

Striving Together

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[0 : 0 0] All right, would you take the Word of God with me and turn to the book of Philippians? Philippians chapter 1.

I am preaching an entire series of sermons in one day today. I don't know why y'all laughing. We will get out of here before 6 o'clock tonight, okay?

What time is the Super Bowl? 5? 5.30? We'll get out of here before then, okay? I'm kidding. We should be out around the normal time today.

And actually, we have a lunch for Discovering First Baptist. Some of you received an invitation to that, so make sure you don't run out of here without coming to our lunch.

That is for, specifically, some of the guests we've been having with us recently, some newer members to learn about our church, meet the staff, etc. So if you received an invitation to that, I want to remind you about our Discovering First Baptist lunch right after the service.

[1 : 0 6] That's at the Fellowship Hall toward the back of the building there. Philippians chapter 1. We're going to be looking specifically toward the end of the chapter. But before we get into that, I want to...

This really kind of is a series of sermons wrapped up in one sermon here. So we're going to just touch on it lightly, but I think it really ties in with the series we just concluded from Matthew's Gospel about salt and light.

Talking, drawing from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus preached. Probably the most famous sermon ever preached on this earth. And we took one of the core truths from it, that God called us to be salt and light.

And that's who we are as a church. We are the salt of the earth. We are the light of the world. And we covered that the last four Sundays. That's available on the First Baptist Henrietta YouTube channel if you'd like to get caught up on that.

But before we get into it, let's look down at Philippians chapter 1. The subject we're talking about today... I don't know if I can get this to work. How many of y'all were here on Wednesday night?

[2 : 1 5] You remember my clicker wouldn't work? It's still not working. There we go. It worked. It worked. There we go. All right. The subject... I think I had slid the...

It's usually user error. It's not usually the guys up there. Matt's laughing. He's like, yeah, he's right. It is user error. The subject we're talking about today draws straight from Philippians 1 and verse 27.

That's these two words, striving together. Striving together. So, I want to focus primarily on that verse, verse 27.

But for the context of it, let's read the whole chapter together. And so, out of respect for God's word, if you're able to join me in standing, would you do so now? I know we've been up and down a little bit during the service, but let's stand one more time together, if you can, and let's read Philippians chapter 1, verse...

Beginning in verse 1, together. I'm reading this time from the English Standard Version. Actually, I believe I'm reading from the NIV on this one, so I apologize for that.

[3 : 28] There are many... Tell you what. How many of you, if you happen to know what translation of the Bible you're looking at right now, would you shout it out? Ready? One, two, three. Yeah, you hear all those different kinds?

That's all right. There's nothing wrong with that at all. God has preserved His word in the English language for generation after generation after generation through different Bibles, the Geneva Bible, the King James Bible, the Wycliffe Bible.

There's all kinds of Bibles that have come up since God's word was translated into the English language, and we're thankful for all of them. Many... Some of them may be a little far afield from the original manuscripts that were found, but normally the ones you'll find at Mardell's or at a Christian bookstore are just fine, and we'll say more or less the same thing, maybe just slightly different language.

So let's read it together. I'm reading out of the NIV. Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 3. I thank my God every time I remember you. Anybody say that's me? People thank their God every time they think of me. Anybody?

[4 : 48] No, nobody's bold enough to raise their hand. That was apparently the testimony of this church, and how special is that? It's actually one of the early sermons I preached at this church in my tenure here was about this church and their unique reputation.

In the mind of Paul, he was able to thank God every time he remembered them. Verse 4. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

You see why he was so pleased to think of them? Why he had so much joy filling his heart when he prayed for this church? It was because they partnered with him in the gospel.

What is the gospel? It's a word that simply means good news. Back in the old days, you would say there's a Roman general coming back to Rome from a far land, and he's bringing the gospel of victories in his battles with the Roman armies.

So he would bring back the good news back to his home country. That is exactly what Jesus did for us.

[6 : 03] He went to a far country, and he fought a battle on our behalf, and he brings back good news of victory over sin. That's why we call it the good news.

That's why we call it the gospel. It's the story that you and I were sinners, we were prisoners of sin, we were brought up in sin, born in sin, had no way to escape it, but Jesus came and brought us victory.

He laid down his life, he fought the battle, he willingly sacrificed himself on a cross to pay that penalty of sin, and because he did that, you and I now have an opportunity to be saved, to find freedom, to find victory because of this gospel.

So that's why we have churches. That's why we sing songs of praise. That's why we go out and tell this good news to other people, and when we partner together in that, it brings great joy to all of us.

So that's what Paul was saying. It brings great joy to me because of your partnership in getting this gospel out from the first day until now. Being confident in this, verse 6, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[7 : 21] Y'all, there's a lot we could stop along through this passage and spend the rest of our time together talking about, but I'm trying to give you the context as we get down to the end of the chapter.

So he said, God began a good work in all of us. He's going to carry it on to its finish. We can thank God for that. He's not done with us. He's still working on us.

Verse 7, And it's right for me to feel this way about all of you. Since I have you in my heart, and whether I'm in chains, sometimes he was arrested for preaching the gospel, or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. Sometimes he was arrested, he was thrown in prison. Sometimes his journeys would take him elsewhere, and he would miss those Christians he would leave behind in Philippi and Ephesus and Corinth and all these cities that he would go to and visit these churches.

Verse 9, This is my prayer, that your love may abound, grow, more and more in knowledge and in depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ when Jesus comes back.

[8 : 56] This is probably a good stopping point right here. So why don't we pray and ask God's blessings on our service and then we'll continue on reading the rest of Philippians 1.

Lord, I thank you for your blessing on our church. I thank you for giving us these holy scriptures. I thank you for your sacrifice for us on our behalf.

May everything we do in this service and through the work of this church be to glorify you, to grow your kingdom, to partner together with this gospel. And it's in Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. You may be seated. Thanks for standing so long. Let's pick it up here when he said, my goal for you is that your love grows, your knowledge and insight grows into God so that you can discern what is best, you can be pure when Jesus comes back.

Verse 11, you can be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Now let's look at verse 12. Ready? I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

[10 : 06] You know what that means? Get it out more. Spread this good news everywhere. Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere. So he said all the bad things that have happened to me when the religious leaders didn't like what I was saying, when the government didn't like what I was saying, when the soldiers didn't like what I was saying, when I got shipwrecked, when I got snakebitten, when I got diseases, all these things that have happened to me have actually served to advance the gospel and as a result in verse 13, it's become clear throughout the whole palace guard, the guys that were guarding him and to everyone else around him that I am in chains for Christ.

His reputation was intact. His reputation was strong. He was not suffering because he was a terrible man, had committed terrible crimes.

It was clear to the prison guards and to everybody else that this man was suffering because of his faith in Jesus. So, verse 14, because of these chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Y'all, this church existed in a day when you could not freely go and share your faith like we can here in America. And because Paul was arrested and locked in prison, he was so confident and refused to give up, refused to have his spirit broken or his will to accomplish God's will deterred, this man was like a dog with a bone.

He just wouldn't stop. Couldn't take it away from him. And so, the church latched onto that. They said, we need that kind of confidence.

[12 : 10] We need that kind of spirit like Paul has. So, Paul's imprisonment was actually driving them all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Verse 15. He addresses some problems that have come up. He said, it's true that some people that you will hear, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others preach it out of good will.

The ones preaching out of good will, these latter ones, they do so out of love. They know that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The other ones that preach the gospel, preach Christ out of poor motives, out of envy and rivalry.

He said, the former preached Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing they can stir up trouble for me while I'm in chains. He said, some people will preach the Bible, they'll preach Jesus, they'll preach the gospel out of bad motives, serving themselves, they have their own agenda.

Verse 18, this was Paul's perspective on that. We recognize that sometimes in churches you go or you turn on the TV and you hear people supposedly preaching Jesus and you just feel like they don't have the right motives.

[13 : 29] It may not always be saying the exact truth. Verse 18, Paul says, what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached.

And because of this, I rejoice. Isn't that interesting? Paul would not let himself get drawn into any controversies.

While Paul was locked up in prison, there'd be others out there trying to make him look bad, trying to take his place, trying to get his fame and influence throughout these churches and this world.

Sometimes it was for financial gain. They'd think that Paul's got to be making all kinds of money going around traveling to all these churches and preaching. Let me see if I can get some of that money while he's in prison. Some of it was influence.

There was all kinds of reasons why people would be preaching Christ out of wrong motivations. Paul said, you're not going to draw me into tearing those people down.

[14 : 42] You're not going to start a war between me and them. You're not going to distract me from my focus, my calling, my purpose. He said, whatever their motivations are, I'm glad they're telling people about Jesus.

I'm glad that God is using them regardless of what's in it for them. I'm glad that God's name is getting out. It's an interesting perspective that I think we could do well to learn from.

And he said, because of this, I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. Verse 19, because I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

God will use it for good. God will get me out of here when the time's right. God's not going to let all my work go to vain, go in vain. God is going to come through and he believed it.

So verse 20, I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but now I will have sufficient courage. So now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

[15 : 56] For to me, to live is Christ. It's what it's about. To die, it's just gain. It's more.

It's more of Christ. I get to go home and be in heaven with Jesus forever. How great is that going to be? You see how Paul was single-minded? He had such a laser focus on God's purpose for his life.

Verse 22, if I am to go on living in this body, that will mean fruitful labor for me. But what should I choose?

I don't know. I'm torn between these two options. I desire to depart and to be with Christ, and that's better by far. Verse 24, but it's more necessary for you that I remain here in this body with you.

convinced of this. I know that I will remain. He's not going to end his life before it's time. He said, I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith so that through my being with you, again, your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

[17 : 19] What's he saying? If I stay with you and pour myself into God's work for me, God's purpose for me, and become so close with Jesus through walking with him, working with him for your behalf, then your faith will grow so much more.

And you're boasting and everything that you live your life for will not be about yourself. It will grow and cause you to be closer to Jesus Christ because of the work that God does through me.

That's what Paul's telling us. So now we get to our key verse. It's been a little while getting there, but thanks for hanging with me through that. Verse 27.

Whatever happens, here is his message to them. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

[18 : 49] Some of the greatest words that Paul ever wrote. They clarify, they crystallize, they make very understandable and plain our purpose as followers of Jesus gathered together in a church.

He makes it so clear what we are to be about. and not being frightened in any way by those who oppose you because this is a sign to them that they will be destroyed but that you will be saved by God.

So folks, what it comes down to is the end of verse 27 right there. Standing firm in one spirit, God's spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

That's what we are going to talk about today. And in the few minutes we have left, I hope that you leave here today with an understanding of what it means to strive together for the faith of the gospel.

Let's think about that word strive. When I look at it, and I looked at it in all these different translations, and even went back to the root word that was written down originally in Greek, and looking at this, what does it mean when it says this word strive?

[20 : 02] Maybe your Bible says contend. Maybe it says struggle. And what it seems to be is that struggle. Because Paul understands that it's a struggle.

We're fighting something. We're fighting an enemy. Something is resisting us, so we have to strive, we have to fight, we have to contend, we have to struggle.

struggle. So, you know where my mind went? My mind went to Philippians 127. That's where it came from because that was the text we just read.

But you know where it went after I realized that this is talking about a struggle? It went here. The struggle is real. Paul knew that, didn't he? He knew that this struggle that we're in is very real.

Now, if you spend time on social media at all, and I can't say I recommend it, but you're probably going to do it whether I recommend it or not. I find myself on there sometimes, not as much as I used to be because I just don't have the time for it.

[21 : 09] But you will see sometimes memes or people using this phrase, the struggle is real. I don't know if that came from the millennial generation or what it was. That feels like something that came from the millennials.

I is one, so I get it. The struggle is real. Now, normally, that's kind of said tongue-in-cheek about something that isn't really that much of a hardship, but it's kind of an annoyance, you know?

Man, I ran out of coffee this morning, and I didn't know it, and so I got up, and I had to start my morning without coffee. Hashtag, the struggle is real. It's like, yeah, first world problems, man.

Your life is really rough out there. Normally, that's how we use that. However, this life is a struggle, genuinely. There is real struggle that you and I have to face all the time, and it's not often the things that make us post on social media, but there is real struggle going on in our hearts.

Anybody know what's happening at 530 today? Y'all look quiet bunch, man. What's happening at 530 today? Super Bowl, there we go, there we go, there we go.

[22 : 26] We've got to cut the air down and wake everybody up. I don't know. Patrick Mahomes recently reopened up about the Chiefs' journey to Super Bowl 58. Now, this year is Super Bowl 59.

Last year, it was Super Bowl 58, and you know who won? Chiefs, yes. So glad for you, man.

You did not watch the whole entire game. You were running in and out some, man. Listen, the Chiefs won it. They're trying to win three in a row this year.

If you don't care about football at all, that's okay. Just listen to this part of the story here. Patrick Mahomes opened up recently about his team's journey to Super Bowl 58 last year.

revealing why this championship holds a special place in his heart. In a candid interview with NBC Sports, Mahomes painted a picture of a season filled with unexpected challenges and hard fought victories.

[23 : 27] They didn't just coast to a Super Bowl last year. If they can pull it off and beat a very powerful Chiefs team and win this third in a row, you can definitely look at their season and see that they didn't coast to a Super Bowl this year either.

But he's talking about last season and he says, this interview says, he didn't shy away from accepting the team's struggles, particularly on offense.

Well, he's the quarterback, so that's his part of the team, right? He spoke of the constant effort to improve week after week, adding, this year it was the defense that kind of led the team.

And the offense, we dealt with our struggles. We had to continue to just work to get better every single week. He even remembered a moment that came after the final regular season game against the Chargers.

Mahomes had a conversation with Travis Kelsey, the tight end for the team, surefire Hall of Fame player, dating Taylor Swift. For those of you that don't follow football, put it in context.

[24 : 31] Where he said, if we win this one, it's going to hurt those guys, man, because this isn't the one we're supposed to win. See, the Chiefs have established themselves as a dynasty in football, kind of the team to beat.

Used to be the Patriots under Tom Brady. There was a day when it was the Cowboys. Feels so long ago. So long ago. But the Chiefs have kind of become that team, you know, they're the one to beat, and that's why everybody loves to hate the Chiefs, because once you reach the top of the mountaintop, everybody's gunning for you.

But last year, they showed struggle. They looked beatable. Many times during the regular season, it was, man, I don't think it's going to be the Chiefs this year. So he said, I know it's going to hurt that team that lost to us, because this wasn't supposed to be our year.

This underdog mentality, which would be unusual for the Chiefs, seemed to fuel their playoff run. As the postseason unfolded, the Chiefs found their rhythm.

Each game presented a new challenge from the Dolphins in the wild card, to the Bills in the divisional round, the Ravens in the AFC championship, and finally, the 49ers in the Super Bowl.

[25 : 44] Yet with each victory, their confidence soared. Mahomes finished his interview by saying, the struggle was extremely real. That struggle, from a football perspective, was real for them.

That wasn't said tongue in cheek, wasn't a joke, their struggle was very real. But it ended with that scene. It ended with that picture. I don't know what's going to happen tonight with this team.

I don't know what's going to happen with Mahomes, if he's going to hold up another trophy or not. But that last year's Super Bowl itself was a dramatic overtime affair, capped off by what is considered one of the greatest winning throws of Mahomes' career.

The struggle from beginning to end was very real. This word striving that we see back in Philippians 1 and verse 27, let's look at it together here.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stood firm in the spirit. Can we say these two highlighted words together?

[27 : 01] Striving together as one for the faith of the gospel. What does it mean? It means fighting or contending together. It means fighting shoulder to shoulder, or the contemporary English version says struggling side by side.

This is what Paul was hoping he would hear about the churches he had visited, specifically this one here in Philippi. This is what you and I are supposed to be doing in this life.

Struggling side by side. Is that how we would describe what we do as a church? This word, synathleo, means to struggle along with.

That's the word that we get this word striving or contending from. To struggle along with.

Y'all, what I want to do is struggle along with you in our partnership in the gospel. What I hope you do with each other is struggle along together in our partnership in the gospel.

[28 : 24] That is what we're supposed to be doing as a church. The struggle is real. And we have an opportunity to struggle together.

You're not alone. You're not on an island. Oftentimes it feels that way. I've visited churches in rural areas of this country that felt like they were alone, man. They're the only ones that really care and they're the only ones trying to do God's work.

And it's so refreshing to be able to go and tell those churches, y'all, there's churches all across your state, all across this country, and all around the world struggling together with you.

Fighting the same fight. And what we read in Philippians here, striving together. So we are the church. And we are together for the gospel.

That's what we're here for. We exist to propagate or advance God's kingdom. To get this message out.

[29 : 25] That's what we're here for. If not, if we have no purpose left here on this earth, then what's going to happen? God's going to bring us on home. We're all going to get together in heaven and have a beautiful forever more.

But until that day comes, we do have a purpose. And it's to be together for the gospel. So how do we do this? How do we strive or struggle together? Very quickly, there's some very clear and obvious points I want to share with you today before we leave.

Number one, we gather together. We gather together. Well, hey, y'all got that part down because you're here. All right? You're gathered. That's what the word church means. The word we get that from in the scripture is ecclesia.

It means a called out assembly. People would use it in the local governments back then. They'd say it's time for a city hall meeting or a town hall meeting. So let's get together into this ecclesia and let's conduct our business.

Let's gather and get this done. That is what God established for the church. It's what he envisioned that the church would be. This called out assembly. This gathering together of believers.

[30 : 31] It's not about this building. We could do this in the park. We could do this in somebody's house. But this place serves our needs and purposes well and we thank God for it. But what it is is the gathering of people.

So that is what we're called to do and that's the first thing the very basic foundation for our struggling together is we've got to get together. We've got to gather. So how do we do that?

Well, we have Sunday school classes at 930. We have worship service at 1045. Family worship on worship Wednesdays at 6 p.m. We have activities for all ages following that.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday we have evening d groups that happen. So we have all kinds of opportunities for you to gather together because the struggle is real and we've got to struggle along side by side.

So we gather together. The Chiefs were together for their Super Bowl. They gathered every Sunday and they gave it their all and sometimes they would mess up.

[31 : 31] Sometimes they would lose. But in the end they won. Now listen, you might hate the Chiefs and you might not care a lick about football and that's okay. You kind of wish I'd quit talking about them and move on to the rest of the sermon.

That's all right. Listen, we're going to do that. But today's Super Bowl Sunday so you got to just kind of put up with a little bit. Listen, we may not always win every victory.

We might lose some battles along the way but we know that ultimately we will hoist the trophy. You know why? Because Jesus paid the cost for us. Jesus already won the victory for us.

So if we keep struggling along together, we are assured of certain victory. So, how do we struggle together and win the fights that we have to fight every day?

We gather together. Secondly, we grow together. We grow together. It's not just about gathering. If you stop gathering, it's very unlikely you'll get to the growing stage.

[32 : 36] Maybe at some point you were growing. Maybe that growing has slowed down. We have so many opportunities to gather but not just gather but grow together in those gatherings.

Sunday school. We go deeper together in these classes. You get to know one another a little bit better. There's structured environment of teaching. Sunday school at 930.

We have classes for all ages from the littles all the way up to those who are not so little or little in age anymore. Sunday school is a wonderful opportunity.

It's been around a long time and I encourage you all to look at a finding a class if you don't have one at 930 to go deeper together. That is a wonderful way to grow.

So starting point is an outstanding option to lay a firm foundation in this Christian faith. What does the Bible teach us? What do we know about God?

[33 : 35] And how can we get to know him better? What purpose does he have for my life? And these are some basic foundations of the Christian faith that we're going to be starting next Sunday. So that's why I encourage you look into that.

See if you'd like to come join us upstairs room 201 for starting point Sunday sermon proclaiming and applying the gospel. God called certain of his shepherds to stand before his people and proclaim the good news of Jesus and apply it not just read the scriptures but give the understanding of them.

That has to come from the Holy Spirit. So you have to look and listen and judge everything that I say by the words of scripture and then learn from it and allow God to grow you from what is preached what is taught in Sunday school what is taught in starting point what is preached on Sundays Wednesday workshops these are specialized Bible teaching.

We have it for the RAs and the GAs we have it for the teens we have it for the even younger ones who aren't quite old enough for RAs and GAs with their their what is that called worship friends and what's that mission for I think it used to be called mission friends and now Nala's calling a worship friends or something.

I don't know I can't keep it all straight. That's all right. It's a wonderful class for a little extra little kids but there is all kinds of opportunities for specialized Bible teaching on Wednesday nights.

[35 : 05] So if you're not here on Wednesday nights and you don't have a valid reason not to be pray about and talk about coming and joining us on Wednesday nights God is working here in our church all throughout this campus on Wednesday nights and that's a great opportunity to grow together as a whole family.

It's not just a class for adults or a class for kids or teens it's all of us together worshipping together in here and then we split off and we can all grow together from our Wednesday night time and then discipleship groups.

It's a wonderful opportunity to grow together. It's slightly a different vibe from Sunday school. Both are necessary and both are important but discipleship groups are we call them d groups are more about community and sharpening each other and we will maybe study through a book of the Bible or study through a book about the Bible or whatever the curriculum might be for that that group each one decides their own right now.

But these are wonderful opportunities to get to know each other to let the the walls drop to let trust start to build and we'll talk about that more in just a moment.

But growing together say man I can I can read the Bible. I've got everything I need right here. Why do I need to go do it with other people around?

[36 : 23] Because if you've read the Bible then you know a verse that says iron sharpens what? Iron. We sharpen one another.

God determined because he knew us because he created us. He set this whole thing up. He knew that we would need each other in order to grow well.

You can grow a little bit by yourself. You can grow a whole lot more together because that's how God designed it. So if you want to take what he designed and do it your own way you're never going to see the results that he planned to give you.

You've got to follow his recipe. So we gather together for the purpose of growing together. Go to these dGroups.

We went to one on Wednesday night this last semester at the Clark's house. And I can tell you I know everyone in that group so much better now than I did when we started. We've shared things that I would never have known had we not been in that dGroup together.

[37 : 36] We prayed for things. Talked about things. We exposed vulnerability struggles in our own lives. Talking about faith over fear in our group. This is an opportunity for growth that does not happen outside of Christian community.

So pray and seek God's face. How can I grow together? How can I see the opportunities that are right in front of me that I could grow together? Take that next step. One to gather together.

Two to grow together. And then third we give together. We give together. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 15 and 16.

Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise but as wise. Making the best use of the what? Time. So that's one thing we give.

We give our time. We give our time to the Lord. Say God I have a lot going on. Especially if you've got kids. How many of your kids are not involved in anything that ever takes you away or ties you up for anything.

[38 : 42] I don't think there's a soul in here that could raise their hand. Kids are always involved in stuff. And that's a good thing. Keeps them out of trouble. Right? But it also can tie up your time.

So you've got to be very intentional in giving your time to the Lord. Because everybody's going to be coming for your time. Your family. Your family. The school. Your work.

Your friends. Your neighbors. The government sometimes. Yourself. Your own desires. Passions. Weaknesses.

It will all be coming for your time. And usually who loses out on your time is the Lord. That should be the first fruits.

We've got to look wisely at our schedule and how we walk every day and make the best use of our time. Say number one, I've got to make sure my family's taken care of.

[39 : 38] I've got to make sure they're safe, healthy, provided for. But I've got to also give my time to the Lord. What does he want from me today? Maybe there's a conversation he wants me to have. Maybe there's a group he wants me to attend.

Maybe there's a gathering of the church I need to make sure we're at. Because I understand we've got to gather together. We've got to grow together. And we give together. We give our time together.

If it was only a very few who gave their time, this church would not be able to be the church that it is today. And if there are not more who are willing to give their time, then this church will never be the church that God wants it to be tomorrow.

So we've got to together make the best use of our time. 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 10. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received.

To do what? To serve others. As faithful stewards of God's grace. So we have talents. We have time to give, but we also have talents to give.

[40 : 40] How many of y'all think you are just super talented? You're all too scared to raise your hand. Thank you, Harlan. We all know you're talented, man. Listen, I appreciate somebody.

Yes, Tripp. Yes, Bo. Love you guys. You're awesome. Tripp's talented. I'm not sure about Bo. He takes after me. I'm kidding, dude. You're super talented too.

Look, truth is, every one of you should be raising your hand. You know why? You may not be talented at the things you wish you were talented at, but the truth is, God has given you talents, and he's given you all you need to use that talent for his glory.

That talent might be listening to somebody talk. The talent might be praying for somebody. The talent might be thinking kind thoughts about somebody else that then turn into actions of kindness.

There could be all kinds of talents that you haven't necessarily been giving or using to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace.

[41 : 50] God has shown enough grace to us to give us what we need to make a powerful impact for his kingdom. Why isn't a powerful impact being made?

Because so often, we don't use the gifts and the talents we have to serve him, much less others. So we give our talent together, we give our time together, and then finally, we give our treasure together.

Matthew 6, 21, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. So. What do you treasure? Well, normally we treasure money.

Why do we treasure money? Because of what money can do for us. We think money is going to buy us happiness. We think money is going to give us that retirement that we need. We think money is going to allow us to go on that trip or buy that toy or whatever it is.

Kids are saying, buy toys. Adults buy toys too? Just go look at the amount of big trucks or ATVs or whatever. You'll see the toys that adults buy, okay? Boat, whatever.

[42 : 55] There's nothing necessarily wrong with those things unless they become God to you, unless they become more important than giving that treasure to the Lord.

So we have to look, take a hard look at ourselves and say, where is our heart? Where does our heart lie? Where does the bulk of our treasure lie? That's where our heart is. So if you're not choosing to willingly, from a willing, happy heart, contribute some of your treasure back to God's work, then you're not investing in what will bring you God's blessings.

If you invest in God's kingdom, the return on that is so much greater than any other investment you can make because it's an eternal return. Something that will never tarnish.

Something that will never fade away. Something that will never break. So God's kingdom is a place for your treasure. It's a safe place for your treasure.

Say, I don't always like everything the church does or I don't always like everything that Christian organization does. Say, that's true because it's run by humans. But God takes our investment into his work, however flawed it might be, and blesses us accordingly.

[44 : 22] That principle is all throughout the Bible. If you give according to what God, that thing just came undone and I apologize. Don't laugh at me, Nancy.

There we go. All right. That little clip came off. That's what we give together. We give our treasure. Willingly. Not because we're thinking, not because we're guilt tripped into doing it and not thinking, man, somebody's gonna be mad if I don't give my tithe this month.

That's not what it's about. That's not even what will get God's blessings in return. He blesses those who give from a willing spirit. So we give our time, we give our talent, and we give our treasure.

We gather together, we grow together, we give together, and then here's the last thing. We go together. The Bible says, you will be my witnesses, Acts chapter one and verse eight, in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

This is where we are supposed to go. So what does that mean? Do we all have to pack up and go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth? No. We can apply that.

[45 : 30] Remember how we take scripture and we read it and then we apply it to ourselves? What does it mean? Jerusalem would mean our family, our town, our immediate area, where we live.

That's where we go. What do we go to do? We go to share the gospel. We go to share the good news. We go to be salt and light. So we go to our family, our town, our area, then we move on to Judea and Samaria.

What would that be? Our state, our nation, America, the people that we understand sometimes, the people that theoretically think and look like us as Americans, as Texans.

That's our Judea and Samaria. And then the ends of the earth. We can't forget about those who have never heard the gospel, those who don't have the same amount of churches and opportunities to grow together, to gather together.

So we go there as well. And that's through this idea called foreign missions. And we support it through the International Mission Board. We support what's being done across our nation through the North American Mission Board.

[46 : 37] We support what's being done across our state in missions through Texas Baptists. And we have a chance to fulfill the command that God gave us all throughout.

Mark 16, Matthew 28, Acts 1, to go together to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Now, practically, how do you do that?

Because I'm pretty sure y'all have heard before from a preacher or a teacher to go out and share the gospel. But practically, how do you do that? We've got invite cards.

See the top picture there? We've got little square invite cards, have our logo on it, have our service times on the back. Very, very simple thing to hand to somebody. You can go to the office and pick them up.

If we run out, we'll order more. They're not that expensive, pretty easy to keep on top of. We've got a budget line item for it. And we can equip you with as many invite cards as you need.

[47 : 36] Men, stick a couple of them in your wallet. Or if your wallet's not the right size, stick them in your pocket. Ladies, stick them in your purse. Have those invite cards, keep them in your car. You never know when God's gonna give you an opportunity to invite someone to church.

Why do we care about them coming to church? Talk back to me. Why do we care about people coming to our church? Exposure to the gospel. They'll hear the gospel here.

We know that. We don't know if they go to just any church around the whole area if they're gonna hear a clear presentation of the gospel. Some of them, they will. And we thank God for that. But we know they will hear the gospel here.

They'll have a chance to find Christian community here. They'll have a chance to grow together, to gather together, to give together, and then in turn to go back out together. We know the opportunity is here for them to become disciples, followers of Jesus.

So that's why we invite them to come. Now that doesn't always mean that they're gonna come right away. Sometimes it takes a long established relationship and friendship before someone opens up to you enough to trust you to go try your church.

[48 : 43] You know? And that's alright. Maybe that's how it should be sometimes. But we have opportunities, utilities, tools for you to take and go invite somebody to church. And then that can start a conversation that could maybe allow you to share the gospel.

How do you do that? Man, your testimony, your personal testimony is a wonderful way to share the gospel with somebody else. You know why? Because they can't disagree with you. They can't argue with your testimony.

Your story of how you became a follower of Jesus, that's individual and unique to you. They can argue with you about something in the Bible. They can argue with you about something you believe.

But they cannot dispute your personal experience with Jesus. And if you share that and use scripture in doing it, even if it's just John 3, 16, that is something that God could use to touch that person's heart and over time change their way of thinking where they respond to God calling them into a relationship with Him.

So your personal testimonies are powerful. I would have three testimonies ready. I would have the 30-second version. You know, I used to be a mess and over time God changed my life and made me who I am today and I'm not perfect but He has made such a powerful impact in my life and I give Him all the glory for it.

[50 : 12] It's your 15, 20-second version. No more than 30 seconds because oftentimes you don't have time to get into the whole story with somebody of what Jesus has done for you. But you might have 30 seconds with them.

So have that ready. And then I would have a two-minute version of your testimony ready. Something a little bit longer, a little more details but it's still not going to bog them down where they feel like they're never going to get out of this conversation.

And then I would have the full story ready. If you have an opportunity, you've got 10, 15, 20 minutes with somebody where you could really go through the whole story, the fascinating, powerful, divine story of what God has done in your life.

That's your testimony. I would have three of them ready. Go back, talk to your spouse, look at yourself in the mirror and tell that story, all three versions. 30 seconds, two minutes and then the full thing.

And then finally, who's your one? This is an initiative, a campaign that we're going to be starting very soon. So in the next several weeks, we'll be rolling out this evangelism campaign.

[51 : 21] So this is to equip our church with tools that will allow you to go out and share the gospel with somebody else. What it boils down to is you thinking through the people in your life and choosing one name, one face that needs to hear the gospel of Jesus and then praying through how can God use me to help see that one person respond to Jesus Christ, choose to become his follower.

You'll hear so much more about that in the weeks to come, but keep an eye out for that. Who's your one? And start thinking who is one person that I could share Jesus with?

So our takeaway from today is this. We are the church together for the gospel. So let's ask ourselves, what are the next step that I can take in gathering, growing, giving, or going so together we can actually make a difference for God's kingdom?

Everybody has something they wish was different about their life. Everybody has something they wish was different maybe about this church. Everybody has something they wish was different about America.

You can't make a difference on your own, but together we can. God never designed us to do this life on our own, but together we can.

[52 : 55] Sounds like a political slogan or something. Together we can. Probably has been. But that is how God decided. So, what about you? Would you bow your heads with me right now?

What about you? Is it gathering? Do you need to be more faithful to the gatherings of this church? Is it growing? Have you been ignoring opportunities to grow your faith together?

Is it giving? You've been holding back in your time, your talent, or your treasure? Or is it going? Is there somebody you can share your testimony with?

Give an invite card to. Who's the one person that God could use you to help change their life? What is the next step in one of these areas?

Maybe it's more than one. Maybe it's gathering and growing. Maybe it's giving and going. Whatever it is for you, I'm asking right now that God would speak to you. My voice isn't going to get you far enough.

[53 : 55] God's voice has to come through and speak to you right now to show you what is my next step. It's going to be a struggle, folks, but we can struggle together.

We can strive together for the faith of the gospel and that's what's going to change. That's what's going to make a difference. God, right now, I pray for this church.

I pray for your people that are gathered here in this room today. I pray that you would show us how to do this life together, how to struggle together side by side so our world is impacted in ways that only you can.

It's in Jesus' name we ask it. Church, if there's somebody here who doesn't know Jesus as Savior, you need to place your faith in Him for the first time, please come down and talk to me.

I'd love to have that conversation with you. If you'd like to place your membership in our church, let's meet down here and talk about it. If you'd like to get involved in a different way than you have been, let's sit down and talk about it.

[55 : 06] But whatever it is, you do business with God right now as Jared leads us in song. love you, Lord.

Oh, your mercy never fails me. all my days I've been held in your hand the moment that I wake up until I lay in my head I will sing of the goodness of God.

and if you can on this chorus all my life He's been faithful all my life you have been faithful sir, if you need to pray all my life you have been so, so good with every breath that I am made Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God I love your voice You have led me through the fire in darkest nights You are close like no other I've known you as a father I've known you as a friend Oh, I have lived in the goodness of God

Chorus out all my life All my life you have been faithful All my life you have been so, so good with every breath that I am made Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God I will sing I will sing God, you are good You're so good We are not We struggle we mess up but thank you for giving us each other to struggle together Help us to be faithful to gather to grow give and go together so your light can shine brightly in this world in Jesus in Jesus' name we pray Amen Y'all, thanks for being in church today

We will see you next Sunday Don't forget Wednesday night and if you are part of our Discovering First Baptist Lunch we will see you in the back through the ■ through the Thank you.

[58 : 46] Thank you.