

Why Church? God's Purpose

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan emphasizes the importance of community and collective giving in fulfilling the church's mission to glorify God and support those in need.

Duration: 47:21

Scripture: Exodus 25:22, Matthew 5:14-16, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the Bible beyond individual salvation. He uses the illustration of playing blackjack to highlight how often we focus only on our own relationship with God, rather than working collectively as a body of believers. The preacher also mentions the work of Children's Hunger Fund and their mercy networks, where supplies are sent to churches in need. He shares his admiration for a student who preached about the issue of isolation and the importance of community in helping those in need.

Transcript

I'm excited, we got a great morning today. There's just some great news. First thing I wanna do is bring up Mike Cook and he's got some friends with him and he will introduce them.

As they're coming up, another announcement real quick is if you haven't signed up yet, we have our golf tournament for Eternity Bible College for our students. It's kind of a fundraiser we do every year for the college so I invite you to do that. It's on Cinco de Mayo which fits because we have our friends from Mexico.

Isn't that a good transition? Okay. Here we go. My name is Mike.

This is Pastor Guillermo, his wife Alma and his son Hector and they have a daughter, Vanessa, who had to stay back because she had to do some schooling on Friday but they came up to visit. We've been going down there since I think October of last year, pretty much every month, a couple of times twice a month to visit them just to do what we can. Sometimes we go down there and just hang out, stay with them.

Sometimes we do some work. My wife and I, my wife Misty and all of our kids, we go down there and just do what we can but what I wanted to talk about was we've been talking about community and their church lives community every day. I mean, people are constantly, their house is adjacent to the church.

They're constantly coming in, coming by, grabbing a warm meal, a conversation. It's the young men of the church are teaching the youth of the church music every once a week. There's young women in there.

They're going to school, psychology school, to come back to be able to help the children that are there that are damaged by all of the social issues down there. So their living community, it's so neat to see it down there. And he has a few things he wants to share with you guys, just the stuff that we've been doing down there for them.

Okay, I'm going to have Ed stand back here just in case I don't know what he's saying. Okay. Dios los bendiga, amados hermanos.

God bless you, brothers and sisters. Es una bendición estar en Cornerstone. It's a blessing to be here at Cornerstone.

Conocerlos. And to know you. Saber que es una iglesia con mucho amor.

You guys have a, we know you as a church that has a lot of love. El tiempo que he tenido de conocer la iglesia, algunos como Miguel, como Pastor Steve, Jose Luis, algunos creo que conocer aquí, ha sido de grande bendición. Si, no, in the time that he's gotten to know us, in time he's gotten to know Mike, Pastor Steve Doucette, then what? Jose Luis, yeah, that one translates easy.

It's been a real blessing to get to know all these guys, that's what I thought. Hilarious. Estoy perdonando, sí.

Y conocer a su pastor, es un gran hombre. And I'm the greatest. De veras, mi corazón rebosa de alegría.

De gozo en el señor. My heart is full of joy, it rejoices. Dios nos ha permitido estar en Loma Linda, en Ensenada.

He lives in a city called Loma Linda, an area of Loma Linda, Ensenada. Donde tenemos un ministerio que Dios nos ha ayudado a salir adelante. Where there's a ministry where God has helped us move forward.

Donde estamos apoyando a niños de la calle. And they're helping the kids that live on the streets. Donde damos alimento a esos niños que a veces no tienen que comer.

There are people who have nothing to eat, yeah, the children especially. A pesar que nuestra iglesia es una iglesia cien miembros posible. It's only a hundred member church.

Dios nos ha ayudado a salir adelante. Oh yeah, okay. God's helped them move forward and grow.

La iglesia en Cornerstone. In our church, Cornerstone. Ha sido un apoyo para nosotros.

Has done a great work for them. Sus oraciones. Your prayers.

Unos meses atrás. A few months ago. Creo que algunos supieron que mi esposa estuvo muy enferma.

His wife got very sick. Si, y se que la iglesia en Cornerstone estuvo orando por ella. And it was cool to know that you guys were praying for her.

Y hoy, gloria a Dios porque esos tumores que mi esposa tenía. Yeah, those tumors that she had, he gives glory to God. Dios la ha sanado.

Because God has healed her. Si. Gracias a Dios.

So thank you. Si. All because of your prayers.

Oh, I'm gonna ask for your prayers right now. So I can move forward with the ministry. Continue to help the kids that are in need and don't have anything.

No clue. Oh, oh. The building.

Oh, oh, their belly. Okay. The children just hoping that their bellies get bigger or full.

Yeah. We're the opposite. I'm so confused.

Okay, it's been a blessing that our church gets to continue. We'll just give you a microphone next service. That continues to bless them.

Thank you very much, my brothers and sisters. Help us to pray. For our youth who are, the missionary youth that are going to Oaxaca.

Okay, this, one of their kids, a couple of their kids are going to Oaxaca with no money, but they just believe that God has placed them on a mission there, so they need our prayers. He wants to be a missionary in that place. They don't have money to help them.

But he said, you know what, I'm gonna go anyways. And he knows that God's gonna provide for him. He's a 19-year-old kid.

And he wants to go to this place. His name's Alfredo, and if you guys would pray, the spirit of God would just fall on him, and he would do a great work there. And that God would give him everything that he needs to have.

Poniendo una carga muy fuerte por las misiones. Oh, God's been challenging their church to do more missions. A lot of times they don't have the funds or the money.

But, oh, they don't have the funds to move the gospel forward. But I know that Cornerstone has a heart for missions as well. Yeah, that has a pastor that encourages you to work.

To go do missions. I'm sorry. I invite you, brothers and sisters, to move forward with that desire in your heart.

Thank you, and may God bless you. I'd like us to just pray for Pastor and his wife. Why don't you pray in Spanish so he knows what we're praying? Can you do that? Pray in Spanish? Yeah.

No, I won't translate. He knows what we're saying. God knows, he knows, and these guys don't matter.

Okay. Gracias. Gracias.

Amen. Amen. Gracias.

Gracias. Gracias. Gracias.

Gracias. Gracias. Gracias.

Gracias. Gracias. Gracias.

You know, what's cool is we're bringing up one of these partnerships, but, you know, like Mike and Misty, in their little community, in their neighborhood, a few families go down and help that church, and what's cool is this is one of several churches that different communities, like different neighborhoods, have kind of adopted, and it's just kind of cool that there are all these different little partnerships going on, and we want to give you one example of that. But we know many of you guys go down regularly to Mexico with some of your friends and bring supplies to some of our churches over there, and it's cool because it's just something we do together. It's not one individual doing all of this.

It's just like this neighborhood from Simi Valley is going to this neighborhood in Ensenada, and then another neighborhood's going to this neighborhood here in Tijuana, and this one's over in Ducati, and really, no one gets the glory for this except for the body of Christ, and all they know is there's some body of Christ that you guys will never meet them, they'll never meet you, you know, these people, but they just know, you know what? God is providing for us, and we are gonna support them. They got missions going on. They're a very missions-minded church, and sometimes we want to be tempted to just say, you know what, I'm gonna go up to him individually and give him a check, and there's nothing wrong with that, but there's something cool about the anonymity, too.

You know, like last service, people just said, you know, I'm just gonna put a little extra in the offering. Can you guys give them more? And so it's just kind of the body of Christ is blessing them rather than me as an individual, you as an individual, and that's kind of what we've been doing this year. I had some good news.

Children's Hunger Fund, if you remember, about nine months ago, as we changed our whole philosophy on giving and money, and we said we're gonna give away half of everything that comes in, and let's give an extra million dollars to Children's Hunger Fund over this year, and nine months ago, we made a commitment to give Children's Hunger Fund a million dollars over the next year, and now it's nine months later, and we just wrote the last check, and a quarter million dollars, so it's a million dollars that we gave them. It's just good to stop and not say, okay, what are we doing next? But just go, you know what, Lord, thank you. We were able to give a million dollars in nine months.

And I'm gonna tell you some of the things that we were able to do with that money, with that million dollars that we gave to Children's Hunger Fund, but I gotta tell you some other good news about this, because it's been crazy. I don't know if you remember the journey on this, but every time we had to write a check for a quarter million dollars, it was amazing how God provided. First time, we had the funds there, and we gave it, and the second time, we were really low on money.

No one knew, but coincidentally, the offering that Sunday, before we were gonna write our check, was \$251,000, you know, on that one Sunday, and none of you knew about it. It just happened to be the craziest week ever, you know? And then, our next check was due around December, and we're thinking, oh, with the recession and everything, and Christmas, but that became our biggest month of giving in the history of Cornerstone, and you guys gave a million dollars that month, again, not knowing. It was like, what in the world? So this week, we write our last check, right? We write our last check, and go, oh, we did it.

We were able to do the whole million dollars in nine months, and I sat down with the finance committee, and I wanted to give you a report of where we were in our debt, because for like the last 10 years, we've been trying to pay off this debt. Last 10 years, we've had about a million dollars that we've owed, you

know, up and down, and every year, it's like, okay, we're gonna pay it off, we're gonna pay it off, we're gonna pay it off, and I wanna tell you guys where we were, because we gotta do the building thing, in a couple months, and so we added up the total debt was \$1.46 million that we owed, and after writing the check to Children's Hunger Fund, I said, okay, so what do we have in the bank right now? \$1.48 million. Is that crazy? You guys, that is so insane.

Every year, we're thinking, we're gonna pay, we're gonna pay the debt, we're gonna pay the debt, and we're like, man, why is this thing still lingering? We gotta pay it off, pay it off, then the one year where we don't think about, the one year where we go, let's just go nuts, and let's just give away as much as we can, let's give away at least half of everything that comes in, let's give a million dollars at Children's Hunger Fund, that year, when we don't think about it, and we have \$1.46 million of debt, that on the week that we make our last check, it just randomly happens to be 1.48 left in the bank, and when we added up those numbers in that room, I just started crying. I literally, I just couldn't, I don't like crying in front of people, but I just started bawling, because I go, God, that is, that's insane. That is just so far beyond what we would've thought.

I mean, that doesn't make any sense. How can a healthy church have this debt for 10 years and try to pay it off and not be able to pull it off, and the one year we're not even thinking about it, and we're just giving like crazy that we happen to have that exact amount, plus another 20 grand left over once we pay off our debt, that's only God, and if you can sit here and listen to this story of how God's blessed this church over the year through the giving, and you can listen to that and go, I think it's coincidence. I just have to look at you and say, shut up, you know? There is no way, you know? There's just no way.

Man, it has been such a great year, and I, you know, a lot of us have experienced that personally, right? You know those years when you just say, you know, I'm just gonna give to this, I'm gonna give this, and then at the end of the year, you go, this doesn't make sense. How did everything work out? How was I able to pay for everything? But there's nothing like collectively now with these huge numbers saying we all got to experience this together, and with Children's Hunger Fund, let me just give you a snapshot of what we're able to do and understand one of the things that Children's Hunger Fund does and what I love about it is they've set up these mercy networks, and how this happens is we here in America, you know, we as Cornerstone Church, we pack up boxes, you know, sometimes we say, hey, fill these boxes with supplies for people, and so that we could send them over to the churches over there and go, hey, supplies. You know, here's a, here's a, that was stupid.

Okay, and here's a bunch of boxes, and then the churches, they set up, this is called a mercy network where they get the churches in Cambodia or Peru, in Africa, they receive these boxes, and then they go to the poorest of the poor and hand deliver these boxes and let them know this is coming from the body of Christ in America, and they begin relationships with them, and I love that because overseas, they never hear the name of Cornerstone. They don't hear any of your names. All they hear is the body of Christ over there in America, and so who do they have to thank? They just thank God.

They don't have a, they don't write letters to Cornerstone, they don't ever hear of us, and there's something so cool about that anonymity. Anyways, so they set up these networks and they were able to expand, even in America. Understand, this isn't just about overseas and caring about the poor.

Children's Hunger Fund does a huge work here in America. Right now, they're based in Pacoima, and that's their headquarters, and we're hoping to move that onto our new property so they can expand, but

they also started another distribution center in Chicago because the money that we've been given, but now they can help the states in that area, in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, and this year, just in the U.S. programs, more than 400,000 children have been fed and served through these ministries. Cornerstone funds were used to purchase 160,000 pounds of food, 160,000 pounds of food.

That's a lot of food, and then turn those into food packs and they deliver it to the poor, and through that, just in America, there were 8,000 people who gave their lives to the Lord through these relationships because they're not just sharing the food, they're sharing them hope of a new life, a better life through Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then overseas, the international programs, and again, I am just giving you little highlights because we would be here all day if we just named every little thing. So I'm breezing through this.

In Peru, they have this, again, a mercy network, and we're able to feed thousands of families, but just in Peru, there were 1,500 decisions for Christ and 300 home Bible studies started because of this food pack program and these mercy networks. We helped supply \$17 million of antibiotics and medicine that'll go to these Christian medical clinics out there because a lot of the pharmaceutical companies here have left over here in America in the year, and what we do is we put them in these containers and we're able to ship it over with the money that you guys gave, and so it really expands to where these \$17 million of antibiotics and everything else are distributed amongst these clinics, and you gotta understand, this medicine saves lives. It's not here where it helps you get your cold over a little quicker or, oh, I don't have to be down with the flu as long.

I mean, people die from preventable diseases. That's the crazy thing in these other places. Be so easy, it's a pill, it's a shot, but they don't have access to it, and we send these meals over.

CHF, this container has 240,000 individual meals, and there are these little rice packets that they boil with water, and we put vitamins inside of this rice meal that they eat so that it's not just rice, but it's actual nutrients, and in Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ghana, West Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, we also are sending over, not sending over, but we use the money, they said they've been able to purchase oxen, agricultural tools, and seeds so that they're actually planting themselves, and they've got these oxen now that are actually helping plow the fields for them. In Sudan, we sent two containers of that rice meal, so 480,000 meals were distributed in Sudan in conjunction with the Jesus Film Project. In Cambodia, we supply like 5,000 orphan children with these supplemental food shipments, and recently another container of 240,000 meals over there to Cambodia with the current food crisis that's going on over there.

But again, all of these things, I love it because there's anonymity, it's just we, it's just these people over there going, I don't know who gave it to us, they just say the body of Christ over there in America, and let's face it, there's something selfishly fun to do it yourself, okay? I mean, it's kind of fun to just say, wow, I built an orphanage over there, and they named it after me, or even, I mean, wouldn't it be cool if you knew in Uganda, there was this family, and you bought an ox for them, and they said, wow, we're so grateful that you bought us this ox that we named it after you, so I got this ox named Morgan, and you're thinking, wow, that's pretty cool, like I got this ox named after me because I paid for it, I bought it, it's my ox, and they have a picture of me in their house, he bought ox, and there is something selfish to go, man, it'd be cool if I had my own high school, I can go there, no, I did it, or a city, wouldn't that be cool, your own city, I'm gonna go visit Francis, and that's a town because I gave so much, and that's so American of us, to want the glory and want it to be about me, and yet it's so biblical for us to go, you know what, I'm just gonna write a check, no one knew I wrote a check, it's just going in this big pot, and so when they're getting ready

to thank someone, they don't thank me, they thank God, and say, God, you richly blessed a group of people in America, and then they blessed us, so thank you, God, and he gets the glory, that people would see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven rather than glorifying us, that's just something we're so focused on is this whole idea of we, we did something, together we did something, because this whole month, as we're talking about community, and I just need to personally confess, and it's a little bit embarrassing, almost, that the last few months, I've really been convicted and embarrassed that I've missed out on such a big theme in scripture. You see, the Bible is all about God, creating this people group, this group of people that will bring glory to him, but America is all about individuals isolated, bringing glory to themselves, I'm gonna take care of my family, I'm gonna take my stuff, it's about me, and so when we marry the two together, and we marry the Bible and America, then it's I come to church, I come to Christ for me, and what did the church do for me? Did I like the service today? I don't know if they took care of me well enough, and it's not this mentality of us, and yet, and I gotta confess that I have taken certain passages, obviously not purposefully, but I've taken certain passages and made them about individuals, individual passages, like to say that you, you as an individual, you are a light unto the world. You as a you, you Jason, you be a light unto the world.

Well, that's not what the passage says. The passage doesn't say, Heidi, you be a light unto the world, it says you plural, y'all, you know, which y'all doesn't even work, I was in Atlanta yesterday, Georgia, and I was in Texas last week, y'all doesn't work, because y'all is, they say that if it's just you, y'all fixing to eat, you know, it's like, just one of me, you know, but it's the idea of a, like all y'all, okay, that works, because then it's a, so those verses, the verses don't say, Bob, be a light unto the world, it says all of y'all, all of you together form one light, that the world would see your collective good deeds, plural, and glorify your Father who's in heaven. The passage in 1 Corinthians 3 says that, not just that you as an individual are the temple of God, but he says, you, you all, all of you all, you plurally make one temple.

Together you make one temple of the Holy Spirit, and God resides in you as a group, that God dwells in this temple, and you think about it, you think about last week, remember the passage we read about how no one has seen God, no one has seen God, but if we love one another, okay, if we collectively, we as a church get together, and we actually love each other collectively, that somehow there's a physical manifestation of God on our earth. I mean, think about it, this is so, so in line with in the Old Testament. If you lived in Old Testament times, and let's say you wanted to actually physically see God, okay, Old Testament times, you wanted to see God, some sort of physical manifestation of God Almighty on the earth, where would you go? You can say it out loud.

The temple, good, the temple. You would go to the temple, right? Because in that Holy of Holies, remember the Ark of the Covenant and everything else, that's the one place you could go to see God was the temple. Well, what does the Bible teach? You, in the New Testament, you collectively are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and if you collective, we loved one another, no one's ever seen God, people out there can't see God, but if we actually love one another, then we actually will become like the temple of God, and if people want to see God, they ought to be able to walk into a church and see the way we interact and love one another, and there'll be some sort of physical manifestation of God on the earth, but it's about we.

And I don't know if you've ever thought about this, because honestly, until this week, I have never thanked God, and that's embarrassing, I've never thanked God that I was a part of a larger body and a larger temple that's been called to declare His praises and His excellencies. I've thanked God for my individual salvation, I've thanked Him, God, thank you for saving me, thank you for forgiving me for this, this, this,

and all these things I've messed up, thanks for using me as an individual, but have I ever really just said, God, thank you? Then I get, I get to be part of this group that you've called out. See, and I was studying 1 Peter 2 this week, and in 1 Peter 2, I want you to look at this verse, I'm gonna put it on the screen, it says, "But you," again, plural, all of y'all, "all of you who have been saved "by the blood of Jesus Christ, "you," plurally, are, a chosen race, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, "a people group for His own possession, "that you collectively may proclaim the excellencies "of Him who called you out of darkness "into His marvelous light." See, I never, you know, until I was reading this, because God, God says, this is a privilege.

In that next verse, He talks about, it's not up there, but in the next verse, He says, you know, you once weren't a people, but now you're the people of God. See, you were on your own, you were just you as an individual wandering off by yourself, but now you get to be a part of something. This is, God's saying this as this incredible privilege that now He looks, that chosen, we are a chosen, it's literally what it says, He chose, He picked you, and said, I want you to be a part of this thing that I'm doing, I want you to be a part of this people group that I am creating on the planet.

You get to be a part of this group, and you guys together are a royal priesthood. You're like a bunch of priests coming together to form one priesthood. You're that conduit between me, God Almighty, and the earth, those who don't know me.

You are the ones I'm gonna use, you collectively as this priesthood. You are a holy nation. We're like our own nation.

When God looks down on the earth and He sees His believers together, we're like forming one spiritual nation, a holy nation, a nation that's different. We've been sanctified by Jesus Christ, we've been purified by Him, and we live by different standards. We're a holy nation.

See, this is plural stuff. No one walks around and goes, look, I'm a nation. No, it doesn't work that way.

You can't take some of these passages. They don't work individually. They don't work in isolation like we want them to here, where it's all about me.

God says it's not about you, singular. He goes, I want a people group. I want a nation.

I want a priesthood. I want a people for my own possession so when it's all done, I'm gathering this group, this nation, this people group, this priesthood, and I'm bringing them up to me, this family. They're gonna be my family, they're gonna be my nation, and they're gonna worship me forever and ever and ever.

God's involved in something so much bigger than you as an individual. It's about us, and I've been thanking God this week, going, wow, God, I'm a part of something so much bigger. I teach a class over at our Bible college.

I teach a preaching class where these 20-year-old kids get up, I mean, I call them kids, but that's young adults. Every year, like, you can call older people kids, right? You know, some of you guys think I'm a kid, and you should just be happy to be breathing. But it's, I get called a kid, I'm like, wow, I'm a kid.

Wow, what does that make you, Bob? It's just this whole idea of, but I got these 20-year-old kids, young adults, and they get up and they preach in class, you know? And I've been teaching this class for a few years, and it's great because some of them are so gifted, you know, they preach, and then I kinda critique

and say, oh, this didn't make any sense. Wow, that was ridiculous. You know, we go on and on, I'm like Simon Cowell of preaching class, you know, and we do this.

But one of the students was preaching this week about this very issue, and I was so blown away by his message, and he had so much to say. In fact, I didn't even understand all of it because some of it was over my head. And I said, hey, can you come in my office and tutor me for an hour? And he did, you know, came in my class and explained, well, teacher, here's what I meant, you know? And, but he was talking about this idea, the same thing we've been preaching about, about being isolated.

And he used a couple of illustrations that I'm gonna steal. Because he says, you know, so often in America, we teach you can be saved from your sin, and absolutely, you can be forgiven. You, as an individual, can go to heaven, absolutely.

But he's explaining the Bible is so much bigger than that. It's not about an individual. It's not about one person drawing attention to himself or herself.

It's about we, as a body, working together collectively for something. He gave this illustration. First, he said, it's almost like in the church, it's almost like when we're playing blackjack.

And I know none of you have ever played blackjack. But if you see it in the movies, what happens is you're at a table, right? But you really don't care about anyone else at the table. It's just between you and the dealer, right? You got your own game going.

It doesn't matter that she got blackjack. Oh, I'm so happy for you. You know, it's just, I gotta beat this guy.

And he's saying how that's so much like us in our relationships with God. It's like we're not really focused on the other people at the table. It's just, okay, I'm dealing with the dealer.

It's he and I, we got our own game going on. You got your own game going on. So you ask him, hey, how's your relationship with the dealer? How's your relationship with the dealer? How's your relationship? And it's all about this, and that's not the way it is.

And then he goes further, and he goes, it's like if I gave you a present. I come over one day, and I go, look, here's a present for you. And you open it up, and you go, no way, ice skates.

And you get so excited, you got these ice skates. Someone just gave you ice skates. And so you go, you know, to ice skating rink, or you know, your frozen pond, whatever, and you're flying around on these skates, go, woo, Sao Cao, you know? And I don't even know what that looks like, but it's Sao Cao, you know, and you're doing this.

And then, you know, sometimes you'll even go to Friday night, all skate, you know? And it's like you're skating with a bunch of people, and you're twirling in the middle going, man, these skates are great, what a great gift. And then suddenly I come back to you and go, oh, you know what, actually, I didn't give you those skates just to go skate around. I'm starting a hockey team, and I wanted you on my team.

And we're actually gonna join the NHL, and we're gonna go up against the Kings, against those mighty Ducks, and we're gonna kill them. You know, we're gonna beat them, we're gonna dominate. And suddenly you go, oh, I didn't know that.

I thought you just gave me this so that I could skate around by myself. And he says, so often in church, that's the way we view it. It's like, oh, I thought I could just enjoy forgiveness so I could spend eternity in heaven with God.

I thought it was just for me. And now suddenly you're telling me that I'm a part of a team, that we work together as a body, and together that we are a team, we are a royal priesthood, we're a holy nation, and there's purpose to why I have this and it's not just for me, but collectively we declare the praises of him who pulled us out of darkness and brought us into his marvelous light that together as a people group. See, the thing is, when it says that we declare, we put on display, our job as priests is to show God to the world.

And God says the way you do that is together. You can't show me by yourself. You can't display God by yourself because all you can do is talk about God on your own.

See, how do you show the world God? How do you show God's forgiveness by yourself? You can't. You can't display God's forgiveness by yourself. But if I choose and I go, you know, Pat, I'm gonna be in community with you, and then they come in and they start eating all my food and taking all my stuff from my house, but they're my brother and sister in Christ, and I've made a commitment to them, and I just go, you know what, no big deal, what's mine is yours, go ahead, take my car.

You wrecked it, you wrecked my car, it's okay, it's okay. Suddenly, people are like, are you kidding me? You just forgave them for that? You just let them take and whatever, and you keep relationship with them? Man, who does that? I'm gonna go someone I know. And suddenly, they're seeing God in action.

If I'm putting up, suddenly I hear John Gerlach, you know, gossiping about me and telling Travis all his junk about me, and I just go, you know, I can forgive you, and in fact, I'll pursue relationship with you in spite of what you've done. They're like, man, did you hear what he said about you? And you're still gonna love him. You're gonna go after him? I mean, who pursues someone who sins against them? You see, and then suddenly the world goes, oh man, they're actually living this out.

I saw a patience that was supernatural. I saw a love of forgiveness that was supernatural that only the Holy Spirit could do because suddenly now these people who are actually at enmity with you that have done things that hurt you, you're loving them in return. You can go, yeah, that's a picture of God, and now they're seeing God.

They're not just hearing us talk. See, all along, people in America have heard the Christian church talk, but have they ever seen us love one another in such a way that we become the temple of God, and we actually display and declare by our actions. That's why this community thing is so important.

It's not so that you have more friends. It's not just so you guys can get together and do your little thing, go, ooh, I have friends now. No, the whole point is, no, if we do this right, then people will see God, and we're on a mission here.

We're a team here, and that's why we encourage each other. Why do we try to help you with your marriages? It's not just so you have a happy marriage. It's because, dude, you're on my team, and we're out to win something.

We're out to do something, so don't go messing up. You're a part of my team, just like you would with a real hockey team. You're like, dude, I know you got problems at home, but let's fix those things because

we're after this championship, and we have a goal, we have a purpose.

The purpose is he wants, God wants this people group. Don't you understand it's always been this way? Did God call individual Israelites to be his glory, to the nations declare his glory? No, he says, I want you Israel. Remember in the Old Testament, he wanted this nation.

This has always been God's agenda. He wanted a group of people to display his attributes. That's why in Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 4, verse six, he goes, that's why I even gave you guys as a nation, Israel, these commands.

He says to Israel in verse six of Deuteronomy 4, he says, observe them carefully, for this will show your collective wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. And people will say, what other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him. See, the whole idea, the point of Israel, why did God Almighty establish Israel as a nation? He goes, because I want people to look at the way you obey my law, you people together obey my law.

I want them to see the way you interact with one another and then I'm gonna bless you together. And people are gonna go, man, look at that nation over there. We have all these funky gods and they never listen to us, but that nation, their God listens to them.

He's really near to them. Tell me about this God you guys have. He wanted this nation to stand out amidst the nations of the world.

And then in the New Testament, it's no different. He says, I'm not asking about individuals. He goes, I want you, and he uses an even stronger term in the New Testament.

He goes in 1 Corinthians 12, he says that, verse 27, you collectively are the body of Christ. You collectively are the body, are one body of Christ. And each one of you is a part of this body.

It makes no sense for a finger to be off on his own and going, whoo, here's Jesus, up there. It's just, he goes, no, I want you collectively to work together and have a unity that's so great that you look like one body. And together, you're like one body pointing people to Jesus Christ.

And this month, you're gonna be hearing so much about this. And from here on out as Cornerstone Church, we are gonna be talking so much about this because the world needs to see us as a body. This is what God wants.

He wants you to be glad that you're on a team with me. He wants you to see that you are not by yourself. He doesn't want you by yourself.

He wants us to declare him, not just by talking, but the world's gonna start seeing us by the way we interact as families, as families together in communities, and then we get together as a church here on Sundays, and we together declare his excellencies as a body. This is God's desire. I mean, don't you see that in the scriptures? And again, I apologize because I've sometimes isolated things because that's been my focus.

I've been all about my own relationship with God. I wanna make sure I'm right. And no, he established the church because he wanted us to be a nation.

Isn't that cool? That the person sitting next to you could be sitting next to you forever, and God says, I want you to start showing this off to the world. Some of you guys are going, no, that's not a good thing. And that's part of, you know, but that's part of the, but then we'll be perfect, so then, you know, we're not gonna bug each other.

But it's usually at the end of the message where I go, okay, if you wanna get baptized, maybe you came here, and for the very first time, you're understanding that, wait a second, God sent his son, had his son become a human being, and had his son nailed to a cross to pay for my sins, for our sins. And maybe you understand that for the first time, that, man, God pursued you despite what you've done in your life. Don't think that God can't forgive you immediately because the Bible says he can, and he can just wipe your sin away as far as the east is from the west.

It's just gone, it's over, like Doug talked about a few weeks ago. It's flushed down the drain. He can clean it.

Why? Because Jesus paid for it on the cross. And you believe that and say, well, I want that, and I believe he rose from the grave to show me, you know what, he has power over death, and this is an eternal kingdom, this is an eternal priesthood. I wanna be a part of that, and the Bible says, well, then repent.

Turn from your own way of life and be baptized. And baptism, you know, I liken it to almost putting on the team jersey. You're coming out and say, you know what, I'm one of them.

I'm one of these Christians. I'm no longer just Francis, I am Christian now. In fact, I lose my name.

I was crucified with Christ. Francis was crucified. He's just one of this group that calls himself Christian that have taken on this name, part of this nation where they just wanna be anonymous, and they want his name, Christ's name, to be lifted up.

And you may hear all this and say, you know what, I wanna be a part of this. I wanna be a part of this body. I wanna be a part of this people group.

I wanna be a part of this nation where people will actually love me, treat my kids like their own kids, treat my bank account like their bank account, my house like their house. These people who have experienced something with God that was so great that they could care less about things of the earth because they're looking beyond that. And if you want that, then you can join us.

And as we're worshiping, I'll be over by the prayer room with some of the pastors and counselors. And you can get baptized today and join us and join this holy nation that's been cleansed because of the blood of Jesus. Some of us came from some pretty dark places, didn't we? And God pursued us and pulled us out of the darkness into this marvelous light.

And so here we are hoping and asking God to make us a marvelous light. And as Jim and the worship team come out, I just want you to think about something. You know what I love about worship time is I don't get lost in the crowd, but my voice gets drowned out to some degree because if I stood up here and sang a solo, not pretty, you know? And if some of you sang solos, it'd be much worse.

So don't go judging me. But, but you ever have those times in church where you stop singing and you just listen to the voices? And it's such a cool sound, isn't it? Why? Because we are making a sound to God that if we tried to do this individually, some of us would be awful. It's not a joyful sound.

It's not nothing. It's just bad. But somehow it's collectively, God in heaven is looking down and hearing this collective group of people.

And together we're saying we've been saved out of darkness. And we are here to lift up the name of Jesus Christ. And there's something beautiful about that sound.

See, I couldn't sit at home and listen to your voice singing to me. But I can, sometimes when people are singing, you know, and a crowd is there, and collectively this body that's unified is singing the song to God, I love that sound. I could sit and listen to it for hours.

There's something so beautiful about it. So as we sing right now, I don't want you to think about yourself as an individual singing to God. Can you sing differently right now? And think about us making a collective sound together, screaming out our unity and saying, God, thank you for making us your people, your family, your children, your body, your team, your priesthood, your holy people, your possession.

And say, God, listen to us right now. Let's stand, and let's together just proclaim to God what he's done for us.

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