this book, we have different giftings, different passions, different understandings, different life experiences. That's great. But when it comes to glorifying Jesus, when it comes to a love for his church, when it comes to seeing people get saved, when it comes to seeing people get set free, we're all saying the same thing, thinking the same thing, acting the same way so that God can get his glory. Amen. That's what Paul's saying.

He's like, get this thing right. The unity in the church is the most important now in our day and age. Did you know there's more than one church in Denver, Colorado? See, we're a little more sneaky in our day and age because in Corinth, if you didn't go to the first church of Corinth, you had nowhere else to go. You didn't get this thing right.

You were outside the christian community. You know what we do instead? I'm not going to that church. Church shopping. I'm gonna find another place that will suit my needs.

You know what? I'm actually done with church. I'm gonna find a ministry that will suit my needs so I don't have to go to church and be part of a community that does that just so that I can get fed by God without actually serving his church. Can I just tell you how sick and wrong that is and how sinful it is and how disappointing it is to the Lord? Why?

Because when he saved you, you're the bride of Christ. He loves you with an unconditional love. The bride is who he loves. It's what he wants. And it's his plan for

pouring the gospel through to the world.

It's the church. There is no other option. You won't read about any other option in the Bible. It's the church. It's the church.

Now. Let me tell you why I'm so passionate about this. For years and years, I mean, I'm just being very candid and raw with you. For years and years I went to church. I just didn't like church.

Do you know I didn't like church because no matter what church I went to, it was the same people sitting in the same seats, listening to the same stuff, exiting the same way and returning the same way. And nothing ever changed. That was my perception anyway. A couple of you guys changed seats today. I know where you are, right?

But for the most part, that's what we do, right? And I was like, no, I don't want to do that. I want to be part of a parachurch organization. They actually are missional.

They're actually going to get something done.

So I remember in 2002, I was part of this church planting residency at fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. And I had all these questions like, why the church? I got saved through young life. I helped with YFC. I've helped with fellowship with christian athletes.

I've been part of so many parachurch ministries. I actually even started my own and went out and preached the gospel. And I'd be talking to pastors and help me understand the church thing because I reach more people in a weekend than you do in the next year. So what's up with this church thing? So I was in this residency program and I thought it was a free place to ask my questions about my lack of understanding of the church.

And it wasn't well received because I would voice those opinions and they'd say, well, maybe you're not called brother hey. And maybe you just don't understand the church. And it's too bad that your life experience didn't happen in the church. And I'm like, I don't even know what you're talking about. And for 15 years, I kept asking God

the question, what's up with your church?

I mean, I like it, but I just don't like it. And I remember shortly after Kim and I were married, true story. We've been married less than a year, and she marries this guy. Me thinking I'm some spiritual guy that loves Jesus is preaching the word, and we're sitting in a church service. And it was the church service where I said, I've had it.

I'm done. I was watching some things going on the platform that were all performance oriented. The pastor that got up to preach, it wasn't right from the word. It was just a thematic message that was an acronym. And I filled in all the blanks, and I handed it to my wife before we got started, and we got in the car to go home, and I looked her in the eye and I said, I'm done.

She's like, what do you mean? I said, it's the last church service I'm ever going to unless I'm preaching.

And she looked at me like, who the heck did I just marry? And I said, hey, when

we have kids, I'm happy to take our kids. I'll go for your sake, but I am done. What a waste of time. That's where I was.

I read every book on why you shouldn't like the church and how you should just be the church and not go to church. And I knew it all, and I'd been writing, but I was praying the whole time, like, God help me understand this thing. And God did. Do you know, over the course of 15 years, he showed me in his word that the church is literally the hope of the world, that the New Testament books were written to local churches for the most part, and God established leadership in that local church, and that God loves the church. And what I came to realize was not that I hated the church, what I realized was I hated the way that church wasn't functioning, the way Jesus Christ wanted it to function.

And I remember when the Lord spoke in my ear, said, are you going to complain for the rest of your life or are you going to repent and get on board? Let me tell you what difference it made in my life. I repented in the way I thought about church, changed my whole career to come pastor one and give my entire life to it. Let me tell you this. Whether you're a pastor, evangelist, teacher, stay at home mom, lawyer, attorney, whatever you are, coach, the local church is the hope of the world, and your

service to the body of Christ is the most important thing you will ever do.

Amen and amen. Okay, so when Jesus calls you home to himself, you don't have to worry if you're a Christian about God showing you all your bad behavior. All that's been taken care of. But let me tell you what your rewards are based upon. How well you served his bride, period.

Did you give your best effort to the church? Did you speak your best words about his church? Did you align with other members in his church? I'm just telling you, why do you think the enemy hates the church? Why do you think it's so easy to get disgruntled and leave church?

Why do you think it's so easy to get ticked off at people in the church and be like, I'm out of here, because they didn't treat me right. It happens all the time. That's why there has to be ongoing forgiveness and enduring relationships and loving one another and saying, I don't appreciate the way you treated me, but I'm willing to come with you and let's work this thing out, right? That's what Jesus says. Cause the church is at stake.

Now, why would Paul want all that? Why this unity? Because unity only exists for one purpose and one purpose only. Make no mistake about it. It exists for mission, mission, mission.

Did you hear what I'm saying? That's the only reason to be unified. I mean, you think about it. When I played sports, right? We didn't come together and just have potluck suppers and slumber parties and hangout and do cookouts and overnights in the wilderness and be like, hey, we're buddies now.

Let's go play a game. Because we're really unified. We would have got slaughtered, right? What did we come and do? We came together with people that wouldn't have otherwise ever come together under good leadership.

That said, here's what you do. And in doing what we did and enduring together, guess what happened? We became unified around our mission. Military people, men and women that serve our military. I have not had the privilege of doing that.

It's one of my regrets in life. But let me tell you this. I know from talking to you whether it's boot camp, officer training, school, whatever, right? What is it? You don't get there and have potlucks and meals.

You don't get there so you can become best buddies, so you can learn how to fight together. There's an agenda for mission. And in that agenda for mission, if you'll align with that mission, you'll become close to all those around you because you have a unifying theme in a marriage. Am I right or wrong? What's the purpose of unity?

Just so that we like each other? That's called dating. Right? In marriage, it's unity for the purpose of what we need to be aligned in our mission. What Schwarzenegger Enterprise is about, how are we going to raise and discipline our kids?

How are we going to save money for the future? Where are we going to live? How's God going to use us to contribute? We need to be united for the mission that

God has for us and church. Let me just tell you this.

We have to be united in the mission that God has for us. Right now, there's different ways that we can be united. I want to talk about three of those ways. There are three really important ways. It's not the only ways, but I want to talk about three ways.

It's important for us to be united as a church and what we have to be saying the same thing and acting the same way and doing the same stuff. And the first one is doctrinal. It's doctrinal if the church is not aligned in its doctrine, it's not going anywhere. Right? So let me tell you where our doctrine comes from.

It comes from this book, okay? All 66 books, I believe with my whole heart, are written by the Holy Spirit, are inerrant in every single way in the original manuscripts. And to the extent that I don't understand them, it's because I'm fallible and God is not. This is our doctrine, okay? It's the word of God.

It's the inerrancy of God's word. We will not change that if you say, well, I'm coming to harvest, but I don't really believe that. Hey, you're going to believe it or you're going to be real uncomfortable here. As long as God gives me breath, this is what I'm preaching. In this book, God reveals himself as a trinity.

God made up of father, Son and Holy Spirit. All one God, three distinct persons, all co equal, existing since eternity past. How that works. Glory to God. That's what makes him God and there are no others.

Right? I believe that. Right. I believe with my whole heart that the Bible reveals Jesus Christ is coming back in all of his glory to redeem the world and to judge the wicked. I believe that the Bible teaches that that's doctrinal truth.

We can stand on this book, right? What about our ecclesiology? What about our understanding of the church? Let me tell you from God's word, with all authority, all authority. The church, the local church, is the hope of the entire world.

Your service to this church is the hope of the entire world. It's not a political hope. It's not an educational hope. It's the ecclesiological hope. It is that God, working through members of his church, will get his glory done on planet earth.

And to the extent the church aligns doctrinally with what God wants, God does incredible, abundant, amazing things, right? That's doctrinal. I mean, if you look at our pillars of prayer and preaching and evangelism and worship, that's who we are, right? I mean, those are doctrinal things that God wants us to do. But not only are doctrinal things.

Did you know there's also philosophical alignment. There's ways in which we do church, because while God gave us the book of one Timothy and second Timothy and Titus, and gives us other instruction that we'll see in one corinthians about how church should be done, he also gives us a lot of leeway on how church could happen. Right. And usually when there's not philosophical alignment, you hear about this schismata, this church split the church. That goes from having a pianist who's been there for 50 years, and now they're moving contemporary because they're actually going to throw an acoustic guitar in and the church splits.

Why? Because philosophically, that doesn't feel right with my heart.

Philosophically, I think worship should be done in this way. Let me tell you, there's a lot of ways to worship our Lord Jesus Christ. If you would have woke up in Africa this morning, you would have been doing a whole lot more dancing in church than you did this morning.

You that right? I mean, there's different ways to worship. We can use a full band, we can do acoustic, we can do acapella, we can do any number of things, right? But there's a philosophy for how we do ministry. There's a philosophy here at harvest.

Let me tell you something about our philosophy. It's not the right philosophy. It's not the only philosophy. It's a philosophy. It's our philosophy that we're deeply committed to because we believe in it.

We talk about worship, walk and work. We believe it's important to worship the Lord in community. We believe it's important to get with other brothers and sisters in Christ and walk alongside in groups because that's what really grows us. We believe

that serving in the church, working for God, giving our best to him, is what glorifies him. That's our philosophy of ministry.

It doesn't mean it has to be your philosophy of ministry, but it's our philosophy of ministry. So you say. Well, Pastor Jeff, I come to harvest because I like the preaching and I like the worship. But I never intend to be in a small group. There's no way I'm serving this church.

Let me tell you what you are. You're a schismata. You're a schism. You're a faction, and you're keeping us from getting the work done. It'd be like this, let's say.

As the Broncos are preparing for their preseason game or their first game of the season this week, two of the whiteouts decided, hey, you know what? I don't feel like practicing this week. I don't want practice. Practice. A waste of time.

I mean, I'm better than the other guys that aren't starting. So I'm just going to

host a wide receiver clinic this week for high school students and teach them how to be good wide receivers. But I'm not going to practice. What do you think the coaches would say? Bye.

See ya. Not paying you right, but coach, coach. But I can train so many more people doing this. Yeah, but you're hurting our team because our team needs you. And this is where you said you're serving.

If you call harvest Bible chapel your home and you refuse to serve and you refuse to walk with other people in community, you're doing the same thing. You're doing the same thing. Pastor Jeff, you don't understand. There's this ministry out there I serve with that's way more important than harvest. Let me tell you, your primary ministry needs to be to the local church that you're at.

It doesn't mean you don't serve other things. It means the number one thing you serve is your church. You give your best effort and your best gifts. I work with other prayer church ministries. I support them financially.

I'm happy to do that. There's no problem. But the lion's share of my serving will always be, the local church will always be where I give the most money. And always be where I labor and give the most time because it's what Jesus wants me to do. And even if I wasn't pastoring, I would do the same thing you say.

Well, you're just saying that because you're a pastor and that's how they get people and trick people into serving in the church. No, I'm telling you I repented from my job, moved my whole family across country to do the very thing I'm telling you to do because it's what Jesus wants. Paul's telling them that same thing. Make the church your primary mission, doctrinally, philosophically. Now, here's what I'm saying.

Well, Pastor Jeff, you're just asking me to leave. This is my last service. No, I'm not. I'm asking you to repent and fold in and be your best for Jesus. And if you can't, we're not the only philosophy of church.

Find a place where the philosophy fits who God made you and then go serve that church to the best of your ability. Right. But there's nothing worse than having a team

of people where you have a few out there that are the distractors. I can't believe harvest makes you do that and harvest makes you do that. Harvest doesn't make you do anything.

It's Christ's love that compels us. We get to worship him. We get to encourage one another. We get to serve him. It's a privilege.

And here's what I find in church. Sometimes when things are going really, really well in our lives, is the time that we pull away and we. I need a break. Sometimes when things are going really, really hard in our life, we pull away and say, I need a break. You know, when the body of Christ is most alive, not just in the mundane, but when there are people that are severely hurting and we're coming alongside to help them, because I've seen this in our church, people are really hurting.

We come along the side, we serve them for one or two or three. We really help them financially and in every other way, and they get back on their feet. I love my church. I love my church. Then they're feeling pretty good now.

One of their friends is going through something very similar. You know what they say? Which breaks my heart every time. I don't have time for that. I got a family right now.

I don't have time to help them. Thinking, where were you the last three years when we were doing it for you? Right. I'm telling you, the local church is the hope of the world. If you're broken, it's a great time to pour in.

If you're feeling really good, it's a great time to pour in. There's never a time to pull out. So let me just address a couple things. I mean, I hear this. It breaks my heart.

Every time I need a break from church, I need a break. Let me just tell you, there's times of refreshment that are good. This summer, the elders gave me four weeks off. I didn't realize till week three how stressed and wound tight I was. I needed that time.

But I'm back. I'm fired up. Can you tell I'm fired up? I'm pretty fired up. I mean, I'm glad to be back.

I mean, it's good to rest. It's good to refresh. That's good. But if the elders are like, hey, take three years, don't go to church just for three, I mean, that's not good, right? And what I find is when people need to take a break, what they're really saying is, I don't want to serve my church, but I'm going to come up with some sort of spiritual way to convince you that I don't need to serve the church because there's this ministry out here, or I'm gonna do a bible study in my neighborhood, or I'm gonna go to this group, they're gonna teach me that I'm gonna do something where I don't have to serve the church or this one.

Come talk to me about this after one. I don't have time now. If you really don't think you have time, come talk to me. Maybe we can figure out how. You do have time, right?

Perhaps you have more time for the church than you think. If it's Jesus primary

call on your life to serve the church, no matter what your vocation is, then there's time for you to do it. I mean, maybe what it means is your kids don't play sports for the next two or three years because you don't have time for that. And maybe what it means is you don't take vacations every other month for the next two or three years because you don't have time for that. Hey, maybe what it means is that you don't eat out all the time because you don't have time for that.

You think about this for a second. I mean, just, just think about this. I'm trying to be your pastor and not a prophet here. I'm trying to be your pastor. What is it that gets in the way of your primary service to the Lord Jesus Christ in this church.

Just think about, what is it. Think about if that were gone, I know I could. Is it the broncos sports? I mean, what is it for you? Is it your job?

You gotta make more money? What gets in the way? Whatever's coming to your mind. Here's. Let me tell you what that's called.

It's called an idol. It's called an idol. It's something that you put ahead of Jesus Christ, no matter how you spin it, no matter what you say about it, because when you stand before the Lord, I promise you, you're not gonna be nearly as excited to tell him, well, I would have served the church, but I did this thing over here. Well, I would have served the church, but I wanted to do this thing. You're not.

I serve the church, Jesus, and I sacrifice for the church. Cause you died for me. You rose for me, you gave me life, you healed me, you forgave me. You called me in to serve it. You gave me the gifts to do it.

How could I not serve you? Because your love compels me to make sure other people grow in the same knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that I have. Amen. That's what he's saying. And we're just getting through one verse here.

You gotta get that. I mean, this is why he's telling the corinthians that because they got all these other things going on that they consider as or more important than the most important thing, which is the local church being united in the mission of Jesus Christ. There's doctrinal, there's philosophical, and then this third one is this. There's

relational. Relational.

Relational unity. Can I tell you what relational unity is? Relational unity is when we all get along with one another because of the same love we have for God. That's what relational unity looks like. We get along.

We love one another. I don't sit over there on Sunday morning because you sit over there on Sunday morning, and hopefully we'll leave through the doors at different times so we never have to run into each other. I now come to the 11:00 service because I know you come to the nine. My family made Saturday nights a priority because I know you're going to be here on Sunday. I don't like my small group because of these two people in it, and I need a new 01:00 a.m..

I making any sense to anybody here? Relational unity. Jesus Christ died for everyone. Everyone that's confessed him as their lord and savior is a brother and sister, and we are called by God to love them no matter what. And let me just make a word on this.

Some people are easier to love than others. Did you hear what I said? Some people are easier to love than others. That's why God gave us the Holy Spirit, because there's certain people you couldn't love without the Holy Spirit. That's a fact.

There are certain people in the church you could not love without the Holy Spirit in your heart. But God's given you everything you need to love other people through his holy spirit. I may not personally be able to love them, but I can love them through the Holy Spirit. I can love them because God loves them. Now, you think about this doctrinal, philosophical, relational.

What would happen to a congregation of people that said, we all love our church, we all love our pastor, we love our pastor's wife, we love our pastor's family, we love our staff, we love what God's doing in our church. We love the way we relate to one another. We love our small groups. We love the way we get to serve. We love what God's doing in our community.

We love Jesus. It's so incredible. We love one another. We love our philosophy of ministry. We love our doctrine.

What would happen? I'm telling you, we don't have enough seats for what would happen. We talk about kingdom advancement. We're gonna put other campuses out there. I know we are.

Talk to you about it on Tuesday night, this coming Tuesday, but I'm telling you, we wouldn't be able to set up enough chairs. So the question is not or the statement is not. Yeah. When these other people I'm looking at today get this thing right. We're gonna have a great church, right?

This isn't. I wish so and so would hear the message. Like, when's it go online, Pastor Jeff? I want them to hear it. The question is, what in my life is an idol to me that's keeping me from serving God my best?

What keeps me from making peace with others? And to the extent that I can, for the glory of Jesus Christ, I will do it. That's what God is saying. I mean, verse ten, in case you're one of those people that say, I just need to know more about the Bible, study verse ten for the rest of your life and put it into practice and you'll be doing really, really well. It's the local church.

It's the hope of the world. I mean, even as elders, I don't know how many times as elders. I mean, we don't always agree. It doesn't mean we always feel the same way. There's nothing wrong with making suggestions.

There's nothing wrong with serving the Lord. There's brilliance in our church. There's great ideas. I'm just talking about if you've been at harvest, like, let's say this morning is like your, I don't know, first time. I mean, you don't need to come up and give me 73 things we could do differently, right?

Hey, if you just did this, or please don't say this. This one is my all time. At my last church, at my last church, we used to do it like this. At my last church, we used to do it like that. At my last church, we used to do it like that.

The restraining power of the Holy Spirit always keeps me from saying, then go back. Right. I'm not calling anybody to leave our church. If you're hearing that, you're not hearing the message, right. What I'm telling you is we have a way of doing ministry under God's authority.

We're excited about what we're doing, and 99.9% of the people that are listening to my voice are really excited about what Jesus is doing here. And let's go take the hill, because we want to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. So let's go do that together. Amen.

So not only do we need to align with other believers within a local church, but unity involves a personal desire and a willingness to do this. Give allegiance to Jesus Christ and his church above personal affinities, agendas, and affiliations. It means we're going to give allegiance to Jesus Christ and his church. We've already started talking about some of this above any personal affinities, personal agendas, and personal affiliations. Right?

Now, notice what he says, for I have been conformed concerning you, my brethren. Still talking to them as brothers and sisters in Christ by Chloe's people or Chloe's household, that there are quarrels among you. In other words, he's getting reported back. He pastored this church for 18 months. He's now on the road doing missions.

He's hearing back from people, from Chloe's family. Hey, I'm hearing there's quarrels among you. I'm hearing there's schisms. I'm hearing there's divisions. I'm a pastor in a local church.

I get to see him with my own two eyes. And every time I see them, they hurt my heart. They break my heart, because the bride of Christ is worthy of fighting for unity. So Paul hears this, and he goes on to explain what he means in verse twelve. He says, now, I mean this, that each of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I am of apollo, and I am of Cephas, and I am of Christ.

Now, who are these guys? Paul planted the church. He's the founder of the

church. He's been there for the first 18 months. He's the founding pastor of Corinth.

Many people got saved under the apostle Paul's ministry. Then you got this guy Apollos. What we learn about in the book of acts is Apollos was a speaker of speakers. I mean, he was like the orator. He would be the guy that's like, dude, nobody brings the word like Apollos.

Apollos is the man. And then you got Cephas, who's Peter, who's been leading Jews to Christ, who actually was the one, the founder of the Christian church, who spent the most time with Jesus of any deceased, and he's leading people to Christ. And then you got this group of people that say, well, I just follow Christ. So what's going on here? You see the factions that are going on.

I'm Paul. I got saved under his ministry. He's like the apostle. I mean, he had a vision of God. He led me to the Lord.

He's awesome. It was so much better at our church when Paul was here. Other people, I'm of Apollos, man. Paul wasn't even that good of a speaker. Apollos can bring the word, brother.

I'm of apollos. He's like the man. He's our pastor now. He's awesome. What are other people saying?

I'm a Peter, dude. I'm a jew, dude. He led me to Christ, and he was with Christ. He even got restored by Christ after the resurrection. I was led to Christ by him.

Then you got this other group of people that still exist in the church today. This group of people. I'm not of any man. I'm just of Christ. I don't go to church.

I don't do anything. It's just me and God. I'm of Christ. I don't need all those teachers and people see what's going on there. Do we do that in our day and age, too?

Now, this doesn't interfere with what Paul says later, which is be imitators of me as I am of Christ. I mean, follow people that God has put in your life and be thankful for servants he puts in your life to the extent that they're following Jesus. But never, oh, never, oh, never. Build your faith upon people that are following Jesus. Build your faith on Christ.

It's okay if you say, well, I come to harvest. And I really hear the word through Pastor Jeff, and I see that he's modeling Christ. But don't make me the reason that you're growing in Christ. Make Christ the reason you're growing in Christ. None of this.

Well, I go to church cause the youth pastor's awesome, but I don't like the church. I go to church cause the women's ministry is great, but I don't like the church. And none of this stuff. I follow this. I follow this, I follow this.

Just get on Facebook if you want to see people do that. Now, I follow Christ because Paul goes on and says, it's about Jesus, isn't it? What does he say? Has

Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Hey, listen, Jeff didn't die for you. Jeff didn't rise for you to the extent I poured God's word in your life. Great. I haven't done anything for your eternity.

Only Christ has done that. Follow Christ. Paul says, I didn't die for you. I didn't rise for you. I wasn't baptized for you.

Right? He even goes on to say, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. Crispus was the synagogue ruler that was converted. And Gaius. You can read about one chapter back in Romans 16:23, that was the host for Paul and Corinth while he wrote the book of Romans.

To the Romans he goes, that's the only ones I remember. So that no one would say, you were baptized in my name. I love verse 16 because the word of God is

inerrant. But the writers are not. The Holy Spirit penned this book.

Notice what Paul says now. I did baptize also the household of Stephanus. Beyond that, I don't know whether I baptized any other. Paul's like, I don't know if I baptized anybody. I can't remember that.

But God's word is true, that God's spirit pouring through Paul. Here's what he's trying to say. It doesn't matter who your leader was. It matters who you're following. And you need to be following Jesus.

Don't make your christian faith about who you follow or what you do. Make it about Jesus and his church. Now, where does this play in our society? I'm telling you, there are people that leave church every day to go and be a part of a ministry out there that's quote unquote doing something. To the extent that it's building the church, great.

But where's your service? In the church? Your primary service is to the church. I

don't like church. Church hurts me.

Hey, welcome to church. That's what grows your faith, right? It's easy to exit and be part of something where nobody challenges you, exhorts you. You can get your own little faction of people that think just the way you do about men, about women, about youth, about kids. I mean, the list goes on, and I can.

Evangelism. We all know what the church is about. You don't, because you're only doing one thing. The church is comprehensive. From the kid that's born to the one getting put in the grave and everybody in between, with every kind of hurt and every kind of pain God wants to redeem.

That's what the church does. And when you pull out, it makes a difference. I mean, think about this. If I put a jigsaw puzzle up on the screen today, that was a thousand pieces and there was only one piece missing, where would your eyes go? First?

Go? The missing piece, right? That's where God's eyes go when you pull out of church. It's not that big of a deal. It's just me.

I really don't have any gifts. You pull out of church, it's like it's a big deal to God, because now the puzzle doesn't fit. And God's orchestrated all the parts of the body just the way that he wants. Whatever it is that's keeping you, no matter how good of a thing you think it is, that keeps you from honoring Jesus and serving his church is an idol. I'm just telling you as your pastor, I know it's a hard word for some of you, but it's just true.

You need to hear it. God wants you to serve his church with everything that you have. Now, baptism is important. It's a sign that we've been identified with Christ. Isn't it interesting that we have no record of Jesus baptizing anybody?

Imagine the pride in that. I was baptized by the Lord Jesus Christ, the savior of the world, the son of God. How good, right? Isn't it cool that Jesus didn't baptize anybody? Other people baptize them.

It's not about who your leader is. It's about who you follow. Are you following Jesus? Are you serving his church? And let me tell you why this is so important.

This is the mission piece in verse 17 that unity involves a personal desire and a willingness to contribute to a powerful witness for the gospel of Jesus. Jesus Christ. The church is the witness for how the world will see Jesus. If the church were completely aligned, I'm telling you, we would make such an impact in our city, in our nation, in our world. We wouldn't even be able to contain it anymore.

Paul says in verse 17, for Christ did not send me to baptize. Now, Paul said Christ sent him. That's the first sentence in this book. But Christ did not send me to baptize, but to do what? To preach the gospel.

Not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. In other words, so the cross of Christ would not lose its power. I'm not coming to you with flowery language. I'm coming to you to do one thing, preach the gospel, herald

the truth. I'm a spokesperson for Jesus.

That's what he's saying. What's the gospel? The gospel means this, that God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him would never die, but have eternal life. Have you ever pondered that truth? I know you may have the verse memorized, but you ever pondered what that means?

That means if you've confessed Jesus Christ as your lord and savior, a billion upon a billion upon a billion and upon a billion years from now, eternity is just getting started, and God's love is still lavished all over you, and you didn't do anything to deserve it. And you didn't go looking for God, but God came looking for you. God loves you with an unconditional love. He loves you no matter what. He died for you.

He rose for you. He offered life to you. He fills you with his spirit. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. That means that the church is only made up of broken people.

That means people whose marriages are jacked up. That means people who are on drugs, people who are prostitutes, sexually immoral, people who are up and outers that have their whole lives seemingly together, have a bank account that's full but empty on the inside. Christ died for them. The church is made up of all sorts of needy people that have come to the cross of Jesus saying that apart from you, I have no life, but I've come to you, and I've been given life. And Paul says, that's what I'm preaching.

And if you own that you have Christ, then what I'm preaching to you is the life of Christ for you to live out everything that God has. So let me tell you this about Jesus. Here's the church. There's nothing more exhilarating than being part of a life giving church. Nothing.

I mean, a lot of people think in the sports world that good players make good teams. Good players don't make good teams. You ever seen a good player traded to a bad team and the team's still as bad as they were before they got the good player, right? Good players don't make good teams. Good teams make good players.

Every championship team has the most all pro players, the most all conference

players. Strong disciples don't necessarily make good churches. Strong churches make myriads of strong disciples. Pick a place that's a strong church that centers on the lordship of Jesus Christ with people that love God, by the way, you're in one and honor him and give him all the glory and serve in that church to the best, and it will be exhilarating for you. You know, I get all giddy sometimes on Sunday mornings because I know someday when I'm standing up here, we're going to be on 20 different campuses, and I know someday when I'm standing up here, we're going to be planting churches all around our state and world.

I know that. And it's not because of Jeff. It's because of something God's going to do through us. And God is calling us to be part of something great. And there's nothing more exhilarating than the church.

Can I tell you something Jesus said about the church? He said, I will build it. I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overpower it. You know what he was saying in a short statement? That if my people are united, the church of God is unstoppable.

The church of God is invincible. Speak highly of the church because it is the only vehicle, because they can get God's work done. And when you talk to other people like, yeah, I love Jesus, but I just don't like the church. Rebuke them. Tell them, you just don't understand what church is.

Cause church is God's vehicle. It's the hope of the world. Will you give your best to God church? I'm telling you, this is a hard message because it's a truthful message. It's not a rebuke.

It's an exhortation. Can we be men and women who love God with our whole hearts, who contribute our best to who God is, so that God, by his grace, may someday do something through us so great that we would just. Our jaw would drop if we could even see it? That's our God we serve. Amen.

Amen. That's our God. I'm going to take the offering right now as our men are coming forward. Let's pray for that. And then we're going to sing a couple songs.

Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory and praise for who you are. And Lord, as we pass out this offering today, Lord, we pray that we contribute out of the generosity of our own hearts. That, Lord, you would have your way with us, that you would honor your yourself among us. And Lord, as we sing praises to your name, that you be glorified in and through us. And it's in your mighty name we pray.

Jesus. Amen.