



# **Message Transcript**

## **How God Changes Culture**

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Amen. Amen. Well, I'm excited. So I want to tell you, open your bibles up to the book of. Drum roll, please.

First Corinthians. First Corinthians. We're going to be taking a look at the book of first Corinthians throughout this year, and I want to tell you how I landed on one corinthians, then give you a little intro or background to the book so you can understand, hey, why does this have anything at all to do with me? So when I'm preparing for a sermon series, I spend a lot of time in prayer, and I spend a lot of time before the Lord, and I read a lot of scripture to really see where my heart is drawn. And I pray a lot about you, and I pray a lot about where I'm at.

And you know what? We're a six year old church. God has saved many people in our body since we've started. God has brought people in that have known the Lord for a while but never really been discipled. We have a young church, and God is doing some significant things among us.

And as I kept going and looking at different books, and there were books I wanted to do, and every time I'd read them, I'm like, I'm not feeling it. Every time I

went to the book of one corinthians, I'd read through the whole thing. I'm like, everything in here is exactly where we are. It's exactly what we're doing as a church. It's exactly where we need to spend some time.

And one corinthians gets a bad rap. Do you know why First Corinthians gets a bad rap? The whole corinthian church gets a bad rap. Because when people talk about Corinth, they understand that it was one of the most licentious cities of the day. I mean, Corinth was like the Las Vegas of the first century.

It was like Hollywood in the first century. I always tell people there were signs in Corinth, they would have said, what happens in Corinth stays in Corinth. I mean, that's the Corinthians. And in that city, God began to save people, call them into a fellowship called the church together, and begin doing some amazing things. Now, however, what happened in the church at Corinth is much like what can happen in our culture, is that the spirit of the world started working their way into the spirit of the church.

And so Paul begins to write back to them to correct some of these things. Now, just to give you a little background about one corinthians. For those of you that were

interested, Paul founded this church on his second missionary journey. If you write down the chapter acts 18, you can go back and read how all of it transpired. How he met Priscilla and Aquila, who were also tent makers, so they shared the same trade.

How he went to the Jews first, like he always did in cities, to present the gospels to them. And then when they didn't listen, he went next door and started preaching to the Gentiles. And you can see everything that happened. Synagogue leaders were coming to Christ. All sorts of variety of people were coming to Christ.

Now, what happened was we read about in one corinthians five that Paul had written them a letter that had been lost. We don't have that letter, which really would have been one corinthians. Our book of first corinthians is really his second letter that he wrote back in two corinthians, chapter two and verse three, we read about a third letter that got lost that we don't have. And then our book of second Corinthians is really his fourth letter written. So in your Bible, when you read one corinthians and second Corinthians, it's actually second Corinthians and fourth Corinthians.

Now, understand this about the culture. The culture was very hedonistic, very self

centered, very meistic, very pleasure seeking. Very wealthy people could do what they wanted to. It was an industry town. Does it remind you of any other place that you're familiar with?

I mean, when I think about our city that we live in of Denver, what I don't hear people say is, I moved to Denver to glorify the Lord. More I hear about the M and M's of Denver. Sometimes the M and M and M's mountains, marijuana, and sometimes mile high in the Broncos. I mean, that's all I hear about. Most people move to Denver to escape, to get away, because it's affluent and it's meistic and it's self centered, and it's very into whatever you want in terms of pleasure seeking.

And that's the culture in which we live. I mean, that's what we swim in every day. Paul's writing to the same kind of culture, so I think it fits us. And also, as I went through this book, I wanted to talk to you. The reason I named this series for the entire year stronger is that I believe what God is calling us to do as a church is to grow from wherever we are taking another step of faith and another step of faith to get stronger in specific areas.

Here's just some of the areas now, as you listen to this, think to yourself, are these areas that I could perhaps mature a little bit in? Because most christians I know, when they talk about corinthians, they're like, oh, the corinthian church. I mean, they had sexual immorality there, and they were divisive, and they had all these problems going on. And I say, have you ever visited our church? I mean, church is made up of people.

People that are unredeemed are sinners, people who are redeemed, sinners who still haven't been filled by the Holy Spirit and walk it out, still can continue to sin in the same habitual patterns. Paul writes this book to the corinthians to say, I love you, and there's a higher calling for you, and you can live stronger in ways that you're struggling with. Here's some of the ways. Think about your own self. Are these areas that you could grow in?

Could you grow in and be stronger in the unity that you have with Christ and with one another in the body? Could you grow in your understanding of wisdom and what God would have for you? Can you grow stronger in your understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to actually walk it out in every area of your life? How about this? Could you grow in any area in your life of morality?

Could you get stronger if you're married? Could you? Is there anybody here who's married who could get stronger in their marriage and could grow some in Christ? Are there any of you here who are single, who could grow stronger as a single person? Is there anybody here that could grow stronger in their purity before the Lord?

How about this? Is there anybody here knowing that all your sins are forgiven that could grow in your christian liberties? Should I drink or not drink? Should I celebrate Halloween or not? What about smoking or not?

What does the Bible have to say about the liberties that I have and Jesus Christ? Could you grow stronger in any way in your understanding of what public worship is and how it should be used for the Lord? Could you grow in any way, in any way at all in understanding what your spiritual gift is and how to walk it out and how your gift fits in with others and what other people's spiritual gifts are? Is there anybody here that has questions about tongues and prophecy and how that works in our modern day that would like to know how to use that and experience that in unity? Is anybody here that could grow in their understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ or their

understanding of what our resurrection bodies are going to look like or be.

Is there anybody here that could grow stronger in the giving of resources? I mean, we can approach this book and we can snub our noses at it, and we can have a lot of pride, like those Corinthians. They were so messed up, they're not as good as me. That's pride. Or we can approach this book with great humility and say before the Lord, every week that I come this year, I'm going to ask the Lord if there's something in me where I could get a little stronger in my walk with Christ.

Now, I want to tell you, as a pastor and as your pastor, I've watched God continue to grow us. I've watched God grow me and my family. I've watched God grow many of you. And so this is not a rebuke, that, oh, we're so weak. This is a, can we get stronger in the Lord?

Can we give God more glory in our lives? Can we live our lives in such a way where God can see us do what only he can do? Because here's my personal belief from my reading of the scriptures for the last 25 years, is God wants to see the world redeemed for himself. That God wants his church to be a place where glory is high and



lifted up. That God wants to use agents of change so that when people think about Denver, Colorado, what they think about is, oh, that's that city where so many people worship and glorify the resurrected Christ.

And if you go there, you're personally experienced God. That's what God wants to do. And I'm telling you, he doesn't just want to do that in Denver, Colorado. He wants to do that in every city all around the world. That's his plan for redemption.

That's why he told us all authority is his and go make disciples. Why? So that he could get glory everywhere. So how I wanted to start this series today was to take a look at the first three verses. Because when God wants to change a culture, there's three things that God does to change the culture.

And you can be a part of this change in many different ways. And as he starts out this book, he tells us exactly how he does it. How is God going to take who we are? How is God going to take where we live and turn it into a place where he is glorified? This is what he tells us in the first three verses of one corinthians.

So let's read those together, and then we'll unpack them. Paul writes to the  
corinthians, and he says, paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God  
and sosthenes our brother to the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those who have  
been sanctified in Christ Jesus saints by calling with all who in every place call on the  
name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God  
our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And right there in those three verses, you see  
exactly how God wants to change a culture, how God wants to make a place glorifying  
to him. And the first thing God does is when God wants to change a culture, he calls  
gifts and sends one of his servants to be his agent of change.

Okay? When God wants to change a culture, he calls gifts and sends one of his  
servants to be an agent of change. Notice what Paul says. Paul called. I'm called.

Called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. And sosthenes are  
brothers. Now, let's talk about this word called call is. This. Called is God's sovereign  
design of confirming his presence in and through you.

Okay? Calling is when he's reaching out to you and bringing you to himself. That's a calling. Okay? I have a four year old little girl.

Her name is Elle, okay? She's at the age where we believe as parents. Crossing the street for her is dangerous in our neighborhood because she doesn't know what it means to look both ways. She doesn't consider cars that are bigger and faster than her. We have made clear boundaries as to where she can go on our side of the street, but never to cross it.

We've made clear boundaries as to how far she can go down the street. Now, believe it or not, my little four year old girl, as sweet as she is, daughter of a pastor, has a sin nature. And so she has tested the limits time and time again. And sometimes I walk out and I'm like, well, where's Elle? Well, she's all the way down the street.

Now, when I call her, it's not just an invitation. It's not Elle, come here. As if. If you want to, that's great. And if you don't want to, I'm fine with it.

My calling to her is irrevocable. When I call her, whether she wants to come or not, she's coming. It helps her if she comes, when I call her, but if she doesn't, she's still coming. Okay? That's what calling is.

Okay? The Bible tells us make your calling and election. Sure. And you're going to see in verse two how God calls all of us who have come to him as his saints. He's the one who goes before us and does the work.

But when God is making a change in a city or God is trying to do something different, he always calls one of his servants to go and get it started. In this case, the church at Corinth does not exist without the apostle Paul. Okay. He calls, and then what he gifts. He gifts a person to do what he calls them to do.

Once you've been called into the family of God, you've been gifted by God. Okay? You've all been gifted. And when we get later in this book, we're gonna talk about all the different kinds of gifts and all the ways that you could have been gifted. But let me tell you this.

There's something about gifting that many of us have a hard time with, because many times we see gifts in other people that we wish we had, and we don't recognize the gifts in us. Cause we don't think, well, that's not really that important. I mean, I have the gift of helps, and I help set up chairs. And what difference does that make? It makes a huge difference.

However, you've been gifted, we're called to give God thanks for that. Now, I learned as a little kid that when people give you Christmas presents, especially when they're non family members, no matter what the gift is, what are you supposed to do? You're not only supposed to say thank you, you're supposed to pretend at least that you're grateful that you received it, even if it's pajamas or underwear or something. Thank you so much. That's just the kind I wanted.

Right. When God gifts you, when he brought you into his family, he gifts you in a certain way to accomplish certain things. Now, let me tell you about Paul's gift. Paul says, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he's an apostle. Now, the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

The apostles were people who had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Paul didn't see him in his earthly state. Paul saw him on the road to Damascus. When he was saw the bright light and was kind of knocked backward onto the ground, that's when he saw the Lord. But an apostle in the first century, capital a apostle was somebody who had seen the resurrected Christ, who was truly his ambassador to go.

And many of the words that were being spoken is what is in our canon of scripture today. So a true apostle. In the first century, like the apostle Paul, he would write these letters that were inspired by God. It was holy scripture. It's inerrant, it's true.

And because of that, many people will say today, well, apostles are gone, prophets are gone, they don't exist. I would tell you this, that the capital a apostle is gone, that the capital p prophet's gone. That your pastor here, I'm not going to give you fresh revelation and tell you nobody else in the world has heard this, but God told me never going to happen here. But the gifting of apostleship and the gifting of prophet still exists. Okay, how do I know?

Here's how I know. Because every time I've taken a spiritual gift inventory from the time I turned 18, my number one gift is apostleship. I mean, head and shoulders above any other gifting I have. So if you want to know what apostleship's like, get to know me, right? I'll give you what apostleship is like.

If you flip back about a page or two to romans chapter 15 and you mark in your Bible verses 20 and 21, this is the heart of an apostle. Paul says this. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel where Christ, not where Christ was already named. So I would not be building on another man's foundation. But as it is written, they who had no news of him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.

What's the heart of an apostle? The heart of an apostle is, which truly means apostolos is messenger or \$0.01. It means my heart is to go where Christ is not being proclaimed. Okay, now, when God called me to plant a church, I knew we were going to Denver like that fast. People said, how do you know?

I just knew. And it was confirmed over and over. And you know why I get excited? Because Denver is an apostle's dream. I mean, you go to Dallas and you start a church and you preach the word and have good worship and you're like 3000 people the next weekend, right?

You come to Denver and people say, well, what do you do for a living? And I tell my neighbors I'm a pastor and they give me the same look as if I would say I'm a Martian. And they're like, well, what's that? This guy's really weird, right? I love being in Denver for that reason.

Right? And I was sent here. And the same is true in the New Testament as it was in the old. And remember the, remember the call on this prophet named Jonah? Did God call Jonah to go to Nineveh?

Yeah, it wasn't like, you know, hey, I'd like you to go if you'd want, if you have spare time. I called you to go. Jonah loved the call so much, he took off and ran the opposite way. Did that stop God? God's like, go ahead, run.



I'll send a flood. I'll send a fish. I'll swallow you. When you're ready, just let me know, and then you can go do it, because my call is irrevocable. So he goes to Nineveh and preaches the gospel, and 120,000 people get saved.

Why? Because God's call is irrevocable. God always calls apostles to start new ministries. Apostles are very good at beginning things, and apostles are very good at mobilizing things. Let me tell you what apostles are not good at.

Structuring and administering things. Let me tell you what they're not good at. All the time shepherding, every little thing. That's why God calls a body. That's why Paul talks about in this first verse.

And Sosthenes, our brother Paul may have been. Been the first person to go, but just cause you're the first person to go doesn't mean, well, it's my church. It's not my church. Whose church is it? I mean, the word says whose church it is.

He says he's an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the church of God. It's God's church. Every church is God's church, but God sends people to go. Now, I can tell you this. When I was praying about what God wanted us to do next, it became so burdensome to me to move to Denver to plant this church that I remember talking to my wife and just telling her this as we were having discussions and we were just kind of figuring out what's God doing?

And my wife's totally hearing the Lord, and she's submissive to the Lord. She's been a great wife and always has been, always will be. But as we're talking, I remember telling her, if we don't go, we are being disobedient to Jesus. We have to go. If we lose all our money, if nobody ever shows up, if the whole thing fails, that's God's fault.

He's calling us to go. We gotta go. Right? That's the heart of an apostle. Let's go.

Now, why do I tell you that? Because we are at a stage in our church's history

where at some point in time, you're gonna see other men stand on this platform, and they're gonna be called of God to go to Salt Lake City and Las Vegas and Nairobi, Kenya, and different places all around the world, because they have the apostolic calling on their life to go. And we're gonna send them. And when we send them, we're gonna say, which of you are going with to establish the Church of Jesus Christ there? Right?

That's the heart of an apostle. That's a heart of an apostolic church. That's who we are. That's what we do. Cause I know what it's like when you come to church on Sunday.

I mean, I know what it's like. I mean, some of you are coming here cause you're crushed. Cause your marriage is broken. I get it. We pray for you.

And some of you are crushed because your health is failing. And the more you pray, it seems to get worse. And some of you are crushed under financial burden. And you know that. You could ask yourself, why all this talk about expanding churches and campuses and why plant?

And why care about the rest of the world when I'm so hurting? Here's why. Because God cares about the rest of the world. And by the way, much of your healing and much of the things that God wants to do in your life will come when you partner with him to get his work done, when he sees that you're willing, by faith, to trust what he wants to do, and you're bringing him glory, that will be the most filled that you ever are. See, that's God's call for us.

And that's what Paul's writing to them. He's not writing like, hey, I'm Paul, called as an apostle. Hey, let me give you my resume. Or remember, I'm not Paul the shoemaker. I'm the apostle Paul.

He's telling them that I'm Paul, the one who was called to share the gospel with you so that you would know Jesus, too. The one who loves you with his whole heart, the one who rejoices every time he hears something good happen in your church, that's me. I'm Paul. I was sent to you. Now, if you want to know about, like, whether you have an apostolic calling on your life, for those of you guys that are feeling called to plant churches, here's a question I ask all young pastors all the time.

Hey, if God gave you two choices and one choice was we, as harvest, we're gonna give you \$10,000, and we sent you to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and said, just have fun. Just go build the thing go find your people. Go raise the money. Go do all that. Does that excite you more?

Or does it excite you more to know that, hey, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, there's a church of 200 people, and they're looking for a solid pastor who can help them disciple and develop small groups who can preach every week. And they have a salary for you, and they have all these things. Every apostle I meet would say, I would never do the second. I would go do the first. Every pastor I meet would say, I'll do the second.

And can I tell you this? Both gifts are hugely important to the Church of Jesus Christ. Both gifts. I have friends that never planted churches that as pastors, are killing it, but they couldn't plant a church to save their life. It's okay.

We all have different gifts. Paul's saying, my gift is to plant churches. Okay, now, Paul spent, just so you know, it wasn't like he just blew into Corinth and stayed for a couple weeks, started the church and left. He was there 18 months, and he was back and forth all the time as he was establishing and doing other churches. And so the gifting still exists.

And when God wants to change a culture, he sends somebody to go do it. Now, you take a look at this, and he says, an sosthenes, our brother. Our brother, which means he's in the faith. If you flip back to acts chapter 18, and I won't belabor you with the whole chapter. I've spent much time reading it this week.

You see how in verse six, he got tired of talking to the Jews. Cause they wanted nothing to do with him. In verse seven, he goes next door to the house of a guy named Tydeus Justus, and he began to preach there. In verse eight of chapter 18, in acts, it says, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, when they heard, were believing and being baptized.

So many people are coming to faith, including the leader of the synagogue, so

they had to replace him. So guess who they replaced Crispus with? They replaced him with a guy named Sosthenes. And Sosthenes brought Paul before this greek council to say he's preaching other gods. This should be illegal.

He shouldn't be allowed to do that. And Gallio threw the case out in court. And when the case got thrown out in court, take a look at acts, chapter 18, verse 17. This is the last time we read about Sosthenes. And they all took hold of Sosthenes.

The leader of the synagogue, who's the new leader? And began beating him in front of the judgment seat. Right? So the last time we read about this guy, he's the leader of the synagogue who's getting beat because he can't bring the case to stop the apostle Paul, and the Jews are mad at him. Now, when Paul writes back to the Corinthians, he's like, hey, Paul, called as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of God.

And guess who's with me? Sosthenes, the one who got beat. He's now our brother. Isn't that the way God works? When God is changing culture?

God brings people that are far away from him into relationship with himself to join the family of God. That's what he does. And he still does the same thing today. Now take a look at the second thing he does. When God wants to change a culture, he does this.

Make no mistake about it. He establishes and builds his church. He establishes and builds his church. Notice verse two. Who's he writing to?

To the church of God, which is at Corinth. To the church of God, which is at Corinth. It's the church. The church. He's writing to a local church.

Now, can I just stop and pause for some of you, especially in our cultural age of individualism and hedonism, that worms its way into the church, where you'll hear people say this, I don't go to church. I'm not called to go to church. I'm called to be the church. All right, let's just talk about it, okay? Yeah, we're called to be the church.



Yeah, we're called to be filled up with the church. But we're also called to gather as the church. Right? We're called to go to church. We're called to give our best to the church.

And I read a quote this week that I think is appropriate here. For those of you that are half hearted about your devotion to church, it's probably because you're half hearted in your devotion to the church about half the time, right? In other words, it is impossible. I just lay this out as a gauntlet. I triple dog dare you this year.

I mean, just throw it out there. You bring all your best to God through this church. If this is where he's called you to serve, or if it's not at harvest, find another place and you bring all your best to that church. Meaning this, I'm gonna tithe, maybe give over and above. I'm gonna find a place to serve even if nobody recognizes me, I'm gonna get connected to community.

Even if people are rebellious and treat me bad. I'm gonna pray for our pastor. I'm gonna come to everything that the church does. I'm praying for our kids. Anywhere

people want me to serve.

Even if nobody notices me, I'm all in, and I'm just praying for that. I triple dog dare you to do that. And then have somebody speak bad about our church to you. Cause let me tell you what your tolerance level will be. You know what that universal sign is?

Zip. I don't like it hearing it harvest. I don't like it when people come in and tell me how bad their last church was. Because if there's anything that Jesus cares about, it's his church. It's not parachurch.

It's not that God can't meet us outside. I got saved through young life. I've been part of FCA. I've been part of Mark, men for Christ. All great.

It's not the church. The church is God's vehicle. He's established. He's told us how to put leadership together, how to worship. And why does God want his church?

I would say it like this because the local church is the visible, tangible expression of the resurrected Christ gathering together to glorify God in that city. I mean, you don't come. You're saying, I don't care that there's a visible representation for Jesus. I'll do it myself. I'm telling you, you don't want to stand in that line when you get to heaven.

Now, you don't need to come to harvest, but you better find a place if you're a believer and give your full allegiance to that, because Jesus cares about it. It is the visible, tangible, local expression of the resurrected Christ gathering to glorify God. Who's Paul writing to? The church. Who's Paul writing to?

Us. He's not just writing to me. He's telling me. He's telling us that our behavior and the way in which we relate to one another makes a difference in how God is glorified in that city. Your marriage makes a difference as to how God's being glorified in our city.

The unity we have with one another is making a difference for how God is glorified in our city. Your attendance here in hearing the word and growing in Christ makes a difference for how God is glorified in our city. And notice what he says. The church is to the church of God, which is at Corinth. To those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Saints by calling. We already talked about calling. It means when you trusted in Jesus, what you begin to realize is God was the one reaching out to me and grabbing me all along. It was God's work in my life that was doing that. Now, if you're not a saint, it's because you haven't trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin.

But it's not because God's not pursuing you. He loves you with an unconditional love. He cares for you with an unconditional care. He loves you for who you are, and he wants you to come in relationship with him. But let me talk to the people who have trusted Jesus.

You have been sanctified. You are saints by calling. Saints means holy ones set

apart. It's who you are. It's who you are.

It's who you are. Your identity in Christ is not based upon behavior. It's based upon the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the Holy Spirit residing in you because of whose you are, you are saints. Now I know that word's a weird word cause I grew up in the midwest where there was a lot of catholic people. So saint to me meant like relic or marble statue or long ago dead person.

That's a saint, right? Here's what the saint is. According to the New Testament, anybody who's trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and believe that he rose from the dead when they believe in the Lord. You're saint, like Saint Ricky right here. He's a saint, right?

St. Cal, right there. St. Kim, right there. Why are they saints?

I mean, I know all of them. Why am I a saint? I mean, just ask my family, have I

been a saint from the time that I've got saved? They'll give you plenty of evidence to show I'm not. But I'm not saint by behavior.

I'm saint by calling. That's who I am. It's who God says that I am. And why is it really interesting to me that when Paul's writing to this church before he spends the rest of the book really correcting them, he wants them to know if you get your identity right and you know whose you are and you know that you're already a saint, then when I start correcting you, you'll start hearing it as I'm trying to get you to grow into your sainthood. If you don't recognize that you're a saint and I begin to give you all this instruction, you'll think that I'm talking down to you or making you feel bad that you have to change all these things.

No. God is growing you and your identity. And notice what it says. You have been sanctified. It's something that's already taken place.

I'm sanctified. And then there's this progressive sanctification. God already declares me righteous. I'm already sanctified. And guess what I'm doing now?

I'm growing so that my behaviors and my attitudes and my beliefs catch up with who I already am. I'm a new creation. The old is gone. Behold, all things are made new. That's who I am.

I'm already all that right. Do you see the difference? Most Christians come to church and they say, well, I'm just a sinner and I'm lousy and I'm no good. And now the pastor is making me feel even worse. No, I'm telling you, if you trusted in Jesus Christ, you're already set free.

You're already a saint. You're already all of that. God loves you unconditionally. He can't love you anymore. And now that you know that, there just may be some behaviors in your life that need to catch up with who you actually are as you trust your new identity.

And that's why God establishes his church. The church of God is saints who gather by calling. Notice what he says. People in every place who call in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not just Jesus the good teacher, not just Jesus that did

miracles, not just Jesus that healed people.

We're talking about the Lord Jesus. That's the second person of the Trinity that's always existed, that died on the cross, that rose from the dead, that's ruling and reigning at the right hand of God the father, that's coming back to judge every living and dead soul that's ever lived. That's the Jesus that we call upon. And God gives local expressions. And as the church has grown, God has different local expressions.

And not everybody has to have the same local expression as to what we have. There are great churches in our city that have different expressions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I celebrate that. They're on our team, right? Well, that church does this different, and that church. Okay, good for them.

They answer before the Lord, just like we do now at our church, I mean, we have four pillars. We talk about preaching the word unapologetically from two timothy four two. That's what you can expect when you come here. We talk about worship and spirit and truth from John, chapter four, so that when you come, you can express your worship any way you want. We talk about evangelism from romans 116, where Paul



says, for I'm not afraid of the gospel, for it's the power of God for everyone who believes.

But I want to focus on this third pillar that we often don't talk about, which I'm talking about number four today, this idea of prayer that we pray without ceasing, because out of all the pillars, it's usually the one that goes, yeah, I should pray more about that. Yeah, I didn't pray much this week. We should pray. I'm telling you, it is the most important thing that we do as a church. And I'm telling you, you have a praying pastor who is trying to encourage praying elders, who is trying to get a praying staff, who takes the busiest two calendar weeks.

We have, when we do ministry kickoff and when we do Easter to do what? We're going to shut it all down so that we can gather and pray. Why? Because when we pray, that's when God moves. Right.

Prayer is not an addendum to our agenda like God. We're going to go plant all these churches now. We'll pray about it. Prayer is God. We are coming before you because this is your church and you're going to do it in your way.

And we don't presume to know what you want or how you want or when you want. What are you doing and who do we need to hire and what do we need to transition and what do we need to change? Because it's your church and what brings you the most glory. And lord, save more people, please bring more people to the saving knowledge of Jesus that they would have life in you. People who are far from you and broken, just like we've been, that they would find life in you.

We pray. I'm telling you as your pastor, it was awesome last night and today to look out when we did prayer as a congregation, see so many people praying. I remember when we started our church with a few people right in the middle here, you know, and we'd sing songs. Oh, that's a long time to sing. And I'd say, open your bibles.

And like three people would have Bibles, right? And now when people come, there's a worshiping community. Now when people come, it's like, I gotta hear the word, right? You know what our next step is? How do we pray as a congregation?

How do we pray with one another? Jesus in his ministry. I mean, if there's any time that he got ticked off, it was about prayer. I mean, you read about it in Matthew. In Matthew, chapter Matthew, chapter 21 and verse 13, he quotes Isaiah six when he comes into the temple and he sees those who are buying and selling.

And he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And here's what he said to them. It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer. But you're making it a den of thieves. If God's house is going to be anything, it's a place where people can come and call upon the name of the Lord, not only as individuals, but together.

And I don't know how many times people come into church and you're burdened. I mean, you're burdened by everything. And you sit through a whole service like this and you're still burdened. And some of you are listening. Like, I can't even concentrate on what Pastor Jeff's saying.

Cause I'm still burdened. And God invites you to call in the name of the Lord, not

only as an individual, but with other people who love you, who want to pray for it, too. And when you do, God answers prayers, big prayers, little prayers. I mean, this week in staff, we would just ask kind of every day, what prayers have you had answered? We had a guy that's moving out here, been looking for three months to try to find a place to live.

The very day we spent time praying over him. Called me before he got on the plane. Got a place to live now we're good. Awesome. Had one of our staff members, dad, diagnosed with bladder cancer.

Kind of went into his muscle treatments and prognosis is horrible. It's not going to be good two days later. Hey, doctors aren't so sure it got into the muscle. Think it's going to be easily treatable after all. I mean, I hear as a pastor because we pray over everything, story upon story upon story upon story upon story upon story upon story of answered prayer.

I begin my week with a group of men praying. I pray with our elders every week. I pray with our staff every week. The only thing we're going to do is continue to

escalate the prayer times. Now let me tell you this just so you know, in case.

Well, when's the next one? It's tonight at six. Okay. Now let me tell you why you don't want to come. Because you got a million other things going on and you already have activities planned and you can't cancel those.

And some of you are going to be too tired to come. And some of you have too many other things to do. And I already went to church once today, and why would I ever want to come back? I mean, come on. There's not one prayer meeting I've ever gone to in this church that I wanted to go to.

Not one. Even me. I know by 06:00 tonight, I'll be like, why don't we schedule tonight? I mean, there's football on, and I mean, I know that, but there's not been one that I've ever left where I haven't said that was the best thing I've ever done. You know, one of my favorite pastors in the history of the church is Charles Spurgeon.

I believe the reason that you can still open up one of Spurgeon's sermons and read it and have it touch your heart is because of the praying congregation that he had. Here's what he said. He said, the condition of the church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer meetings. So is the prayer meeting a graceometer. And from it, we may judge the amount of divine working among a people.

If God be near a church, it must pray. And if he not be there, one of the first tokens of his absence will be a slothfulness in prayer. We will be a praying church. We don't host Daniel Henderson's strategic renewal western region conference because he's a friend of mine. He is a friend of mine.

We host it because my hope is that all of you will take advantage that right here in our church in Denver, you can learn how to pray better. And I know what it's like. I mean, I remember when I first started praying, like, five minutes was a long time. Praying out loud was kind of a burden. Cause what if I did it wrong?

Right? So if you thought, like, hey, come in and pray with your staff for 4 hours, how would you do that? What's it like to pray for three days in a row? That's crazy. I

love it.

I'm telling you, as a pastor, I would rather be remembered for my prayers and the way that we got our congregation to pray than I would be as a preacher. Because I believe with my whole heart if we will seek the Lord together. I mean, if everybody that called harvest their home came to our prayer meetings and we didn't have enough space, I'm telling you, God would do so much more than we could ever think, dream, or imagine in us, through us, and out from us, that we wouldn't even be able to catch our breath. That's who our God is. And that's what God wants.

He wants to teach us to pray. We're saints. We're his. It's not behavior. And he's invited us to pray.

One of the things we're doing as a congregation, I called an audible. It's tough to get things going because, like, what are we going to do? Well, sometimes we do it Sunday nights and sometimes we do it Sunday mornings. So after tonight, first Tuesdays of every month, guess what we're going to do first Tuesdays of every month. First Tuesday nights of every month, we're going to gather and worship and

pray.

When people get baptized, we're going to baptize them, right then we're going to make it the place where God's glory is resounding. So if you're wondering what we're doing the first Tuesday of September, guess what we're doing. We're going to have praise and worship night and pray and seek the Lord. Guess what we're doing. October, the first Tuesday of the month.

Give you a hint. We're going to pray and worship the Lord. So you can kind of just set your calendar for the whole year so that you know when it's coming. And for those that want to be a part of it, do it now. I'm not mandating that you can your small groups and you cancel it that week, but it's not a bad idea because you bring your small group to a place where corporately they experience the presence and the prayers of the Lord and praise.

It'll change everything. I'm just telling you, it's a great option for you to have. And this is what God does. God calls a man to go to a place to build up other brothers whose identity are in Christ so that all the giftings are flourishing and people are calling



upon the name of the Lord. They're calling to him.

They're calling to them. The church who are saints are calling to the Lord. And then he says this. When God wants to change a culture, he releases his continued grace and peace. He releases his continued grace and peace.

Notice what? He says grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, some people read that. He puts that in every letter. Just grace and peace.

Grace and peace. You know, it's just kind of like this churchy thing to say. Let me tell you what grace is. Grace is the miraculous power of God that has the ability to free you from sin, death and hell and present you faultless before the throne of God in heaven. Grace is a big deal, and it has no doing of your own.

And he releases his continued grace. Because the Bible says, for it is by grace. We have been saved through faith. It's not your own doing. It's a gift of God so that no

one should boast.

But grace goes beyond that. It's not just a salvation grace. Notice what Paul says in Titus. Titus, chapter two, verse eleven and twelve. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

That's what grace does, saves people, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. What does grace do? Helps us to deny ungodliness, helps us to deny worldly desires. Helps us to live uprightly and godly in the present age. Do you need more grace?

I do. I do. Every one of those things I listed in the front I can grow in. As your pastor, there's not one that I would say, yeah, I remember when my marriage was struggling and I needed a touch. But we have the perfect marriage now.

Kim may have the perfect husband, but we don't have the perfect marriage now.

Right? We don't have perfect kids. I don't have perfection in my morality. I don't have perfection in my unity.

I haven't arrived yet. I'm still struggling. So I know you are too. But God's grace is being released so that we can grow in all those areas and take steps of faith and encourage one another to do that very thing. That's grace.

But it's not just grace. What does he say? And peace from who? From God. I read John, chapter 16, verse 33, but it bears repeating.

I read it last week where Jesus said these things. I have spoken to you so that you may have peace in the world. You will have tribulation, but take courage. I have overcome the world. What does God want you to have?

Peace. Philippians four, six, seven. Anybody anxious about anything here today? Anybody worried about anything? Be anxious about nothing.

But in everything, by prayer and supplication, present your request before God and the peace that passes. All understanding will guard your hearts and mind. In Christ Jesus, Paul is telling them grace to you, the grace that saved you, the grace that's continued in your life, the grace that you can have that will grow you into all godliness. And as you're doing it, because your identity's already rested in him, have peace as he grows you. Quit striving, quit laboring, quit trying to figure it all out.

Let God have his way. Peace to you. And that peace is from God our father and who. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is present among us when we gather, when we pray, when we worship, when we seek him, God shows up.

I mean, for me, I'm telling you, on Saturday nights or Sunday morning, if I knew Jesus wasn't going to show up in our services, I'm telling you where I would not be, I wouldn't come. Why bother? There are plenty of other things to do. But I'm telling you, we're at a church that sings praises to the Lord, that honors the Lord, that champions his word, that desires to put our life into his, that prays to the Lord, that seeks to the Lord. We want to be more and more of a congregation that does that publicly.

I just want you to know in all of our campuses, whether you're in Broomfield or whether you're here, that our altar is always open. I mean, you want to come down and pray during the worship set, do it. You want to come up and see our prayer team. Prayer team at the end is not like an addendum to the service. For out of the 1500 people, the two people that have problems, I mean, look around to your right and left, just look at everybody around you.

Everybody you're viewing has problems, every single one. What we're doing when we pray with each other is we're confessing them to each other and we're saying, I need to go to the throne before you. I know you can't help me, but let's go to Jesus together because we believe that he can. So when our prayer team comes forward, it's not like service is over. You are loved, you can come pray if you want.

We're gonna start incorporating the prayer team during the singing of our last song so they can be here. So during this last song today it's a prayer. The prayer is, lord, I need you. Before we sing that song, I want you to think about that area in your life where you're like, this is where I need him. I know this is where I need him.

Maybe it's you and your spouse, this is where we need him. Maybe this is where our family needs him, man, this is what I need from the Lord. And if he's speaking to your heart or your eyes are tearing up or you're like, that's me he's talking about, I just encourage you to have the courage to take a step of faith and come pray with our prayer team. So when we stand, I'll bring our prayer team up. Kim and I will be up here to pray with you, too.

You can pray right where you want. Nobody's gonna bother you at all. But we're here to be a collective group of people that seek the Lord. So let's call out to him in this song. Let it be our prayer this year that we would grow stronger in him.

So could we stand, Lord Jesus, as we sing this song. Lord, this is our petition before you. This is our supplication. This is our ask. Lord, we are telling you we need you.

And, lord, I just pray you would hear the prayers of our people as we turn to one

another or as we come forward and seek your face. In Jesus name. Amen.