



Message Transcript

An Overview of Ministry

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Thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. Would you do me a favor? Would you welcome our Broomfield campus, who's worshipping along with us?

So great to have you. What an awesome day of celebrating God's work through individuals, through baptism. That was incredible last night and this morning and so excited to preach God's word to you as well. So let's just continue in an attitude of prayer. Let's prepare our hearts for God's living and active word to us this morning.

So, Lord, we just pray to you. Lord, our prayer is that you would be glorified through the preaching of your word, Lord, that as you speak directly to each one of us, that we would receive exactly what you have, that we would hear what you want us to hear, and that we would put your word into practice. Lord, I believe with my whole heart that your word never ever returns void. And, Lord, it's a privilege to preach. So, Lord, be helpful to me this morning.

Help me to be accurate with the truths of your word. And Lord, use your word to transform us to look more like your son, Jesus Christ. And now all God's people who are ready to hear his word and put into practice whatever he shows you very loudly.

Agreed by saying with me, amen. Amen.

I want to encourage you open your bible this morning to one corinthians, chapter 16. 1st corinthians, chapter 16. We're going to start in verse 15 this morning and by God's grace finish this book. And I want to tell you, it is always bittersweet to finish a book. This is when we started last fall.

It's been 437 verses by the time we're done today, 37 weeks. And God speaking through his word in this series that we've done stronger. I can tell you as your pastor, I feel stronger as a pastor, having preached through this book, and I hope that you and your walk have become stronger in the grace of Jesus Christ as a result of hearing his words, too. And what Paul is doing in this final section in one corinthians 16 is he's giving exhortations to the Corinthians as to how to continue to live. And this is his final farewell.

And I've entitled this an overview of ministry because he's going to highlight five things that we need to be aware that ministry is about things we need to continue to do and be involved in. And as you know, last week we talked about two verses, all right?

We talked about the battle cry that he really put out, which was be on the alert stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong.

Let all you do be done in love. So don't miss that part. Let all you do be done in love is really the overarching principle of all five of these points, that all that we're going to do, all these things that we're talking about today, are going to be done in love. And this is where Paul picks up in one corinthians, chapter 16, verse 15. Here's what he says.

He says, now, I urge you, brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. Now, we see it in our bibles as parenthetical, but you can pull out what Paul is trying to say. What ministry involves, and what ministry involves is simply this. It involves God's transforming work on one person at a time. Remember well, ministry involves God's transforming work on one person at a time.

Remember it well. God always works one person at a time. Notice what he says now. I urge you, brethren. And then he kind of parenthetically says, you know, the

household of Stephanus, that they were the first fruits of Achaia.

The first fruits simply mean this. It was firstfruits. We've talked about firstfruits before. It was those that ripened first, those that were harvested first, and was also a promise that all the other crops were on the way. And so Paul's using this analogy when he talks about Stephanas as the first gentile convert in Achaia.

Achaia was southern Greece. And he remembers him how? By name. He remembers him by name. Paul understood that even as ministry grows and even as things get big, and, you know, now we're meeting in Denver, Colorado, of all places, which Paul wouldn't have even known about, the church continues to expand.

Who does he remember it? He remembers God's transforming work on one person at a time. Remember it well. And here's why. Because there's gonna come seasons in your life where you don't see God at work as much, and you don't see him as often as you'd like to see him.

Remember what he's done. God is always at work, and he always works, transforming one person at a time. One of the reasons people will ask, hey, why do you give testimonies when you do baptism? Why not just throw a couple up on video or just do this? Because I think there's something powerful about sharing our individual stories, not only for us to hear God's transforming work and to encourage us, but also for the individuals that have the courage to stand up here and share.

This is what Jesus Christ has done in my life. And that's what Paul's talking about. And this isn't the first time in the book, if you remember that Paul's mentioned Stephan as he talks about him back in the very first chapter in verse 16. You remember he was talking about who he had baptized, and he talked about baptizing Crispus and Gaius. And he said, beyond that he didn't know.

But he says in verse 16 now, I did also baptize the household of Stephanus. Beyond that, I don't know whether I baptized any, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. He not only saw this man come to Christ, but then he got to baptize him and his whole family. He was the firstfruits. And when somebody comes to Christ as the firstfruits in an area, it's a sign that God's going to bring more corinthians to Christ.

I still remember what it was like when we left Peoria, Illinois in 2010 to move to Denver, Colorado. And I still have this memory firmly planted in my mind as I was driving our car. My wife was behind driving our van at that time with our two kids at that time in the back. And I was seeing her in my rearview mirror, and we were leaving our hometown. Everything was packed.

The movers had already come. We had already made a decision. We're going no matter what. And I remember calling her on the phone and talking to her. And I could see her in my rearview mirror as I was talking to her.

And I only knew one family out here. It was my friend Brock deal and his family from my high school. We went to high school together. And I had come to Christ when I was 18 and we were now at 40 years old. And he still hadn't come to Christ.

It was pretty obvious he hadn't come to Christ. And I knew when we were driving, I remember calling my wife on the phone and I told her this. I said, if we're

going out here and making this journey only so that Brock comes to Christ, it will have been totally worth it. And I remember he came to our first launch team meeting and it was fairly apparent he hadn't been saved yet. And kept coming, kept coming.

But I'll never forget after we had our first service on November 7 of 2010, sending out these group texts. And he sent back to me a text. He said, that was me. He goes, I gave my life to Christ today. And he was telling his wife what had happened.

I got to baptize him, and I've got to baptize his kids since then, and they've come to Christ, and I've seen God's transforming work in their life, and I can tell you they were just the first fruits, because I get teared up every time I see people's stories here on the stage, and every time God does something. But I always thought, man, if God can say Brock, I mean, he can save any, anybody. And the only reason I say that is because I know if God could save me, he could even save Brock. I mean, that's the power of the gospel at work, and that's what Paul was talking about. So as he's giving final exhortations to all the people in Corinth that he loves, he's like, hey, I don't forget.

He goes, I'm not even forgetting, Stephanie. He was the first one of you guys that got converted. Now, look at all of you that know Christ. And I'm still welled up for emotion, because God is still doing a work. And remember, he does it one person at a time.

And remember, well. Remember well. Don't take for granted what took place on this platform here in Englewood this morning, what took place in Broomfield this morning with the one person that got baptized there. I mean, we've baptized over 300 people since I've been here as a church. Don't take that for granted.

There are some places that call themselves a church, and they haven't seen someone come to Christ in years. God's doing something special here. Remember, well, what God is doing. We're part of something special. That's what Paul's saying.

And ministry always involves God's transforming work one person at a time. It means when you're meeting with someone and you're not getting through, it means when you have a counseling session, it just doesn't seem to be working. It means when you're serving a bunch of kids and kids ministry, and they don't seem to be all that

thankful just yet. I mean, every person that you're pouring the gospel into, God is using you for his transforming work. And there's some of you that beat yourself up all the time because the enemy whispers in your ear and he says these words.

You've never led anybody to Christ. What have you ever done? You've never done any. I'm just telling you, if you've been faithful with God and the things of God and loving people there are someday in the kingdom of heaven, you're going to see people who are there that will give testimony. It was because of you when they were in this bad time, and it was you when they were in Sunday school.

And I guarantee you there's going to be some of my Sunday school teachers. They're going to be shocked that I made it. And, you know, I mean, I know the kid I was when I was four years old, and so, you know, people will be rewarded. So don't beat yourself up. Every time you invest in a life, you're doing it for the kingdom of God, and it's valuable.

That's what ministry involves. That's what he says. He continues talking about Stephanas, and he says this, that at the end of verse 15, and they have devoted

themselves for the ministry of the saints, that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work of labors. Let me tell you something else. Ministry involves.

Ministry involves submission to those who are serving honor. Well, ministry involves submission to those who are serving honor. Well, notice what it says. It says they devoted themselves to the saints. That means they were driven by, they were dedicated to, basically, they were addicted to serving the saints.

They had to serve God's people. One of the evidence is that you've been born again is at some point in time, very shortly after you get saved, there'll be some way that you want to help christian people. There'll be something that you want to do to help people grow in their faith in Christ. It's just part of what it means to be a Christian. I mean, if you've never had a love for God's people, it's because you don't belong to God, right?

Because God loves all of his people. And when you're born again, there becomes this thing that wells up inside that just says, I just want to help. I just want to. I want to

serve. I want to do something right.

And there's different ways that God's gifted us for that. And he says that Stephanus and his family devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints and that the corinthian people were to be in subjection to them. It means to be in submission to them. It means there's no greater work you can do with your life than to serve God's people. There's no higher calling than serving God's people.

And I'm just here to tell you, vocationally, you can do any number of things, and God will honor what you do as long as while you're doing it, you're giving him glory as you do that. But your most important work is how you honor the saints. You may get paid more in your business to do something else, and that's noble and good, but your service here to God's people at the church is the most important work you're going to do. It's the work that's going to last the longest. That's what Paul was saying.

And when you see people serving like that, submit to people like that, put yourself in subjugation to people like that. It's the very same understanding that we read about in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 17. You can write that verse down.

Hebrews 13:17. It says, obey your leaders and submit to them.

Obey your leaders and submit to them. When people are serving you, submit to them. Obey them. Why? He tells us, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Right? Well, why submit to my pastor? Because he's going to be held accountable for your soul. Pretty big responsibility, right? So submit to him, serve him.

Right. He says this, let them do this with joy and not grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. In other words, the people that you're submitting to, the people who are serving you, let them serve you with great joy, not with grief, not like, oh, I got to serve them. No, let them serve you with joy. Now, if you flip back to first Corinthians chapter 16 and verse 16, it says that you also be in subjection to such men.

And notice this. And to everyone who helps in the work and labor, everyone means all people that are serving were to submit to. Right? See, we get submission

wrong in our culture, right? Because we think that submission means put down.

Right? We think when we read Ephesians five, wives, submit to your husbands means husbands, put your wives down. It doesn't mean that husbands are to love our wives. Like Christ, husbands are to elevate their wives. Wives are choosing to place themselves under the authority of their husband.

But it doesn't mean that husbands never submit to their wives, at least in a good marriage. It doesn't mean that. I mean, it means that there's times my wife knows better, many times my wife knows better than what I need to do, and I need to submit to that if we're going to have a healthy marriage. Right? But let's put it in church talk for a little bit.

I mean, let's just make it real. I was thinking about this this week. We just hired a middle school pastor. He actually got married on Friday night. So we're excited that he's coming.

And he's probably not listening to me since he's on his honeymoon. At least I hope he's not. And so we can talk about him. And he's a young guy, very excited about getting him here. I think he's going to do an incredible job.

If you were to look at our organizational chart, when it comes out, he probably has two bosses. Until he gets to me, at least two, maybe three. I'm not sure yet how it's going to flush itself out. So in some ways, I'm his authority, right? I've had 25 years more ministry experience in preaching and leadership and understanding in the church.

I mean, in some ways I could come down and just dictate, this is what you're gonna do, this is how you're gonna do it, this is what's gonna. Right? But I gotta tell you a little something about me. I have a daughter that's gonna be in his ministry this year. You know what the Bible tells me to do?

Submit to his leadership. You know what that means? That means my question for him is, what can I do as a parent to help your ministry to flourish? It means, what do you need from me so that you can be better at what you do to serve the students

that you need? Cause I actually care a lot because I'm a parent of one of those students and I want my child and her friends to know that they have a great place to worship the Lord.

How can you use me to help you get that done? Do you see the difference? I mean, that's what it means to submit. And see, what it means to submit is when you're asking other people the question, how is it I can help you thrive in your relationship with Jesus Christ? If husbands were to wake up every day and ask their wives, hey, honey, how can I help you thrive today in your relationship with Jesus?

And wives were to wake up and say, hey, honey, husband, how can I help you thrive in your relationship today with Jesus? And then once you got the answer, you went to work on those things, you'd have a great marriage if parents were asking their kids. Now, parents, you are the authority over your kids. It's clear from God's word. But if you're asking your kids, hey, how can I help you become better?

Like, what do you need from me to become the you that God wants you to be? Your kids can flourish. Your kids can thrive. I mean, isn't that what it means to submit?

That's what submission looks like.

And Paul's saying, when you see people serving like this, submit to them, it means honor them. Well, it means preference them. That's what it means to submit. It's when you're taking what you're able to do and you're coming alongside and helping someone else be better. That's what ministry is all about.

He goes on to say this in verses 17 and 18, not only are we to remember well and honor well, but notice this, he says, I rejoice over the coming of Stephanus and fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part, for they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, he says, acknowledge such men. So Paul had these three men come to him, fortunatus, Stephanus and Achaicus, and they came and they clearly brought Paul something. Perhaps it was money, perhaps it was provisions, perhaps it was something that he needed, and it totally refreshed Paul. Now, think about this.

In the first century, I mean, to travel a distance means you are leaving your home. It wasn't like you just left your house, locked your doors, got in your car, drove

30 miles, went to a church service, drove 30 miles back home. That's really not that big of a deal. You want to go 30 miles in the first century, you're leaving your house open to possible robbery and attack. You're leaving all those who call you their friends.

You're probably traveling down roads by foot in ways that there's dangerous places you can go. There's no places to stop along the way for food. If you don't bring enough provision, you don't have enough. I mean, to go plan to take something to somebody costs you something. And these three men were willing to make a sacrifice to make sure that Paul had what he needed.

And when Paul met these three men and saw these three men, he's writing back to Corinth, thanking the church for sending them, thanking the three men publicly. And guess what he's doing? He's telling them, it meant so much to me. It refreshed me. Ever had people in your life that have done things for you, gone above and beyond, and it was just, oh, I needed that.

I needed that. That's what ministry involves. Let me give you a third point here. Ministry involves people who have sacrificed to serve you. So thank well.

Thank well, ministry involves people who have sacrificed to serve you. So thank well. I remember one of the guys on our launch team when we first launched a church, and he had said, I've never been to a church plant before, I never thought about stuff like this. Like, I kind of thought when you walked into a building, that chairs were just there and that signs were just up and that children's was just set up and that people were just there to help you. He goes, I didn't realize we were gonna have to come up with all that stuff, right?

I mean, somewhere along the line, if there's somebody who is serving you, it means they've made a sacrifice along the way to make sure that you got what you needed. I mean, if you just think about the church today, for those of you that place, your kids, in our children's ministry, I can tell you how many hours have gone into that over the last eight years as we've built that place up to not be a babysitting service, but a place where kids can truly learn who Jesus is and what it looks like to grow in Christ. Right? If you've been in a small group, if you've been in any form of ministry, if you were served coffee today, if you were greeted by anybody, if you were welcomed, if you heard announcements, there was tons of time that went in to make sure that you get what you need so you can grow with Christ. In other words, so if there's anybody

that done any of that for you, just say thank you.

Thank you. See, it's mature people that know how to say thank you because mature people are aware that there's other people that are serving you. It's immature people that aren't aware. I mean, it wasn't until I was a freshman at the University of Illinois that I realized that laundry that was dirty didn't automatically get clean and folded and put in my drawer. And I knew that.

But I'd never taken time to think about that until I was the one that had to do it. Remember my mom giving me this big bag to put all my laundry in? And I put all my laundry in the bag, but it didn't get clean. And then I had to learn where the laundry machines were. And then I got down there and realized, oh, I don't have any soap.

And then I got back down there like, oh, you got to put coins in there. All this. I didn't know anything. And I remember picking up the phone my freshman year and calling my mom and saying, mom, I've never, ever said thank you, but thank you so much for cleaning my clothes. I didn't even realize.

I kind of assumed that's just an easy job. I don't like it, right? Thank people. Some of the things that we think are easy jobs that people should just do for us is because there's somebody behind the scenes that's serving us. And mature saints will notice that and just say, thank you.

Thank you.

Notice what he says about this, for they have refreshed my spirit. Verse 18. Therefore, acknowledge such men. It means recognize them. It means live with an attitude of gratitude.

Now, some of you know this last week I went to the funeral of my sister's father in law. We were in Chicago for a day and went to the funeral. And at every funeral they do this thing called a eulogy. You know, eulogy, it comes from two greeks. Greek words eu, meaning good and logos, or word.

I mean, it's good words. That's what a eulogy is. It's good words. And as I was listening to my brother in law talk and different people that worked with this guy and all this stuff, and knowing that he was a Christian and that he was in the presence of Jesus and listening to all these good words, have you ever been at a funeral and wondered, man, it'd be so cool if that person could just rise from the dead and listen to this half an hour, because they'd be really impressed at what they're hearing. I mean, in other words, why is it we wait until people die to give the good words when they can't even hear them right?

I mean, here's what Paul's doing. Paul's giving good words to these three men, and he's saying, honor these men. As I was sitting in the funeral, I was getting moved because I always do when I know somebody is in the presence of Jesus. But other people that miss that person are grieving. And I was sitting there thinking about, who are the people in my life I need to specifically thank?

Perhaps people that I've talked to and told them how special they are. But who would be the ones that I'd be at their funeral standing there saying, you don't even know what went on behind the scenes. Let me just tell you some things about this man. And I began to weep in the funeral, thinking about a few men in my life that have been

that for me. And I know I have some letter writing to do this week because I'm happy if they pass away to stand up at their funeral and share it publicly, too.

But I'd want to be able to say, they already know all this. I'm just repeating what I told them. And that's what Paul's saying. He says, when you see people in your life that do those things, then thank them in some way. I mean, write them a note, tell them thank you to their face.

Do something to acknowledge the people in your life who have sacrificed to serve you well. All right. That's what it means. He continues, verse 19. He says, the churches of Asia greet you.

Aquila and Prisca greet you. It may say in your bible, Aquila and Priscilla, same person. Prisca and Priscilla, same. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. The greeting is in my own hand, Paul. Now, these are weird verses for some of us. I mean, we read this, like, what does that mean? Oh, that's just biblical days.

I don't know what that means. Here's what you see. Paul's saying that ministry involves the deepest relationships you can possibly have with another. So love well. Ministry involves the deepest relationships you can have with another, so love well.

He says, the churches of Asia greet you. I don't know how many churches that was. I don't know how many people that entailed, but they didn't have the technology we have today to send emails or all those things. I mean, this is the communication that all the people in this church are greeting you and they're loving you. He says, aquila and Prisca heartily greet you in the Lord with the church that's meeting in their house.

I mean, greeting and relationships are paramount to the church. It's paramount we live in a day and age where we think church is a place where we can grow in our moral values, so that we can bring our plans into church and maybe figure out how God's going to bless our plans, so that we can live a better life here and now, so that

we'll be viewed as a good person in the workplace. That's not what church is. Church is for a group of people who have crossed over from death to life because of the shed blood of Jesus, and that we're all part of Christ's body for his glory. And so we're called to serve one another together for the sake of the gospel, so that God will be glorified and others can come to know who he is.

And that doesn't happen without relationships. Right? So relationships are important. It means this, if you haven't served here or got alongside of each other, you're the one who's missing out. Now, I realize I'm not introverted.

I realize that. And for some of you that are introverted, I know that when we do the meet one another and we greet one another before we take our seats, some of you that are introverted, oh, I hate that part of the service, right? But what are we doing? We're saying we're brothers and sisters in Christ. Hey, we're going to spend eternity together, so let's get to know one another.

And hey, I'm here for you and I know you're here for me, even though we don't even know each other very well. And isn't it great to worship the Lord today? I was at

a church one time when I was in Dallas for one of my favorite preachers, Doctor Tony Evans. I went to his church and I was one of the few white guys that showed up that day. Everybody's african American.

Then there's me. And they didn't do anything seeker sensitive. As a matter of fact, when it came time to meet the visitors, they said, hey, would all the visitors please stand up? Well, there's no way I could hide. I mean, everybody was wearing a suit.

Like not just any kind of suit, but like a nice suit and a colored suit and all this kind of stuff. I mean, there's green and red and yellow and then there's me. So we stood up and I'm just standing there and they're saying, we're so glad you're here, and all this stuff. And they said, now greet one another. They spent like five minutes in their service and I mean, I felt attacked.

All these people coming over, just loving me, like, we're so glad you're here. Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome. And then it ended. And I'm like, we don't need to end yet. That was pretty cool.

Let's keep that going, right? That's what it means. It means greet one another. Have you ever noticed Romans chapter 16 in your bible? If you haven't, you should flip there.

Romans, chapter 16, the book right before one corinthians in the last chapter. I mean, we don't know how many people were greeted. You can count about 30 some. But when this chapter is written, you also see the whole church greets you, or the brothers all greet you. So in addition to the names that are listed, I don't know how many more people are greeting.

But you read this chapter, what's this all about? There's greeting, this greeting urbanis greeting apelles, greeting Herodia. I mean, why do they greet? Why do they greet? Why do they greet?

Because greeting and relationship was paramount in the christian church. Even when you get down to verse 22, I mean, it's almost like Paul took a breath and Tertius

was the guy who was writing. He's like, I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. I mean, it's like he got his greeting in right. Everybody wanted to greet one another.

Everybody wanted to love one another. They shared a fellowship with God and a love for one another, and all they could handle was just loving one another. So good to see you. The deepest relationships you will ever have are those friendships that you form in Christ. They're deeper than family relationships.

Like, for Kim and I, we can tell you with our whole heart, this is our family. We love our family, but we're closer to some of you than we are to our own family because of the foundation that we share with each other in Christ. And that's paramount to our lives, and we need that with one another. And that's what he's talking about here. He's saying, the churches greet you, and Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily with all the churches in their house, and all the brethren greet you.

And then you see this verse kind of nestled in at the back part of verse 20. Greet one another with a holy kiss. You're waiting for me to exegete that now and not skip it,

right? Like, I know there's some single guys here. They're like, let's bring it, brother.

I've been wanting to invite this girl to church, and if we're going that direction, I'm going to invite her next week, right? You got to understand, in the first century, greeting one another with a holy kiss was as common as shaking hands or hugging one another. It wasn't in any sort of romantic way in some places in the world today, in Asia or, they still greet this way. I've heard missionary friends of mine say, you know, I was at this church, all these big bearded men, and they went to the greeting part, and I stuck out my hand. I got one planted right on my lips, and it was really uncomfortable, right?

But that's how they do it, right? I remember one time, I mean, I don't know how you guys text your wife. I text my wife things sometimes during hard days. And I was texting her one day, and I remember texting her like, man, I cannot wait to get home tonight and just kiss your face. Have you ever sent a text that went to the wrong person?

I had been texting Kent Shaw when he was in Chicago. I sent it to Kent and he said, wow, I'm not that up for it, but it is biblical. He goes, maybe you can start a new

tradition out there.

Greeting one another is a handshake. It's a side hug. It's a high five. It's looking each other in the eye. It's like, hey, I'm glad you're here.

Means a lot to me. I mean, that's what greeting is. It's when we recognize and honor one another and we love each other well, and we value each other. And if people go to our church, we value them because they go to our church and they love the Lord and we want to see them grow in Christ. That's what he's talking about.

That's what greeting is. That's what the church is. And we're called to love. Well, I mean, even Paul says in verse 21, this greeting is in my own hand. Paul, in other words, I'm taking the time to write this letter to you right now.

There's still a thing in our culture that exists called the US Postal Service. You can actually sit down and write a letter, put a stamp on it, and they will take it to

somebody else's house. You can communicate that way. And I find if some letters written in somebody's own hand and get sent to me, sometimes I'll even save those type letters. Anybody can write type letters, right?

You know, email. Anybody can send an email. Anybody can send a text. I get a personal letter from somebody. That's so rare that many times I'm saving that thing because I want to remember that they took the time to write to me.

Wow, that's pretty special. Here's what it means. Here's what it means. It means greeting is always inefficient. Love is always inefficient.

You can't love quickly for you guys that are married, you'll know this, right? I mean, there's things you can do for your wife. Well, she'll say, oh, that was nice. But if she knows that you had to go an extra mile or spend more money or take extra time or think about her longer or do something in order to provide something for her, it wells her heart up. It's not so much what you gave or what you did.

It's like you were thinking about me for a long time. That means something to me, right? And it means something to all of us. That's what greeting is. It's inefficient.

And we, in our culture, we like to be efficient. Let's get in, let's get out, let's get done. Christianity doesn't work that way. Christianity is inefficient. Loving somebody who's hurting takes time because why?

Because we're doing relationships one at a time, right? I mean, all love is inefficient. It's all going to be time consuming. It's always going to be sacrificial. And ministry involves the deepest relationship.

So when we're talking about greeting, we're talking about companionship and hospitality and fellowship and affection, because those are our most important relationships. It means we move from being a consumer in the church to a contributor to God's people in the church. I remember when I was at the University of Illinois, I got challenged one time by being asked when I lived in a fraternity, and I was saying that I wanted to grow with Christ, but I wasn't really grown that much with Christ. And the guy just asked me a simple question. He said, what percentage of your friendships are

christian?

I said, I don't know, like 5%. He's like, that's your problem. Like, you don't understand, man. I'm an evangelist. And he said, well, how many people are you leading to the Lord?

I'm like, well, that's not important. But he had me, and he's like, you need to get around christians. You need to be with other people that care for your soul as much as Jesus does so that you can grow. And by God's grace, God opened doors for me to move out of my fraternity and get with some other christians. And that's when I started growing and I found myself in a small group.

And when I got in a small group, I realized I could be authentic and real and vulnerable. And for the first time in my life, instead of a group of people judging me for what I did wrong, they were coming around me saying, do you want to do this right? How can we help you do it right? And I'm telling you, I grew so much in two years that I was in that study that even after I graduated from the University of Illinois and lived an hour and 45 minutes away, I never missed small group. On Monday nights, I drove

nearly 2 hours every Monday night there and 2 hours back.

Sometimes I'd spend the night if it went too long. Cause I knew how desperately I needed relationship. Now. Let me tell you something. It hasn't changed.

I've been walking with the lord for nearly 30 years. I'm just as desperate for christian fellowship and friends now as I have ever been. You don't outgrow it. You don't say, well, I know the bible well enough now. I don't need it.

You don't say, I know how to pray well enough now. I don't need it. I need it as desperately now as I've ever needed. When I tell you, pray for our elders, pray for our elders, they're investing in me. I'm investing in them.

They're a big part of my life, the friendships that I have in the church, big part of my life. I cannot be who God wants me to be without other people walking alongside of me, and neither can you. And they're the deepest, most important relationships you will ever have. Do you have christian friends you're walking with? Hey, if not, you're going

to be hearing about this a lot in the coming month and months, but you need to get in a group.

You need to get with other people that love Jesus, that want to see you grow, and you need to get with other people you want to see grow. And as you contribute and are contributed to, there's this symbiotic mutual thing that happens where you're different than you were. I mean, I could tell you unreservedly, and those of you who have been with me for eight years, you know this is true. I'm a better christian man now than I was eight years ago. Say it again, Ricky always says that.

Always says that. But I am because I've needed to be challenged and sharpened by other people along the way. And our church is better than when I got started. When we got started, our church, and nobody brought a Bible to church. All people did was complain that we sang too long, right?

Nobody would pray out loud. Didn't have. I mean, now that's just normative for us because God's building us and he's using us to strengthen one another as we continue to grow in Christ. And I don't want that to stop until we meet Jesus. We need each

other.

I need you and you need me. That's why we're growing in Christ. And the deepest relationships you can have are with one another. So love people well, just love. Well, it's something we can always grow in.

And then he finishes this greeting. It's very interesting as we finish this book, the way he says this. I mean, most of all, you say like, hey, love you guys. See you later. Here's what he says in verse 22.

If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha, the grace of the Lord be with you, my love. Be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. Now that seems so strange.

I mean, one side is like, I totally love you guys. But if you don't love Jesus, go to hell. I mean, like, what in the world is that all about? Here's what he's talking about. He

says that ministry involves the bedrock of the gospel, so exhort.

Well, it involves the bedrock of the gospel, so exhort. Well, notice what he says. If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. That is to be anathema. And Maranathema means our Lord come or our Lord is coming.

If anyone does not believe in Jesus, let him be accursed. Our Lord is coming. Let me just tell you something about the gospel, because you gotta get this. This is really, really challenging to say. I mean, you heard testimony today from people who are baptized in Christ on both of our campuses.

It means this. The gospel is offered to all people. There's not one person here that God does not love. He created you. He loves you.

He just loves you. And the reason that he has not come yet is because he's bearing with great patience the sins of the people who have not responded to him yet. But there will be a day that he comes. Okay? Now, I don't know about you, but I grew

up watching different things and dramas and things like heaven's gates, hell's flames, and there would be like this separation of the sheep and the goats, and the sheep would go be with Jesus and the goats would go to hell.

And as the goats were going to hell, here's what would happen. It would be some kid crying like, we had science class together and you never ever told me, right? Hey, how come we work together and you never ever told me about Jesus? And it's a great motivator because if you're a christian watching that, you're like, I better tell my friends because, my goodness, they don't know about Christ yet. That is so false.

Let me just tell you about something. Heaven is Jesus. Heaven is for people that want to be with Jesus. Heaven is for people that want to worship Jesus. Heaven is for people that believe Jesus is the only true God and there is no other, and that he's worthy of all of our worship and praise.

And all of those who are going to be with Jesus believe that hell is for people who say there's no way, there's only one God, there's no way that he's the way, the truth and the life. What about all the other religions out there? Damn him for believing

that. I can't stand a God that would say stuff like that. That's what hell is for.

So let me give you a picture of what's going to happen to lost people, people that don't trust Jesus. In Matthew's gospel, when you read that there's weeping and gnashing of teeth for people that don't serve the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, you're not going to see people going off to hell, like, I'm so sad. I really wish I was with y'all. They don't love Jesus.

They're the same group of people that during their earthly lives said, I want nothing to do with them, will be the same people in hell that say, I want nothing to do with them. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are a group of people that are basically giving two middle fingers to Jesus, saying, curse you for sending me to hell. Who do you think you are? The same way they did when they were in their life, right? And here's what's really hard for me to grasp.

I can grasp it theologically. I just can't grasp it emotionally because I have friends and family that don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, that don't honor him. And I'm telling you, it breaks my heart because I know what's coming, because I used to always have

this vision of, you know, friends and family that I could name by name that are going to go off to hell crying, and I'm going to be like, oh, I miss them so much. That's not what heaven's like theologically. What's going to happen is this, when people are known for who they actually are, and saints are known for people that worship the king of kings and the Lord of lords are giving God all the glory, and the wicked are shown for how genuinely wicked are that?

All your friends that are going off to hell, that have not responded to the gospel are cursing Jesus. All the saints will cheer God's glory that he is so wonderful to cast them out of his presence, and we'll be cheering for that. Now, I can get there theologically. I cannot get their emotional. I can't picture in my heart that which means this for time and space.

Why hasn't God come yet? Cause he loves you. He loves you. See, I think when there's weeping and gnashing of teeth, I think it's going to be God that weeps, that the people that he created for his own glory and for himself have chosen to rebel and gnash their teeth in him. Right?

I think God wants every single person that can hear my voice and every single person I would ever stand before and every single person on the planet to repent of his or her sin and come into a relationship with Jesus and love him as the only true God. I think God desires that for the world and anyone who would come to him. God will never turn away, no matter what you're hooked on, no matter what your God is, whether God is drugs or alcohol or sex or passivity or selfishness or greed, God loves you no matter what. And he's inviting you to come into a relationship with him. But if you choose not to, hell is a real place, because God is a God of justice who is absolutely just in casting people into hell.

See, we start with the wrong, wrong idea about God. Our idea about God is God loves everybody. How could a loving God send somebody to hell? The view of the Bible is that none of us are good. No, not one.

How could God ever let even one of us into his presence? Here's the answer. Here's the answer. Because God sent his son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, who died for you and rose from the dead, and it's the only way. Amen.

And it's the bedrock, it's the foundation. And Paul's not mincing words. He says, if anyone doesn't love the Lord, he's to be accursed. Maranatha. Does that mean Paul doesn't care about people?

No. He's been preaching the gospel through the whole book. He said, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those of us who are being saved, it's become the power of God. And you can experience the power of God by repenting of your sins right here at this moment and trusting Jesus Christ. And I can tell you when that happens.

There's a party that goes on in heaven celebrating Jesus work in and through your life. That's the gospel. He says, the grace of the Lord be with you. Grace is God's unmerited favor on your life. It's his unmerited favor over the penalty for all your sins that Jesus paid for it.

It's the unmerited favor over the power over any current sins that you have that God is able to redeem all of those. And then he says, my love be with you all in Christ Jesus. You hear Paul's heart for his church. You hear Paul's heart for I love you. My

love be with you all.

Amen. Now, if you haven't been to church very long, I mean, you hear people say amen. I say amen all the time. Like, what does amen mean? I mean, Martin Luther in a small catechism says, we say amen means yes, it shall be so.

We say amen because we are certain that such petitions are pleasing to our father in heaven and are heard by him. It means when we say amen at the end of the prayer, it's not like goodbye. Amen. It means yes, I'm believing you for this. I'm trusting you for this.

You are worthy of this. Amen. Amen. Yes, yes, like that's what amen means. And Paul says, my love be with all of you cause I love you all.

Amen. Amen. 437 verses, God's word in one book. It's true. It's a ministry exhortation to all of us for what ministry involves.

Ministry definitely involves these five things. God's transforming work on one person at the time, so remember it well. Submission to those who you are serving, so honor them well. People who have sacrificed to serve you, so thank them well. The deepest relationships you can possibly have with one another is to love people well and that it involves the bedrock of the gospel.

So exhort people well. God wants all of you to come to him. God would want that none would perish. As I told you, I was at a funeral earlier this week, and as I was listening to the different speakers and pastors talk, and they brought the gospel and shared what it was, realizing that most of the people there did not know who Jesus Christ was. Here's what I realized once again.

Every time I realized when I go to a funeral, the people, the only thing that matters at the end of your life are the people that you loved well. Did you love people well? That's all people will remember. And it's only going to be a handful of those because it's only going to be the people that you were closest to. What you accomplish, what you do, what you achieve, nobody cares.

They'll care with how you treated one another. The relationships you have are what God's entrusted you to. They're the most important that you have. Love people well. Amen.

Amen. Would you stand with me? So, Lord, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for who you are. Lord, we just praise you. It's a celebration, Lord, in this season, as we've taken a look in this book in first corinthians, Lord, that, that you've grown us and that you've made us stronger, Lord, we just love you, Lord.

We want to continue to grow in you, want to continue to honor you, continue to thank you, Lord. As we sing, we just give you all the praise, glory and honor. In Jesus name, amen.

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