

Serving The Lord by Serving Others

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[0 : 0 0] you turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians with me, Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. This is our second to last sermon in this series, and I'm a little bit sorry to see it close. I've thoroughly enjoyed diving into this book. It is one of my favorite to read in the New Testament, and I have thoroughly enjoyed sharing it with you and what God has given me along with you. Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians chapter 6. We'll read down through the first nine verses today, and then next Sunday, anybody want to guess what the topic is going to be? Armor of God. There you go. That's good. If you have kind of cheated and read ahead in Ephesians, that's all right. Ephesians 6, the second half there, talks about the armor, so to speak, that a Christian can wear to protect him against the attacks of the evil one, and so we're looking forward to diving into that. But today, we're going to be talking about serving God by serving others. The book of Ephesians has been divided up into two sections. First section is who we are, and the second section is how we live. That's right. Much of my study for this series has come from these two books, Christ-centered exposition and the Bible exposition commentary.

Those are good resources. The background of the book, written by the Apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament around the year A.D. 62, and he wrote it from prison in Rome, likely under house arrest, after he had been the pastor of this church that he's writing this letter to back in Ephesus for about three years. And you can read his exploits during that time back in Acts chapter 19. So the breakdown, boy, they just divided it nice in half there. The first three chapters are our identity in Christ, who we are in Christ. The second three chapters talk about the practical side, what we're supposed to do, how we're supposed to live. And so that's what we've been talking about in this second half. Today, we're talking about, I'm sorry, last week, last week we talked about mutual submission.

And we covered kind of the second half of Ephesians 5. And that was understanding the lesson that we submit to God's Spirit within us when we voluntarily, willingly submit to each other.

Whether that looks like husbands and wives or fellow believers. And today we're going to get into more of these relationships. So this mutual submission theme carries on through our reading today in Ephesians 6. So let's keep that in the back of our mind as we get into it. Today I'll be reading from the New Living Translation, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 1. If you're able to and willing, would you join me in standing and let's read Ephesians 6 verse 1. Children, any kids still in the room?

I know a lot of them are off in junior church, but I think we've got some of the older kids in here with us. Ephesians 6 verse 1. Children, all right, children, anybody paying attention? They're talking to you. Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.

[3 : 25] Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment. Remember those 10 commandments that God gave Moses back in the Old Testament? This is the first commandment that has a promise attached to it. If you honor your father and mother, things will go well for you and you will have a long life on the earth. Okay, now we're moving on to fathers. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. And finally, masters, treat your slaves in the same way.

Don't threaten them. Remember, you both have the same master in heaven and he has no favorites. Let's pray together. God, I ask that you would open our minds and give us clear understanding of the words that we read from Ephesians 6 today. Help it to impact us, change the way we think, change the way we live. In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. Thank you for standing.

We saw a lot of different categories of relationships here, didn't we? So the topic we're going to talk about today that kind of carries through all these relationships and even started back in the second half of the previous chapter is this, serving the Lord by serving others.

Mutual submission, not regarding one of us as higher or more important or greater than another, mutually submitting to one another, and serving God by serving each other.

So that's the theme that we're going to be talking about today. And the first category we read here in Ephesians 6 is kids, children. Kids obey God by obeying their parents. Let's look back at verse 1 down through verse 3. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. That's what my Bible read growing up.

[6 : 10] Obey your parents in the Lord. And I love how the New Living Translation kind of expands on that. It says, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord. Kind of clarifies. What are we saying?

What are we saying when we say you're in the Lord? We're saying you belong to the Lord. So because you belong to God, you should obey your parents. Why? Because verse 2 goes back to the commandment that God gave so many centuries earlier, honor your father and mother. And there's a promise attached to that command.

If you honor your father and mother, things will go well for you. You'll have a long life on this earth. And we don't know and how long exactly we're given to live. And God even tells us, don't number your days. Don't begin to predict how long of a life you'll have on this earth.

There's no, tomorrow is not guaranteed. There's no promise or guarantee that you'll have the next 10, 15, 20, 50 years. But God does say you will have a long life. And I believe the connotation is a full life. The meaning there is a full life that will be as long as God planned for you to have on this earth.

If you do that simple thing of honoring your father and mother and children, that means obey. When you become an adult, sometimes honoring your mom and dad can take on different perspectives, different angles, different ways of honoring your mom and dad as the relationship takes on a new stage.

[7 : 47] But we are continually for our entire life to honor our mom and dad and children. That means obedience to your mom and dad. Kids, that means you've got to obey them, even if you're mad at them. Even if you're justified, even if you're right and you know they're wrong, you've still got to obey your parents. God says it. He commands it. And there's a reason for it. Those are the people that he has placed in your life to give an account to him for the job they did in raising you. They will stand before God and answer for how they raised you, how they trained you. And so your responsibility as a child is to honor them and honor God because you belong to God. He has assigned you to those parents.

And so you honor God and you serve God by serving them. Let's look at a couple other verses that kind of say a similar command. Children, Colossians 3, always obey your parents for this pleases the Lord.

Now let me just tell you a little sneak peek ahead. We're going to be going back and forth from Ephesians 6 back to Colossians 3 throughout this entire day. And we could have even done it last Sunday, but I was kind of saving it for this week. Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 and 6 are what we call parallel passages. They're going to have very, very similar commands. Why? Because those were written to two different churches, one in Colossae and one in Ephesus. But God gave the same commands in many ways to both churches. So Paul wrote about both of them in his letters to these churches. So we get to read back and forth and see the similarities in these two passages. And the first one is to children.

Children, always obey your parents. I love how he put that word in there. Always. Sorry kids, you've always got to obey. Even if your parents aren't asking you the thing to do that you want to do or the thing that you think will actually work, your responsibility is just to honor God by honoring them and obeying them in this season of your life. Because this pleases God. It won't please God if you can turn back around and say, that's why I didn't do that because you were wrong and I was right. That's not what's going to please God. You being right. What's going to please him is you humbling yourself before God by humbling yourself before your parents and saying, okay, I understand that God wants me to obey you and so I'm going to honor God by obeying you. Exodus 20, 12. Here's the commandment. Here's the commandment they were talking about. Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you. God holds the keys to life and death.

We want to honor God by honoring our father, heavenly father. And then he promises he will give you that long full life. Proverbs 23 verse 22. Listen to your father who gave you life. By the way, just a general reminder, you wouldn't be here if it wasn't for your mom and dad. Okay, you wouldn't be here. Listen to your father who gave you life and don't despise your mother when she is old. God knows that as we get older, sometimes our minds can get weaker. Sometimes our bodies definitely get weaker. Sometimes we're not what we used to be, right? That's not that's not your concern. You don't have to worry about that.

[11 : 24] God says don't despise your mom and dad because of that. They love you. They gave you life. It poured so much into you that you'll never even know or remember. And you can honor them. You honor God by honoring them. So children, obey your parents. You obey God by obeying your parents. Parents, on the other hand, obey God by loving their kids well. Parents, we obey our God by loving our kids well. Let's look back at Ephesians 6 verse 4. Fathers. And look, mothers, you don't get left out here as well. But God instituted, like we talked about last week, the father as the leader of the home. We're supposed to mutually submit to each other, mutually serve each other. But God did put that leadership role on the father's shoulders, that responsibility. And so he addresses the fathers to set the tone in the home by not provoking your children to anger or wrath by the way you treat them. Don't intentionally push your kids buttons as good as it feels sometimes because they've been driving you up the wall pushing yours all day. We can't respond in anger, right? Our children are developing. Their brains are developing. Supposedly, our brains are fully developed, right? We don't always act that way. But do not provoke your children to wrath by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction, your Bible might say nurture and admonition, that comes from the

Lord. That should be the tone of our home. Loving our kids well, giving them an accurate view of who God is and how God treats us. That should be how we're treating our children. Now, if any of you have been perfect in that role, I would love to meet you and you should write a book afterwards. But I don't think any of us have any of us have none of us are going to be perfect parents. Kids are thinking right now, I knew my parents weren't perfect. Problem is, none of you are perfect kids either. All of us are imperfect, right? And so our relationships bear the fruits of our imperfect treating of each other. So, Colossians, back again in chapter 3.

Fathers, do not aggravate your children or they will become discouraged. Have you ever seen your kids get discouraged? I know I have. And mine are young. They're about to be nine and seven. I've seen them get discouraged. I've seen them get discouraged as after, as a direct result of the way I treated them.

I have seen my treatment of them cause discouragement in their faces, in their countenance, in their heart. I've seen it. So, I have to instantly learn in that moment, I went astray. I provoked them to wrath or I crushed their spirit. Don't aggravate your children. You'll either cause anger or discouragement frequently in your children. And often that'll lead to resentment. And resentment can lead to rebellion.

Rebellion is a dangerous, dangerous path to walk. Because then you're not walking according to the Holy Spirit of God. You're walking to what seems right in your eyes in getting back at someone else and rebelling against what you were taught. And then the baby goes out with the bathwater. You understand?

[15 : 14] Then it's not just, I'm mad at my dad. Now it's, I'm mad at God. I'm mad at the church. I'm mad at my parents. I'm mad at anybody who taught me this way because I reject that now. And now I walk a different path. You don't want to see your kids walk down that path. You don't want to see what becomes of your children or even your grandchildren because you provoked your children to anger, which caused resentment, which caused rebellion. So, it might start with discouragement and then it might go to anger. There is a way to correct, to discipline, to instruct our children without causing discouragement and anger. And we've got to learn it. If we don't, then we have failed not only God, not only ourselves and our family. We've failed our children. We've failed future generations. Because we couldn't control our own spirit. We couldn't manage our own spirit by the power of God. You see how all this works together?

See how it all builds on top of each other? You and I have to maintain our personal relationship with Jesus. We have to say no to the flesh and yes to God's spirit because our children need us in that space. Our children need that version of us. Our spouses need that version of us. When we continually live in that flesh and say yes to ourselves, our homes are not filled with harmony. Our homes are harmful.

Proverbs 22. Direct your children onto the right path. And when they're older, they won't leave it. If you, in a godly, loving, compassionate way, direct your children onto the right path, then when they're older, they won't leave it. There might be a time when they walk away from that path, but they'll find their way back because you showed them who God really is. And once they go off and taste something else like the story of the prodigal son, and all of a sudden, everything that looked so attractive turns out to not be so attractive, and all the allure of chasing your own desires and your own sinful flesh doesn't work out as well as they thought it would, then they'll remember how good God really was. How right the instruction about God that their parents gave them really was. So we've got to direct our children on the right path and do it in a loving way, in a tender way, in a compassionate way, in a consistent way, managing our own flesh and emotions. So when they're older, they'll remember, boy, God is good, isn't he?

I've got to run back to God. There's a concept here. I mentioned it a moment ago, the harmonious home versus a harmful home. What do we mean by harmonious? It means we're living in harmony. Y'all heard how good the choir sounded up here, didn't you? I thought they sounded good. I don't know.

You know why they sound so good? Because they're singing in harmony with each other. You've got your altos, and you've got your sopranos, and your tenors, and your basses, and how many of you looked at, you know, I don't know if we still have the the hymnals in there. You can look, you can see the different parts in music written, and when all those parts are mixed together, it's this beautiful harmony that sounds so much better than if we were all just singing one same part.

[18:51] So that is how a home is supposed to live. We're supposed to live in harmony with each other. We're not all filling the same role. We're not all exactly the same. We don't all think about things the same way. We don't all want the same things. But when we are all pursuing God and trying to serve God, then we serve one another, and we're not living in discord, we're not producing this sound that's hard to listen to, which is probably more characteristic of our home sometimes, unfortunately.

But instead, we would be producing this beautiful music, so to speak, okay? And that would be the way our home moves forward. Sometimes we hit a wrong note. Sometimes we hit a wrong key. And in that moment, we have to apologize. We have to humble ourselves before God and before each other and go back so as not to produce a harmful home. Instead, a home full of harmony. So parents, here's the question. Are you in it for the long haul with your kids? There's two ways of approaching this. One is giving your kids whatever they want? Because that satisfies the initial controversy. It satisfies the initial bumping of heads. I want this. You won't give it to me. I don't like you. Fine. Here, you can have it. Are you happy now?

How many times have we treated our children that way, whether they were a baby or a toddler or an elementary age kid, junior high, high school? How many times has that been the relationship and the response with our children? Or on the other side, it's the overly harsh side. You better do what I say or you're going to regret it. You better listen to me. You better do this just because I told you to and shut up and sit down. That might get obedience. But is that provoking them to anger, to wrath?

That's going to build up bitterness, resentment? They just can't wait to get out of your house so they can do what they can do. They can do what they want instead of what you make them do. Both can produce immediate results. They're happy they got what they wanted or they're scared for what's going to happen. Now, y'all, we've got to discipline our kids and there is a healthy fear fear of God and of parents, but it's got to be a healthy fear. We owe it to our children to not live in either extreme. God doesn't deal with us that way. God deals with us patiently. He works through our hang-ups. He works through our frustrations, our fears. He works through them with us patiently year after year after year after year, getting us to understand who he is, how much he loves us, what's important. Think about the journey that you've been on with God and how long that's taken.

So the question is, do we treat our children the same way? Are we in it for the long haul with our children, not just for immediate moments of peace or immediate moments of order?

[22 : 34] Are we consistently showing our children this is who God is? And I'm not always going to be perfect, but that's a big part of who God is, how he treats us when we're not perfect.

So are you in it for the long haul with your kids? Number three, employees. Employees. Now, we read the word slaves in our Bible, and that was the world they were living in. Remember how a couple weeks ago, I think it might have been last week, we talked about how patriarchy was not the message of the Bible, it was the cultural backdrop of the Bible. Same thing for slavery. Slavery was certainly not the message of the Bible, it was the cultural backdrop of the Bible. So that's how the world was when Paul was writing to them back then. There were slaves and masters, and we read about a specific slave in the New Testament named Onesimus. So instead of slavery, which, thank God, God is a God of freedom and liberty, and in our world today, slavery is illegal just about everywhere, though it still is in existence, oftentimes in the case of human trafficking. And so nowadays, we can institute that word employees into slaves. So employees, obey your earthly masters or your earthly leaders, authorities, supervisors, bosses. With deep respect and fear, serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Try to please them all the time, not just when they're watching.

As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Let's look back at Ephesians 3 again. Remember our parallel passage? Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they're watching you. You see how closely this runs together?

Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Boy, God must really want us to get this if he puts it into two different letters to two different churches. It's the same commands, the same instructions. And he included both of them in our holy scriptures, which he has preserved all the way to 2024 and beyond. Okay? So God must think this is really important. Let's pay attention to it. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the master you are serving is Christ. But if you do what is wrong, you'll be paid back for the wrong you've done.

God doesn't have any favorites. Okay? So think about that concept that the master we are serving is Christ. If you work for Sonic, the master you're serving is not Sonic, it's Christ. And God has placed an earthly master over you, and he is telling you, you must then treat that master as you would treat your heavenly father, your heavenly master. Okay? Christ is a good master.

[25 : 47] So it's easy to show him love. It's easy to be grateful for him. But sometimes it's hard to show love and be pleasing to our earthly masters who are not always good masters.

But that is how we show them who Jesus is. That's how we show them how Christians really should be. That even when we're poorly treated, even when we're mistreated, we still show the same kind of obedience, respect, love that we would show to our heavenly master.

So that's the concept here. Look over Matthew chapter 5, verse 16. This is from the New International Version. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. That's what it's talking about. When you have an opportunity in the middle of the darkness of your workplace to let your light shine, then people are drawn to that light.

And the goal is not for them to glorify you, it's to glorify God who shines that light through you. That's evangelistic. That's evangelistic. Employee ship. Is that a word?

Evangelistic working. All right? That's showing Jesus to other people through our work. Say, man, I work on a ranch. How am I supposed to show? Well, whoever you work with, show them what Jesus would look like working on a ranch. Show them what Jesus would look like working in an office. Show them what Jesus would look like teaching in the school. Show them what Jesus would look like wherever God leads you in this world. Show them what Jesus would look like there.

[27 : 44] How am I supposed to do that? With God's help. He wants to help you do that. That's his goal for you. So if you open up your heart and lay aside your own fears and anxieties and let God take over, he can do things through you that you never thought possible. Believe me, I have lived that.

I've seen that happen. So we must let our light shine before others that they see our good deeds and don't glorify us, but glorify our Father in heaven. Y'all remember this song?

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. It's a good song, isn't it? Shine all over Henrietta. Shine all over Clay County. Shine all over your home. Shine all over your job site.

Shine all over wherever you are. God has given you that light and you can let it shine. So how do we serve our leaders well? Specifically, number one, give the same respect, enthusiasm, and effort we would give God himself. How do we serve our leaders well? We give the same amount of respect that we would give to God himself. That's not blasphemous. That's what we are instructed to do. As though our master was Christ himself. We give the same amount of respect.

We don't talk to them or talk, ready for this, about them like we would someone that we don't respect. Humanly speaking, you might not respect your master, but you're not serving him. You're not serving her.

[29 : 32] You're serving God. He's your master. So because you love God and you want to let your light shine and not be just another contributor to the darkness, not just another employee who's talking bad about their supervisor behind their back, who's griping and complaining with legitimate reason and cause, instead, you're going to let your light shine and go against the grain and give that same respect that you would to God. You're going to give the same enthusiasm that you would if God was your boss.

You're going to give the same level of enthusiasm. There might be nothing that really appeals to you about the work you do on a given day in your job. There might be nothing exciting about that, but you're going to get excited about it because you're serving God. You woke up that day and God not only kept you alive and kept you fed with a roof over your head and maybe a family to wake up to who loves you and loves the Lord and maybe a church family who loves you and loves the Lord. He also provided a healthy enough body for you to go to work. He provided a job for you to pay your bills.

He provided all of this for you. So whatever work that God has put on your plate, you're going to tackle it with enthusiasm. Whatever you do, do it heartily. Do it with all your mind, all your soul, all your strength as unto the Lord and not unto people. So give the same respect, enthusiasm, and give the same effort that we would give for God himself. How many of y'all have ever had a day when you just wanted to mail it in? It's like, look, I showed up, okay? I'm here. What more do you want from me? I get it, y'all.

There are days like that, but that cannot be how we're known. That cannot be the norm for us. And in those moments, we've got to find five minutes, whether it's a bathroom break or whatever you got to do, and get alone and say, God, I can't today. So you're going to have to, you're going to have to help me.

Because I don't want to work for them. I want to work for you. And this is the work that you've given me to do. Help me to do it as though you had given it to me, because he has. That is the work he's given to you. For that day, for that moment, that is the task that he set before you. So that's how we serve our leaders well. And then secondly, we work for a heavenly reward. Why? The earthly reward may never come. You may not get the promotion. Your business may not take off how you thought it would or should. COVID might happen. Sickness might happen. Financial problems may crop up. There might be all kinds of problems that keep you from getting the earthly reward that you feel like you need or deserve or want. And the truth is, even if you get that heavenly reward, even if your ship comes in, so to speak, and it all works out better than you could have thought it would, because sometimes God does grant us those blessings and those seasons of plenty.

[32 : 52] Even if that comes in, it does not compare with the heavenly reward that is waiting for those who faithfully serve God. So how do we serve our leaders well? We show them respect.

We show them the enthusiasm and effort that we would show to God. And secondly, we work for our heavenly reward. He's promised it. He's promised us an inheritance if we faithfully serve in the here and now. Then someday, he's got the someday taken care of. And then finally, leaders. He doesn't leave the leaders and bosses out, all right? So leaders, obey God by loving their employees well. Let's look back at Ephesians 6 and we'll be done. Verse 9. Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Now, hopefully nobody in here has slaves, all right? But you might have employees. You might have people working for you.

You might be in the church in a leadership position in our church, whether you're in charge of a ministry team or a Sunday school class or in charge of a committee or serve on staff. Whatever leadership position that God has placed you in, in the job site, in a charity, in a non-profit, on a board, whatever God has placed you in a leadership capacity, you obey God by loving those under you well. Treat your slaves in the same way that he instructed slaves to treat their masters. Don't threaten them. Don't have that culture of fear. So back in Colossians, we've finished chapter 3, moved into chapter 4 now in that same passage over in Colossians. Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a master in heaven. You're not better than them. You're not greater than they are. God is your master, even if he has made you their master. And then Philippians 2, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves. How many bosses do you know that that characterizes? That describes them accurately. They value others above themselves.

Anybody ever had a boss like that? Boy, not many, huh? Not many. That's pretty rare, isn't it? Pretty uncommon. And if you did have a boss like that, you probably never forgot them. And you wish they were still your boss today. That is a rare leadership trait, but it is highly effective. Leaders, it's not your job to have all the praise and honor coming to you. It's your job to serve those under you well. It's your job to help them succeed. That's why you've been placed in that leadership role. It's not selfish ambition. It's not a career maker for you. It's not you trying to climb the ladder and get more for yourself. It's not trying to build that ego that's probably already too big. Instead, it's serving others well. So how do we do that?

How do we love well from a position of leadership? Number one, build a culture of mutual success and equality. Build a culture of mutual success and equality. If I succeed, we all succeed. If you succeed, we all succeed. We all want to succeed at the same time, not me above you. You're not working to contribute to my success, a leader would say. We're all working to be successful together.

[36 : 31] We're all equals in this. And then number two, resist a culture of fear and favoritism. These are the two warnings given to us in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4. Fear and favoritism. Okay, God doesn't play favorites and neither should a leader. God doesn't come at us from a perspective of fear.

You better watch out or I'll get you. That's not how God treats us. So we must not treat others that way. People are coming to work every day in fear for their jobs. That's not a healthy culture. That's not going to produce what you want it to produce. Same way as parenting. Might work in the here and now, but that's not going to work long term. Are you in it for the long term with your employees?

At the end of the day, my leadership effectiveness is not measured by what I'm able to accomplish, but by what those whom I lead are able to accomplish.

A leader's effectiveness is not measured by what you accomplished, but by what your team accomplished. How successful were the people that you were leading?

This slide came from last week and I kept it in here. The whole theme of this mutual submission, mutual service, whether it's husbands and wives, children and parents, bosses and employees, it's less hierarchy and more humility. It's less who's in charge and more how can I serve?

[38 : 07] That is an accurate picture of Jesus and that should be an accurate description of us in our relationships. So I challenge you, release the pressure of the pecking order. Embrace the blessing of mutual service. All right? I'm going to mention this verse again, but I keep mentioning it every Sunday. God can change the way we think. It's got to require that, okay? It's got to require God changing the way we think. This isn't naturally how we think and how we approach things. God's got to do the changing, the transforming within us to make us a new person. So here's a question for you.

How does God want to change my thinking to see my relationships as he would see them? How does God want to change my thinking to see my parent-child relationships, my workplace relationships as God would see them? How does he want to change me? We serve God when we willingly serve each other.

We serve God when we willingly serve each other. Would you bow your heads with me? God, I ask that you would reveal this to us. I can't individually apply the truth that you're teaching us here to every life.

I can't point to relationships that they have with children, with grandchildren, with friends, with employees, with supervisors, husbands, wives. I can't walk up to each person in here and say, here's the steps you need to make. Here's the changes you need to make. Here's how you need to change your thinking.

But God, you can do exactly that. So I ask that you would. That you would individually speak to every man, woman, and child in this room.

[39 : 58] Right now, in these quiet moments while the piano plays, I ask that you would speak to us, that you would open our hearts. Church, with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, let me ask you, let me speak to you directly for a moment. Nobody's looking around, but would you be bold enough to slip your hand up if you need to put your faith in Jesus for the first time today? If you need to understand that you have sinned, you are not perfect, but Jesus came down to this earth, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross. Then rose from the dead and proved that he was God.

And now he says, my death was a sacrifice for you. That blood that was shed on that cross that day can cleanse you of all your sin. It can offer you hope now. You can become my child. You can know that your future is secure if you'll put your faith in me for the first time. I'm not talking about coming to church or being a good person. I'm talking about placing your faith once and for all in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. If that's you and God's working on you right now, would you slip your hand up so I can pray for you?

Thank you. Let me ask you this question. How many of you would say, God is speaking to me about something else? Whether it's putting your membership in this church, whether it's changing how you approach a relationship in your life, would you slip your hand up if you just need prayer in this moment? Say, just pray for me and I'll pray for you. Would you slip your hand up? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You can put your hands down. God, you see these hands, but you know what's going on in each heart, in each mind.

I pray that you would jump right into the middle of that. Don't let the devil get in and convince these dear people of deceit and lies. I pray that your Holy Spirit would reign the day.

And I pray that we as a church would be a church that's known for how well we love. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.