

All right, good evening everyone. Good to see everyone's faces here this evening. Before we begin, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Dear father, we thank you for gathering us here this evening. There's so many other things that could be done, but Lord, you have brought us here. You have put into our hearts the importance of gathering as a church. I thank you, Father, for my brothers and sisters in Christ here in this room, friends that see the need to gather more than one time, not just Sundays, which is your day, oh Lord, but also just meeting here during the week through the difficulties and challenges that we faced day in and day out. How we need to physically be present with us. Father, I pray that you would help me to deliver this message in such a way that we would see even more clearly the importance of gathering together. I pray father for your spirit's presence working in each one of us this evening. Help me Lord to say what you want me to say from this pulpit. That your word will come out clearly. That the thoughts that you have given to me to share I pray father that it will come out in a way that would bring about the desires of our hearts Lord to glorify you more and to bless your people. Help us in this way father in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Well, this evening concludes our five week series regarding starving the algorithm to feed our souls. So important to know the day and age that we live in that we're growing closer into a place where isolation is the norm. I'm not talking about just the time that we just recently a couple years ago, right? Came out of the experience of COVID. This has now changed our culture to where isolation is okay. But we don't see that in scripture. We don't see that in church history and it's nothing new. It's nothing something that we are to adopt. Just because it's normal in the sense in the world doesn't mean we should adopt it. We should look at the scriptures first and foremost and then we should look at church history and then we should continue to be faithful to the word of God and continue to be faithful to how our forefathers in the faith and how church has always been and to be consistent in that way.

So I want us to think about some moments in the culture where we are in context of culture from beginning of America to now to where we're going to be in the future. We live in an unprecedented time in this regard where connectivity is becoming more and more fluid. Meaning that the adoption of using our devices is becoming more and more we're more involved in it than ever. Meaning that everything becomes connected to a device. I shared in one of the sermons where smart devices is all throughout, right? You can see it in your kitchen and the devices in your living room, in your bedroom, indoor, outdoor, and so on. This is becoming an age of connectivity. That's where we live.

I can go back in time when devices are clunky. Do you remember those days where you would just be only able to talk on the phone and read very simple text messages with no smiles, right? No emojis. I'm talking just plain text. I remember those days when it felt like that. We're not like that anymore. We're not living in an age like that anymore. Yet the paradox of our age is profound. The sense that the more connected we are with our devices, the more we feel isolated. I can again attest to that. The more we are inundated with devices, the more isolated I feel. Do you not feel the same way?

There's actually an AI ad that came up recently that said this. This is their slogan. Being present

is a power move. Interesting. It's a notetaking device and they want you to remember them as being present is a power move. So in the world they're identifying that presence is important. We see that strongly with this slogan. While our digital devices offer again the illusion of belonging, presence and also instant comfort. Our devices by the way is always with us, right? They frequently results in harsh that are by and large socially disconnected and you feel less known, not more known. They don't get you, your soul present. They're looking and you are looking through a device that has no soul presence. Digital devices can't bring that feeling. They can't bring everything of you there. God designed us to be present face to face. And I gave a sermon on that in one of these five weeks series, we must examine how then algorithms dictate the very rhythms of our lives, our very interactions that we experience and acknowledge that genuine community among believers requires far more than convenience. The convenience of digital engagement, the convenience of surface level chats.

We're going to be exploring tonight the intentional labor that is required to meet face to face. I can't believe I have to actually give a message about that, but I have to because we're forgetting that yes, it does require labor. It does require more than just punching a bunch of buttons or touching your screen to interact. We can't miss this. It's all of you being present. Your soul, your spirit, your physical presence, the eye contacts, right? The feelings where you are. All of that must be intentionally there. We must cultivate this deeply meaningful relationship that God has originally designed us to be and continues to be. Nothing ought to change and how we meet up, the way we show up when we're present because there's power behind that. There's power when you're actually present in all these facets of what I just laid out where God moves that cannot be dimmed down to a digital device. The way God shows up when we're physically present there's nothing can equate to that digitally speaking.

I wanted to share some report rather. During May 2023, the US surgeon general issued an official advisory titled our epidemic of loneliness and isolation. The report documented that even prior to the pandemic, the global pandemic, approximately half of American adults reported experiencing measurable feelings of loneliness. The advisory noted that social disconnection carries health risks, health risks that are comparable to someone smoking 15 cigarettes a day. 15 cigarettes a day is what isolation can do to you. We live in a moment where communication is instant, but there's danger in that. Is real relationships instant? No. So, it's becoming increasingly difficult to have real relationships in an age of instant communication. When do we actually get to spend time meditating? When do we get the time to actually have pauses? Long pauses in our conversation where someone doesn't have to keep jumping to the next topic and the next topic. Do you remember those times? I do. It seems like long ago, doesn't it? And how much we got to keep reminding ourselves where we come from and where are we today?

We possess the techno capacity to broadcast even our daily lives to thousands upon if not millions of people in what we call the social media platforms. Yes, we have the technical capacity to do that today. Yet many people wake up every morning without a single person who truly knows their burdens, truly cares about what they fear about, and truly cares about, hey, what are your daily temptations? Like going to your phone the first thing you wake up. It happens even in our home today, right? I thank God my kids are still young enough they're not

opening up their devices in the dinner table because I would just completely say no to that. In fact, I shut down the TV. I want us to be completely present at the dinner table. No devices. But yet, how many homes today are not like that? See, convenience has slowly replaced commitment. Convenience has slowly replaced commitment. Why? Because now we have everything delivered on demand. We have everything in our digital devices that are on demand can be done in milliseconds. Yet real relationships started to feel less convenient by comparison. Oh, it's you ever feel like it now? How it feels more inconvenient now that the age that we live in? It's far easier to watch in comparison a show on your latest streaming service or scrolling through a feed or sending text messages than it is to open up your home, adjust your calendar, and share your life with real people in real time. Right? How many of us have already having a lot more difficulty opening up our homes than we did before? Notice that. Notice that there was times even before my time is my grandparents age where they can say that they left their doors open. They didn't lock their doors. They didn't lock their cars because they could they knew their neighbors. Nowadays, it's like we have a house that have an Airbnb across the street. We just seeing people coming in and out, coming in and out. Who are your neighbors today? Are they even your neighbors? There might just be an Airbnb. We are living in an age like that where we can't even trust our neighbors because we don't even meet with them. We don't know their lives. How many of you can really honestly say you know your neighbors? Well, thank God. That's how it should be. Amen. That's how it should be. You see, the places that usually are locked up are ending up the worst communities, right? You see it. I lived in those communities. I lived in Boil Heights, man. Everything was gated, the windows, right? The doors. And then you have a gate in front of your front yard. It's like come on. You're just showing off that you don't trust anybody. But yet this is where we are. And it's becoming more and more like that.

When life becomes challenging or your faith is tested, spiritual isolation quickly can become dangerous really fast. If we live in this isolation, your spiritual life can be put in danger. So there's no such thing as a solitary Christian. I shared that last Sunday. No lone ranger Christian, right? Because if there is a lone ranger Christian, you will be attacked by the devil and you will be attacked more viciously. I gave the analogy of the herd. If you stay close in the center of the herd, a lion can't get you. Who does a lion get? He gets the one that's trailing in the back and then he pounces on them. That's the idea. There is no lusting as a lone ranger Christian. Every attempt to isolate yourself, you are being more and more a target to be vulnerable to the attacks of the devil. He is like a roaring lion, right? Seeking to whom he may devour. He's speaking about Christians there. Obviously the lost are already living in the devil's realm. So, right. So, we got to take every attempt to realize yes, it's going to be inconvenient. Yes, they're going to be hurt if you're close to somebody. But again, God is going to be present because God set it up for us to be together. And we're going to see that.

I'm making a long introduction because there's a lot to share just where we are in these modern times. You see, the vulnerability for a Christian is this. Are you feeling more discouraged or more encouraged? If you're feeling discouraged, you're setting yourself for isolation. Are you living in more security in God or are you doubting God? If you're doubting God, you are setting yourself for isolation. This is a time when you have to meet in person for those doubts to go

away, for those discouragements to disappear. It's not by you staying distant. We often mistake super superficial digital interactions for genuine connections. Things like likes, views, comments, emojis, and short form conversations that are limited to 160 characters. They all fail to constitute real relationships. And the same is true to following people online who do not know us. You may know them, but they don't know you. Which in any other context you will be labeled a stalker. And yet this is okay to follow some person that he doesn't or she doesn't even know you and stalking is now a norm. Did you realize that? Again, you would have never thought about this outside of the context we live in today. But now stalking is normal.

Or what about the various groups that are today that put themselves together as labeled as outrage groups. I shared with you the idea of outrage as living outside the bounds of boundaries in one context. And so these are people that just want to be angry. They just love being angry. Whether it's what's happening in politics or things that are happening globally or in the economy, there are actually groups that share in grievances to stir up their anger. So whatever makes them angry in society, there's a group for it. I hope you're not in it. I hope you're not in any of those groups. That's the sad situation we're in. There are actually groups like that. And we know none of these dynamic exchanges amount to a true meaningful community, right? You can't live like that in anger and be a good witness, right? And yet so many so-called professing Christians think it's okay to go ahead and just share all their comments and all their opinions and think that arguments are going to win people over to Christ. Never does in history and never will today in the context or in the future. You must learn from church history. Jesus said, Pray for your enemies. Pray for the ones that are persecuting you. How many of people in these groups are actually doing that? I'm pretty sure they're not because God will convict them.

You see, the letter of the Hebrews, which we're going to go to, and I'm setting this up because this is a passage we're all familiar with, but I want us to see the context we're living in, and then look at this text. So turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10 and we're going to look beginning in verse 19. Just some context of this passage. It was written to a community of early Jewish Christians and they were facing severe social pressure such as being tempted to be persecuted for their faith and they were tempted to retreat in the shadows. They don't want to face the persecution and I can understand that and you would understand that too. But they are going to miss then being the light amongst the darkness. Their confession of their faith in public areas from them drifting away from the visible gathering of the church which is the visible gospel which is the local church.

In Hebrews chapter 10 19-25 we see here that the writer offers a decisive call to action reminding them that their standing before God and their endurance in the faith are directly bound with how they treat each other in a local church setting. So read along with me verses 19 to 22. Writer writes, Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Here the writer sets it up for the readers, the believers here that during the old covenant in order to access the Holy of Holies, the high priest could only go once a year. And to enter in, he would have to go through this heavy veil. And he did so bearing the blood of an animal sacrifice. And he would go in deeply with a holy fear, reverential fear, respecting God. And it would be done again a day of atonement once a year. And he would be then in the presence of the holy God in the holy of holies. It will be inaccessible and will be separated from the everyday life of the Israelite. So they won't understand what this looks like. Only this priest would be able to experience the holy presence of God.

So the writer of Hebrews declares that everything changed at the cross through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The veil was torn. His broken flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ and his flesh opened a fresh and living pathway straight into the presence of God because Jesus now serves as our resurrected high priest over the house of God. We don't stand far off in fear. No, instead he says be bold. You are entering in not by your strength, not by your power, but by the blood of Jesus. And when we are able to then freely access inside the presence of the holy one, we have this access to the father because of what Jesus has done with his body being torn. You see, because Christ has secured this entrance, the passage gives us our first duty. Look at it. Let us draw near. I want you to pay particular attention to let us. Let us means he is allowing us. Access. Before it was not allowed for the average Israelite. Now every Christian that is in Christ, he tells you, Let us draw near. Let us draw near. It's a picture that you have full assurance. You see that? It's not partial assurance. No, this is you got to have full assurance. I know if you understand the old covenant, like you got to be careful when you go in. Trust God. Trust what Jesus has done for you. Go in with full assurance of faith. By the blood of Jesus, we are accepted and we are able to enter into the presence and he says the holiest place. You see that the holiest place and he goes on and says that our conscience and our hearts meaning our inner and our outer with the body is sprinkled by Jesus's blood. And what that means is that we're no longer going in there with fear of the guilt of sin, but now we go in with full assurance that Jesus has bought us with his blood and we no longer have the guilt of sin. That's what he means by the conscience of evil. We don't have guilt anymore. That's what the blood of Jesus has done. And then in our bodies, it says when we enter in, our bodies are purified by the work of the Holy Spirit. What that means is that we're now living in truth. When the Holy Spirit's living in us, it means we're living in truth. Do you see that? In our bodies, consider the weight of this. I want us to understand the weight of this. Just like the writer does here. He wants us to understand what Jesus has done for us to be able to enter into his presence into God's presence. See, from the time that sin entered into the world back in Genesis all the way to the New Testament where Christ pays for our sins, that whole gap, think about that. How many thousands right over 2,000 years of how much of that was being we couldn't go in we couldn't be in the presence of God and one thing that Jesus does that veil is removed so you got to understand the weight behind this it wasn't like oh there was no waiting for this to happen no it took a long time. But only Jesus could have done it. Only Jesus could have done that. And I want you to see the weight of this that Christ allowed us to enter into the holiest in the presence of God. And do we ever approach then as like a high priest into the presence of God that we don't just rush in? The high priest would never rush in. Every step was getting closer and closer into the holiest of holies to the point where he was in reverential fear. Can't just go lightly. That's

the idea. I want you to know that weight behind even our approach to God. And there's a clear message here. The main thing here is that we're no longer kept at a distance. We're now brought near. We're brought near. He wants us to first capture the understanding what Jesus has done. He has brought us near to God. Before we He's talking about community of believers getting together. He's like, Do you understand what Jesus has done for you that you can be in nearness to God? See, when Christ died, that barrier was permanently removed permanently. That veil will never go back up. There will no longer be this distance. You will always be an opportunity to come near by the blood of Jesus. God himself, creator of the universe, created everything on this planet and everything beyond this planet. This is who we're approaching. And to remain distant from God after the veil has been torn is to ignore the price Christ paid to bring us near. Remind yourself when you're getting in the presence of God what Christ did for us for his body to be torn apart by the lashes on his back, nail prints on his hands, feet, and the crown of thorns that was placed on his head and the mocking that he received. How much do we actually think about him when we're approaching God in prayer? Or are we just going right to our prayer request? This is why this is so important to slow down and take this very seriously because in the modern digital landscape, we operate again by instantaneous communication. That's not how it was back then and it should not be today. There's preparation before prayer. I think that was John Bunyan that said that. Prepare before you pray. Prepare before you pray.

Let's look at verse now 23 to 24. Understanding the context of how we are able to now approach God by the blood of Jesus. Now he goes on to the second let us. He says let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering for he is faithful that promised. And then the third, and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. The writer moves directly from our personal standing before God to our collective responsibility toward one another. He's given us access to God. He's giving us access to having a faith that's not wavering. Meaning that we have a singular focus when we gather. We're not here for our objective, our ideas. No, we're here for a singular purpose. That's what he means there without wavering. And so he goes on, he says these words, let us consider one another. And here's the consideration without wavering on these things. Provoke unto love and to good works. That's our singular focus when we gather. That's our singular focus. He wants us to first collectively know the vertical relationship with God and then our horizontal relationship with each other. When you approach God the right way and then you approach your brothers and sisters in Christ the right way, God moves powerfully, wonderfully, gloriously. So let us take these matters carefully, thoughtfully, provoking each other in this way. This is how it is to be faithful to God. For he was faithful to us. Right? It says there, he promised this for us. He then makes us faithful to each other. We can faithfully do this. Doesn't matter how bad the times are. Doesn't matter how difficult the culture is pressing down pressure to be isolated. No, you can be faithful because you have a God who is faithful. That's why he put this promise. I love that in parenthesis. He has promised to do this through ages. Throughout ages, nothing new will change this context in your life. This is what's going to keep you anchored to have unwearing faith to God and to others. Perseverance is not a solo effort by no means. Verse 24 introduces, by the way, it is a command. Verse 24 is a command. We are to consider one another. Consider one another. This requires intentional observation and thoughtful care. That's what it means. You're observing each other. You're considering one another. You're watching after each other. And you're

thoughtfully caring for each other in prayer. You start off your prayer with God. But are you continuing that praying for each other? Are you drawing near with that understanding? The word translate provoke means to incite to stir up or spur into action. There's something physical happening here. In classical Greek literature, it was often described as this. If you ever been on a horse, you would spur the horse. The spur the horse would not move unless you spur the horse. You got to kick him. You got to spur him up. So the idea is here it is. You have to irritate the horse to get moving. Provoke means to irritate each other in a good way. Irritate each other in love. Okay? In love. If we just had provoke, it would not be good. But we're irritating each other in love. We're stirring each other up. Hey, I love you in Christ's name. I love you. I love you. God wants me to love you. He wants me to stir you up in this love that we have in Christ. Do you desire that when you interact? Do you really want that in your relationships? Scripture commands us to deliberately stir up one another toward Christian love. And then he goes on and says, Active goodness. Everything that God is is good. Amen. All things good from come from above. And he and it comes down to us. It doesn't just land on the ground. It lands to the believers. That's what it means. And he wants you to share his goodness with others. And if there's none of that, there's a lot of forgiving that's necessary. A lot of times you got to forgive because we're not sharing God's goodness. Right? And so, let us be active in love, active in goodness. It's a command. You cannot thoughtfully consider then your brothers and sisters in Christ if you only know them through your digital device. How much of the people that you're communicating are just through text messages or through phone calls? How many of the interactions are actually in person? Yes, it's inconvenient, but that's where it counts. That's where it counts. Of course, if you are ill and there is a valid reason why you can't be present physically, of course, God knows. But if there is an unreasonable reason why you're not showing up in person, there's a problem there, obviously. And so we ought to always think if we have the ability to do so, are we then in close proximity with each other? There is a command to be close together to recognize each other when someone is going through some trial. When you're feeling weary, meaning you're weak in spirit because you've been so isolated most of the time, that you're wavering in your convictions, you don't know what God wants for you because you've been so far away from his people and so far from his word. Do you remember this verse like this as I explained it? Or have you forgotten this text? Because so familiar the approach is so lax meaning you don't really thoughtfully consider what you have in Christ or worse yet you lose sight of the gospel the good news of what Jesus Christ has done for you that you're no longer your own but you are bought by the precious blood of Christ and he has made you into a new creature behold All things are passed away, right? Behold, all things become new. That's how we are to live.

So the bottom line is this. The answer to isolation isn't being connected to many. It's being deeply known by a few. Just by a few. Let me just validate this. At the beginning of the life of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, he had his 12, but he had his inner three, Peter, James, and John. He didn't have a lot of people, but he had the people that he needed. And those three he got to spend intimate times with private moments to train them for the future leadership that we'll have in the early churches. He then had his 12 close disciples and then a wider group of 72 followers at the most. And then right after his ascension, that was 120 believers. And we see the early accounts of that in the book of Acts. And then we look at the Apostle Paul. Okay, that's the Lord

Jesus. What about the Apostle Paul? He had his inner circle of three, too. Timothy, Titus, and Luke. That was his inner three. He spent the most time with these three brothers in Christ. And then we see in Romans 16, he named specifically around 30 individuals that you spend sometimes closer out of the inner three. That was it. Everyone else just somewhat acquaintances seeing each other along the missionary roots, but that was it. We think Apostle Paul was spending so much time with all these people, but actually in reality, he wasn't. See, many believers today, we possess dozens of so-called friends. I counted in Meta, you can have up to 5,000 so-called friend followers. Are you kidding me? You're never going to be able to go deep with 5,000 people. Let's go back to scripture. Amen. Let's go back to what the scriptures teach us. There in lies the true meaning of relationships are not found in the many, but in the few, but in the few. You may have your casual conversations at work or at school or even at the gym, but they will not be those that you will be able to go deep with with your life and sharing your life. The crisis that we live in today is a temptation to have those many people in our lives but have no meaningful relationship, no strong relationship, no strong ties that can actually help you in your walk with the Lord. The local church is meant to be the place where surface acquaintances transform into covenant relationships. Understand this. It is a covenant. God put us in this adopted family. And this is now our family. Our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said, Those that do the will of God are my brothers and my sisters. These are our families. This is the exact community that God wants you to be in for you to hold fast in Christ, to be reminded of the gospel, to be reminded of who we get to approach in prayer when we gather in our times of prayer. We don't rush into these times together. We spend a devoted time together in these three to five people groups that we get into our times after the message. So holding fast to the conviction of scripture in spite of what's going on in the culture that yes, we are in the world, but we're not of the world as Jesus said. We don't just follow the flow of the world. That's what these five weeks were about, right? How to be more aware and to be more aware, how much more we got to be grounded in the word of God by reminding us the word of God and how much it's important to follow the word of God, not follow the world. We need believers in our lives to have permission to check on our souls to ask the difficult questions. What are you going through? Be honest. Be honest. And then to encourage you when you're weak and you need some strength in your life. Prayers, encouragement, words of encouragement, or just, hey, I'm here for you. We don't even have to talk. See, someone in this congregation needs you to pay attention to them. Not just here on Wednesdays, not just here on Saturdays, not just here on in the evening, Sunday evening, but are you paying attention that you may be the very person that they need in your in their life? That you will notice when they're absent here on Wednesday or on Sunday morning or Sunday evening, you actually notice it and you're the one that goes after them. Remember I said in one of my sermons, if you caught it, it's probably because God wants you to take care of it. You want them to be stirred up in love and good works because in isolation, you can't do that. It's a one another thing. Love is shared. Good works is shared.

Now, let's go on and go to verse 25. He says not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together as a manner of some is. So there were some in that time even then they weren't following this but he says but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. This Hebrews was written around 64 to 69 AD. The writer addressed this early on in the Christian church. It was already a problem and it still is today and it's getting worse as a day is

approaching. You see this pattern is what we need to stop. The pattern of not being present. It is so important for the vitality of the body to grow together that no part of the body is deformed but that all is growing healthy together. So when people choose right unreasonable reason to abandon the regular physical gathering of the believers whether it's fear of persecution like back in the early Christian days of physical persecution or verbal persecution or for personal comfort or just simply neglecting it because something more important came up. This withdrawal exposes us who are doing these things to spiritual danger. Always know this. They are being attacked and they're being influenced. Yes, Christians cannot be demonpossessed, but we can still be influenced. Is his voice louder than God's voice? Because if God's voice is louder, he is the one you're going to listen to. It's always the one that's clearest and loudest that you're going to hear from, right? And so this is very important for us to understand. The physical assembly of the local church is not optional. It's not for exceptional committed Christians. Nowhere in this passage says it's for the most mature. No, this is every single one that calls himself a believer in Christ. It is a vital environment where that is ordained by God. God approves this for spiritual not only survival but growth in our lives. And as we move closer to the return of Christ, that's what he means by the day approaching. Every day we're getting closer to the Lord's return, right? We're to be even more closely reminding of this and remind each other more often as you see the day approaching to gather in worship to gather for instructing of the word of God, the preaching of God's word and the mutual exhortation would increase rather than diminish. It's imperative that we live in this way because today we live in an age where we have an abundance of content but lack community. Early Christians were they were more abundant in community less in content. They had to show up in the physical grounding to hear a sermon preached. Nowadays you can hear sermons preached online, right? This exact reversal. We're scarce in community and abundant in content. Back then they were scarce in content but abundant in community. Let us remind ourselves of that. We don't need more content. We need more presence. The equation has definitely flipped, hasn't it? How much? Right. I gave the statistics. 49 hours a week is spent on content rather than community. So what does this mean for us as a church? This is what we need to double down on. Hey, we need to gather. We need to gather. This is lacking and is deeply lacking in the churches today. It will never online as good as it is not as powerful of God moving than in a physical gathering. This is what we need to desire and pray for how much we need to pray. God has to move ultimately. You cannot force this irritate provoke doesn't mean to force. You can't force anyone to love. That's not love by definition. You can't force anyone to do good works. It's not good then. It's not good then. So what do you do? What do you do then? How does how do we put this in practicality? We've got to understand the importance and hear this. Then this is going to be harder as we get closer to the days where people are going to forget how important how good it was to gather. You see, look, think about Christ. Let's just bring the gospel here front and center. He didn't stay at a distance in heaven and say, Okay, build your church. He came from a distance to us and he showed us what church is supposed to look like. So what is this? Here it is. He showed us by how he led. He showed us how by he led. So if just us here, if we get this and we're leading like the way Jesus did, he didn't stay distant. He came close. He led by example and people followed them. We don't have to worry about who's going to follow. People will follow if it is done the way God wants us to. So if we keep gathering, if we keep showing up, if we are leading by example, God will take care of the results. You don't have to force this to happen. But pray for

others that are not showing up. Pray for them. Share testimonies of what God is doing in your life by you showing up. Those are opportunities to do that. Let us understand what the gospel and its in that aspect of what Jesus did for us. I've got so much more to share, but it's just going over time.

Here's some things to think about as I close. Honestly, look at your personal relationships. Here are five marks of real relationships. Here are the five marks of real relationship in the context of friendship. First, in order to be a real friend is proximity. You have to actually be with the person more than you are through the use of digital devices. Secondly is purpose. You're coming to provoke one another and good works. That's the purpose. Third, transparency. You have to go first and be honest. Hey, what are you struggling with? Share it with the people that you meet with. Be the first one. Don't wait for the other person to share. Prepare. You've already prepared to meet with a purpose to share. Hey, I'm struggling with this, but God is helping me with this. He's answered this prayer. He's helped me to love this person. He's helped me to do these good things for people. Share. Be transparent. Both the good and the things you're struggling with. Fourth is consistency. If you don't put it on the calendar, it won't work. Put it on the calendar. Start filling up your calendar. I shared the other day, if you don't put prayer in your calendar, you're not going to pray. Be disciplined. Be disciplined even in the way you show up. Fifth and last is accountability. You give someone permission to speak into your life, not just to cheer you up, asking those hard questions. How are you really doing? How is your soul? How is your relationship with God right now? How's your relationship with God in the word, in prayer, in meeting up with each other? What are those things? Because real friends are bound by this kind of level of care that show ups regardless of what how inconvenient it might feel, you still show up. Obey and you'll understand. Remember, obey the ordinance what God has ordained for us together and you'll understand and you'll grow in your relationship and ask this is the last thing I want to share. What are who are the three to five people that can do this these five things in your life? Do you have three to five people that can actually do this in your life? And I'm praying that our discipleship groups when we gather that those components are there as we finish this evening in those things. If you can't name them, take the concrete step towards these things, these five things that I shared. And I'm praying that our discipleship groups have these things in place that you're working towards those things. You're praying together for it that we have more discipleship groups out of it not by us but because we watered I mean we planted we watered and God added increase let's go with that understanding. Amen.

All right. Let us pray for these things. I want us the men to pray before we go into discipleship groups. Brother Ken, can you pray for this request that God will grant each person to want to live with these five qualities? If you don't remember them, just whatever God shows you. That we would be intentional about these things. Provoking each other in love, good works, maintaining good works. That we won't be satisfied in living in isolation, but that we will be more content in being in