The Meaning of Membership — Delivery Transcript

Hebrews 10:24–25 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 30, 2022 · *Family Matters*

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All right, well thanks to the team for leading us this morning in worship. If you have your Bible, you can open them to John's Gospel. Probably John chapter 8 is where we'll begin. And it's actually a kind of an atypical sermon. We've been in a series on our church as a local church. We've been talking not just about the church in general necessarily, but this particular local church. And so if you're visiting with us today, you may be wondering, you know, why did I come today? If they're going to be talking about their life together, talking about membership in the local church.

And I can sympathize a little bit with that question. But I think it's helpful for you, if you are visiting, to kind of know what our church is about and why the way we think. And the reason we've been doing this series is to try to submit ourselves to God's design for the local church. God has a design for everything, whether it's marriage, finances, how you live in the workplace, parenting. He has a design for literally everything, including a design for the local church. And so what the series has been is an exploration of God's design for how we do life together.

And we've learned a lot of cool things, such as God loves the church and the church should matter to us because the church really matters to God and God has given the church a very important task. Our purpose as a church is to continue or to advance the ministry of Jesus on the earth. And we're God's primary chosen vehicle for that. Certainly there are great organizations, Christian organizations like Red Cross and the International Mission Board and those things are worthy of our attention and support. But nothing compares to the church.

God has chosen the church as his primary vehicle for advancing his purposes in the world. We saw that in Ephesians 3, one of my favorite passages on why the church matters. Paul's talking to the people in Ephesus and he's saying his ministry was given to him by Christ to preach the mystery, to preach the mystery of the gospel to everyone, "so that God's multifaceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. This is according to his eternal purpose." So from the very beginning, before time began, before God created anything, he had in mind his church.

It's the apple of his eye, and so it ought to be the apple of our eye. Church matters, and we've also seen certain things matter in the church. Certain things ought to be made manifest in our lives as individual Christians if we're part of a local church and certain things ought to be functioning properly in the life of a local church. We looked at some of those; we listed four. You could probably add more, but I don't think you can have less. Those four gifts that Jesus Christ gave to the church included the ordinances, which is baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The offices, which is the office of pastor and deacon, and then the Spirit of God and the Word of God. And we said in our church, we are not one of those churches that's either or. You know, some people say, "I want to be in a Spirit-filled church," and what they mean by that is kind of this emotional expressiveness and attention on the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, sometimes miraculous gifts like speaking in tongues and miracles and so forth. Others say, no, we want to be centered on the word.

We want to be theologically rich. We want expositional preaching. We want to not be all cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs like some of those people over there, but we want to be grounded in God's Word. And in our church, I don't think you should choose either one. I think if you're going to be a church filled with the Spirit, you will be a church that's centered on the Word. And if you're a church that's centered on the Word, you'll be a church that walks in the fullness of the Spirit and will crave and aspire to be more and more filled with the Spirit.

And so that's the gifts that Jesus has given the church. And when all of those things are hitting on all cylinders and a healthy church with a healthy structure is doing what it's supposed to do, that congregation will have lives marked by certain attributes. The proof, you might say, that discipleship is really taking place in the life of a local church. And I think there are four of them. I don't know what it is with me and fours, but Jesus, I think, lists them, makes them very clear: the "my disciples" statements of Jesus.

The first three are in John's gospel, that's why I asked you to turn there. The first one is in John chapter 8, verse 31. Jesus speaking to his people. Okay, if you're in the church, you're a person of Jesus, you're a disciple. Your life number one should be marked by an abiding in the word. He said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you're truly my disciples. You'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free." So what do we mean abide? We just mean that believers, if you're going to be in this local church and our

church is doing its job, you will become a person who continues in the ministry, who continues in the faith, who continues in faith in the gospel, who continues to believe that Jesus is in you and you are in him.

And you persevere in your walk with Jesus. The second proof of the pudding is love for other believers. Not only will you abide in Christ's word, you'll also love Christ's people. This is in John 13, verses 34 and 35. He says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Not if you raise your hands in worship, not if you have doctrinal integrity, not if you post mean comments on blog sites about all the evil people in the world. No, if you have love for other people in the church.

A special, unique, supernatural love for other believers is proof of the pudding for other people who need to come to know Jesus. And then finally the third one, John 15, verse 8, Jesus says, "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples." So Jesus' disciples abide in his word. They love Christ's people and they bear fruit in Christ's mission. That's what it means to be a member of a local church. That's why membership is important because when you become a member of a local church, you're basically covenanting, you're making a relational commitment to that church leadership and to the other members in that local church that I want to be a person marked by these things.

I want to grow in my ability to abide in God's word. I want to grow in my ability to love other Christians. And I want to grow in my effectiveness of bearing fruit in Christ's mission. And you can't do that solo. God did not design the Christian life to be lived by yourself on the lake doing your own thing. He designed it to be lived in community. A Christian without a church is a Christian in trouble. But when you connect to community, these things begin to naturally surface in your life.

The best summary statement of all of this, I think, is in Galatians chapter 5, verse 6,[1] when Paul is correcting a heresy in Galatia, and he says, "What matters is faith working through love." That's it. That's what our church is. Our church, God willing, is characterized by people of faith who genuinely believe Jesus is the Christ, that he's the Messiah, that he's our Savior. But that faith is not a stale faith, dead faith, or stagnant faith. It is an active faith that expresses itself through deeds and actions and words of love.

Love for God, obviously, love for one another and love for the world. Imagine a church where that kind of love is given and displayed. That's what we want our church to be. So if you were to put Broadview on a napkin, sometimes we talk about our vision frame. This is what it looks like. We're a Great Commandment, Great Commission, Acts 1:8 church. The proof of discipleship. We exist to make disciples. How do we know disciples are being made? We know it's happening if our people are characterized by abiding in the word, loving other believers.

Bearing fruit in Christ's mission and walking by faith. Faith that expresses itself in acts of love for other people. How does that happen in our church? Well, it happens through these environments that our staff and our leadership work very hard to make these environments compelling and helpful and attractive. And those three environments are our worship gatherings, our small groups, and our ministry teams. And you've heard me say it a lot, worship, connect, and bless. That's our pathway. Worship God in a gathering. Connect to other believers in a group. And bless other people on a team.

I think when you do those three things in those three environments, you'll grow as a Christian. Doesn't matter who you are, doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian, if you will be faithful to attend the worship gatherings, connect to other believers in a group and bless other people on a ministry team, you will find yourself growing in ways that you never knew possible. You will find yourself experiencing God in ways that you have never experienced him before. And so what I want us to do with the time that we have left is to try to spell out for those of you who consider yourself members of Broadview membership expectations.

And those of you who are guests or maybe you're not members of Broadview, hopefully this message will help clarify why membership matters. All of these membership expectations flow out of this pathway that we just talked about. But I want to kind of drill down and give clarity on the specifics of what it actually means to be a member of a local church and what our expectations are of our particular members of Broadview Baptist Church, and to try to cast a vision that when we all commit to these things and embrace them and press into them, God will begin to use our church in ways that are absolutely phenomenal, and our best days will be ahead of us.

The first one, as you might imagine, has to do with your attendance. And the first pillar, if you're going to be committed to a local church, you got to be committed to showing up. We cannot do what we're supposed to do as a local church if the members who say I belong to Broadview Baptist Church never actually show up. And in the post-COVID world, it's very easy for people to not show up. And certainly with all the stuff that happened during 2020 and the pandemic, there were good reasons why people stayed away physically.

A lot of people tuned in online and all that stuff. But with that age now beginning to fade away, it's important to remind all of us that being physically present is extremely important for our church to function according to God's design. We cannot do what we're supposed to do if our people are not physically present. There's a passage in Hebrews, one of my favorite passages is Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24, and it's a reminder of why it's important that members of a church be present to gather together for worship. He tells them, "Let's consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather

together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

Now get this, here's his logic. The day's coming. What day is he talking about? Does anyone know? The day of Christ's return. He's talking about the day Jesus comes back to get us. And we know, because we've been going through the book of the Revelation, we know that day will be characterized by a growing lovelessness in the heart of even God's people. Even good Christian people will grow cold in their love for Jesus. We also know that day will be marked by an increasing hostility in culture towards Christians, that the world will hate believers, they will persecute them socially and even physically, even to the point of death.

So there'll be growing lovelessness within, increasing persecution from without. If that's true, the author of Hebrews is saying, get together and worship with one another and strengthen one another and build one another up because you will not survive unless you do. You cannot function as a church like you're supposed to function with what's coming, with what's going to happen. It's all the more necessary that you gather together, be physically present. Otherwise you'll shipwreck your faith and your church will dry up and it'll die because the world is too difficult. So the reason we gather on this day is because of that day.

And if you've fallen out of the habit of regular church attendance, let me exhort you as your pastor, just get back in the habit. Think of it like working out. You know, it's not all that spiritual. You fall out of the gym and you stop going to the gym and they keep charging you every month for your gym membership, all you're doing is wasting your money, all right? The same thing happens in the life of a local church. You fall out of fellowship of a local church, it just kind of gets easy not to show up.

I know I've been there. It's like going back to the gym. It's not fun. It's kind of difficult. It feels a little bit awkward. It hurts when you get there for the first day. It's got all this pain and suffering in your life. But if you keep on, keeping on, eventually you'll get yourself healthy again and it will be good for you and good for everyone else. So attend regularly. That's the first one. Second one, grow. This is a word both for those who feel spiritually underdeveloped and those who are a little bit overly confident in their spirituality.

This morning I said if you came in here and you feel like I got everything going on and I got no need in my life, I said you were blind to the reality of your actual situation. There is a temptation, especially those of us who are older in the faith. Maybe you're 70 years old and you've been a Christian for 65 of those years. You're like, well, I can spiritually retire, you know, I'm 65. I don't have to grow anymore as a Christian. That's just not true. It's never true. There's always seasons of your life in which you can grow.

A new season physically, a new season in terms of your age, means a new season for you spiritually. We never arrive, always striving, never arriving till the day when Christ returns.

Some of us, maybe you're not mature physically, maybe you're not even mature spiritually, there's a sense in which maybe you're a new Christian or maybe you've been a Christian for 20 or 30 years, but it's as if you just became a Christian. You are spiritually immature. You don't read the Bible. You don't pray. You never have a quiet time. You're barely active or involved in the life of a local church.

Everything feels new. You always feel like you're inadequate as a Christian and it'd be one thing to feel that way but the sad part of it is you never have any real desire or discipline to remedy that situation. You're spiritually a baby in the Lord Jesus. By the way, it's not unique to you. This is a thing that has plagued local churches from the very beginning. You can go all the way back to the book of First Corinthians. Paul is writing to his church that he planted there in Corinth, and he is pleading with them, "Would you please grow up?

Would you please desire growth in your Christian life?" He said, "When I came to you, I wasn't able to speak to you as spiritual people." He uses the word spiritual people to describe a mature, growing Christian. He contrasts spiritual people with people of the flesh, meaning you're worldly. You're living as if Jesus isn't in you. You're living as if it's all up to you. You're living as if you're kind of comparing yourself to other people. Well, I'm better than them and they're not as good as me, so I must be pretty good.

God must love me because I'm better than them. That's flesh. That's worldly thinking. He says that's how you're treating one another and it grieves me as your pastor. "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still worldly." You may be here this morning and if you were honest with yourself, you'd say, you know what, I'm a baby Christian. I have not grown up spiritually. My life is still characterized by petty fights, petty division, selfishness, arrogance, insecurity.

And the sad thing is as a pastor, I can preach until I'm blue in the face. I can't make you want to grow. What do they say? You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. And that's the sad reality of a pastor. As much as I want it for you, as much as I desire for you to desire to grow. One hour on a Sunday morning is not going to do it. You've got to have a hunger and a thirst to connect with God relationally throughout the week, Monday through Saturday.

Find a better preacher than me to listen to on Monday morning, you know. Find someone else to spiritually nourish you so that you're built up in the faith and constantly growing, never arriving, always striving until the day that Jesus returns. The same is true for me. I'm always trying to listen to people, read challenging books, find areas in which I'm weak theologically or emotionally. This last couple of years I've been trying to grow in the area of prayer, connecting with God emotionally because I'm a very emotionally awkward person, socially awkward, emotionally awkward, all kinds of awkward.

I want to grow in that area of my life. And so you find areas where you can grow as a Christian, press in, and grow. Grow continually. Thirdly, connect relationally. This is also difficult for me. As chief introvert of Broadview Baptist Church, I am not great at connecting with people relationally. I know some of you may feel the same way, but you cannot have a church without relationships. People will come to a church because the preaching's good or the music's good or they got a great kids program. People will not stay in a church for those reasons.

I have watched countless numbers of people come into our church, love it 100%, and walk out two years later because they didn't make relationships. And some of it wasn't all their fault. Some of it is our church family wasn't active in bringing them in and inviting them and connecting with them. Some of it was their fault, because they kind of thought of church as a gas station. I come in, I park my car, I'm spiritually depleted. I had a hard week. I'm going to sit and listen to a sermon and get all excited about Jesus again and then go out, and like air coming out of a balloon, you know, kind of runs out of air.

And then I'll come back to church again and I'll get the preacher to kind of build me back up and kind of pop me around. You know, like they pop a balloon around. Church is not a gas station. Church is not an air balloon. The church is— it's like a gym. It's like a training facility. You need a workout partner, you need someone who's coaching you, helping you, spurring you on to increase and to grow in your relationship. You need friends, you need relationships. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 15 talks about growth; it talks about connecting relationally.

It says in Ephesians 4:15, let us "grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ." And it also says in verse 16, the body "builds itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part." So this idea in the church is that the way growth happens in you individually. And the way that growth happens in us collectively is by various different people connecting to one another relationally and doing what they're supposed to do on their end and the other person doing what they're supposed to do on their end and the body builds itself up in love as everyone's working the way they're supposed to work.

There's got to be relationships for those kinds of things to happen. Speak the truth in love. Build one another up in love. Not a gas station. It's a training facility. There are these one another passages in the New Testament, the Greek word allelon is translated "one another." You've probably heard this before, but it's fascinating. The word allelon is used over 100 times in 94 different New Testament verses. So many times when the word's used, it's used to describe the same kind of basic concept. I think 17 times it talks about— no, 13 times it talks about unity.

Fifteen times it talks about love, seven times allelon in humility towards one another, be humble towards one another. And then the others span from encouragement and hospitality

to prayer and comfort. There's actually even four that say kiss one another, which we are not doing around here. I'm not kissing anybody but my wife. But that was kind of a Middle Eastern thing. We all have areas of the Bible we don't obey. Okay, we can skip that one. I'm totally joking. Don't skip that one, but it's culturally defined. So shake hands. Let's shake hands instead of kissing each other.

But the basic idea is that there's a one-anotherness to the local church. You cannot have a local church if there's no one-anothering going on, because the one-anothering is essential to the Christian life. And so when you think about connecting relationally, hospitality, speak to one another, encourage one another. Pray for one another, sing to one another, all of these require you being present and you being willing to put yourself out there, make a friend. One hour a week sitting in a row isn't going to cut it. That's why groups are so important.

That's why we say connect in a group, because groups, as imperfect as they are, they at least attempt to facilitate meaningful community. I don't think small groups create community. I've been in groups where I never connected. But at least I had the opportunity to experience community because what happens is you get in a group, you share a little bit about yourself, you share a little about what's going on in your life, and then there's another person in the group who's going, oh, I think I like him; I think I might like her.

Their kids are going through the same things our kids are going through. Their kids are the same age as our kids. Man, she talked about struggling with that issue, I struggle with that issue. And so what you end up doing is you go and you say, hi, my name's so-and-so. And oh my name's so-and-so. And you exchange numbers and then you end up going out for coffee or taking each other out to dinner or whatever the case may be, couple on couple, however it all pans out. That's how community is formed.

It's not formed in an hour on a Sunday morning or in an hour in a small group, but that group facilitates meaningful connection and what you're responsible to do as a member is to put yourself out there and make it happen. And again, as chief introvert of Broadview Baptist Church, I'm not saying it's easy or natural. But it's a responsibility, it's an expectation of membership because when you do that, you build something special. And when we all press into that, this community becomes something special. It becomes a place where people can walk in even though they're kind of socially awkward and go, oh wow, I feel like I belong here.

People actually introduce themselves and they're actually friendly, and maybe I actually make a friend because I don't have any friends anywhere else in my life. But when I came here people accepted me and they invited me to their Sunday school party and I connected. That's why membership matters because you're committing yourself to do that even when it's uncomfortable. Next, number four, give generously. This is a little bit controversial.

Nobody likes when the preacher talks about giving, but I'm going to do it anyway. When you become a member of a local church, you're committing to give financially.

Now people debate about how much are you supposed to give? Start with the reality, the reason why we give, according to Scripture, is because there's a temptation in every human heart to love our stuff more than we love the Lord. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he says, You want to know where your heart is? Go find where your money goes. Where your money goes is where you're going to find your heart. I think it's Matthew chapter 6. He says you cannot love God and money. You'll love the one, be devoted to the other.

How does he say it? "No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." So in a way when you join a church and that church is saying we expect you to give financially so that we can continue to minister to you and to other people and advance the kingdom of God in the world, it's actually an invitation for the sin of greed to be broken in your life.

It can be a good thing for you spiritually. I know it never feels real great to give away money, but it's a spiritually healthy practice because it's a reminder, all my money belongs to God. I'm a steward, not an owner. It's temporary. I'm going to give an account, and so it's an invitation to be a good steward of God's resources. How much a person gives, I always grew up believing you start with a tithe. Tithe is ten percent. The Bible teaches tithing. The Old Testament, it's the only area that God says in the Old Testament or New Testament.

Test me in this. Test me in this one area. If you don't give 10% of your money, see what happens. I will pour out my blessings on you in ways that you can't even begin to imagine. Now some people say if you give money, you get money. I don't think the Bible teaches that, but there is a sense in which when you give God provides for you in ways that are supernatural and very, very amazing. Malachi 3:10: "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse"—why?—"so that there may be food in my house."

So he's talking about giving to the temple, but he's saying give to the temple because you know the priests need to eat too. They can't go out and harvest grain and plow the field because they're busy studying God's word to preach to you every single Sunday. So bring in the tenth so that those people can be fed and this ministry can continue because you need this spiritual food just as much as you need that physical food. "Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure."

Now some people say, well, that's Malachi, that's Old Testament, we're in the New Testament, we're New Covenant believers, so I don't have to tithe. And if that's what you think, in one way you're right. That's Old Testament. It's Old Covenant. We're not under the

Old Covenant, right? We're under a new law. We're under the law of Christ. Love God. Do as you please. That's a good summary. But if your mindset is I'm under the new covenant, so I don't have to tithe, I don't have to give 10%, then you don't understand the new covenant.

New covenant, what's called grace giving, I think the 10% is a starting place, not an ending place. You give above and beyond a 10%, not less than. The best illustration of this, if you want to study it for yourself, is 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul talks about it as a grace. Giving is a grace. He says, you excel in this grace, in that grace, in this grace. I want you to excel in the grace of giving because when you excel in the grace of giving, you prove the genuineness of your love.

We want to be people of faith, expressing faith through acts of love. You prove the genuineness of your love by how you give. And then he extrapolates, what does grace giving look like? He says it's patterned after Jesus, though he was rich, for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. He says it's proportional in nature. This is where the whole 10% thing comes in. He says, give according to what a person has, not what they don't have. So if you're super, super wealthy, 10% may not be enough for you to truly prove the genuineness of your love.

If you are saddled with debt, you don't have a job, you don't have any income whatsoever, then 10% is not feasible for you. In fact it would unduly burden you. No rather you should receive from those who have more. It needs to be voluntary, Paul says, not under compulsion because the Lord loves a cheerful giver. It's also proportional not just in the outgo, but also in the income. He says whoever sows sparingly reaps sparingly. So if you're going to be chintzy with your generosity, God will be chintzy with his generosity towards you.

And then finally it invites a blessing. Look at this. Chapter 9, verse 6: "The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart." So is 10% the only option? No. Maybe in your circumstance, because of all you've got going on, you're saddled in debt. Maybe 2%, 5% needs to be your beginning spot. But get out of debt, start to honor the Lord in your finances, and then grow in your generosity. So the 10% is a starting spot.

Or whatever the Lord impresses on your heart. Don't do it reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. I used to know someone who would put a little smiley face on their check every time they'd put it in the tithe box, even though they weren't smiling. They were like, well, God wants a cheerful giver, but deep down they were like, I don't want to give you this money. Well then you probably shouldn't give it at all. That's a heart problem. Go back to the gospel, remind yourself of what Christ has done for you, get your heart in the right place, and then give from that place of gratitude.

The Lord wants a cheerful giver. And when you give in that way, God is able to make every grace overflow to you so that in every way, always having everything you need, notice need, not want, you may abound. So give generously. I cannot tell you how many times I've seen people begin to honor God in their finances with a tithe and God show up in ways that they couldn't even explain. We have the tithe challenge around here. If you have never honored the Lord in your tithe, start. And if the Lord does not take care of you, we'll give all the money back.

90 days, I think, is what we say. Ninety days, you begin to honor the Lord in your finances, and then after 90 days, you can't pay your rent and you can't buy groceries. Then we'll give all the money back. It's not something we need from you. It's something we want for you. God doesn't need your money. He wants something for you. And one of the ways that he can demonstrate his provision and his goodness and grace in your life is when you begin to honor him and trust him in an area that you've always wanted to control.

Because it's always been a place of insecurity and all of those things I've got to have. When you release that and you begin to trust the Lord in your finances, you invite his blessing in your life in ways that you can't begin to imagine. So give generously. Fifthly, serve faithfully. Every member of our church has been given a ministry and gifted and empowered to serve. First Peter chapter 4, verse 10: "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God."

Notice this language of stewardship. When you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit filled your heart. Jesus baptized you in the Holy Spirit and he gifted you for ministry. That gift is a stewardship, which means it's temporary and you're accountable to God for how you use that gift. If you are gifted for ministry and never use your gift in the life of the local church, then you'll give an account for never having used it. We're stewards of God's varied grace. Now a lot of people get kind of insecure about what is my gift and I don't know what it is and they go and they read the various lists in the New Testament of the spiritual gifts and I don't know that's very helpful because there's so many different lists and none of them are the same and none of them are exhaustive and you can kind of force yourself into something that doesn't really fit who you are as an individual.

I think the better method is to find the confluence between what you're naturally good at, what you naturally have a passion for, and what other people naturally affirm in you. And what you'll find is that God oftentimes supernaturally blesses you to build up the church and to minister to people in ways that coincide with those three arenas. Natural abilities, affinity, your passions, your affections, and then what other people affirm in you. So if you kind of love to study and love to talk and help people learn and grow, well, God may give you the gift of teaching.

I'm not saying I was a good communicator before I became a Christian, but there's a kind of a natural communication ability I have. But if I wasn't a Christian, I could preach until I was blue in the face. I don't think it would build you up in love. But the fact that the Holy Spirit gifted me in a particular way, when that gift of teaching is being exercised, the Holy Spirit uses it in a very unique way in the life of the church. And the same is true for every single individual who's been baptized into the Holy Spirit.

If you're a member of Christ's body, you've been gifted for ministry. And so find that gift and use it. And you don't have to serve on Sunday morning or on Wednesday night. You can find another way to unleash your gift in the life of the body, but discover it and deploy it. It's an expectation of membership because when every person does their part the body builds itself up in love, which means when we don't embrace our part, the body doesn't build itself up in love the way we are supposed to.

Now that being said, your gift is not the only thing that should drive your service. Sometimes you serve in a church not because you're gifted, but because there's a need— for example, in the preschool wing. We always need preschool workers. Ever since I've been a pastor, we've never had enough volunteers in our preschool wing. Always needing more people. I'm not looking for someone who comes up and says, I have a passion and special ability to change diapers. In fact, if someone came up to me and said that, I'd be like, you're not serving back there.

That's pretty weird to say. Run a second background check on that one. No, we're not saying that. But sometimes there's a need and you say, well even though I'm not super passionate about changing dirty diapers, I'll be willing to do that once a month or every six weeks or whatever the case may be. Not because I'm gifted and passionate about it, but because the church needs it. And I love this church and I want this church to build and grow. And so I'll serve. So serve faithfully. Next, live missionally. This means the church doesn't just exist when we're gathered, the church also exists while we're scattered throughout the city of Abilene.

Colossians chapter 4 says, "Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person." Every single one of us is an ambassador for Jesus when we leave this place. Remember the church is not a building. The church is not a place. The church is a people. You are the church. And so we are the church when we all get together, but the church continues to be the church when we scatter throughout the week and living missionally is being willing to leverage and take advantage of those opportunities as they surface in your life.

First Peter 3:15 says, always be ready to give an apologetic, an apologia, to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is within you. That means you're always filtering your

circumstances and conversations and experiences through the lens of how does God want to use me today? Where's God working? How can I join God in what he's doing? I want to leverage these opportunities to be the church and the church exists to continue the ministry of Jesus. I'm going to continue the ministry of Jesus in my day-to-day activities.

One of the things— I actually got an answer to this question after the second service, but I wanted to figure out how we could have a number where people could text message into the number when they have opportunity to share the gospel. I think a lot of people say, well, it's not worthy of celebrating if no one makes a decision. That's nonsense. If you get an opportunity to share the love of Jesus or share the gospel with another person, I think you ought to be able to send that in to your church family and then your church family can celebrate every single Sunday: Sixteen of our members got to share the gospel this week.

16 of our members got to bless someone this week. They leverage their opportunity to be a blessing. That's what it means to live missionally. That's an expectation of membership in the local church, not just when we gather, but when we scatter. And then finally walk humbly. This is the virtue that transcends every other virtue. First Peter chapter 5, verse 5, Peter says to the church there, "Clothe yourselves"—every single one of you, not just old or young, every one of you—"clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." So many ways we can sin against one another. I think at the root of every sin is pride. It's ego. It's my way, not their way. It's my way, not God's way. It's at the root of all relationship problems. It's at the root of our sin against God. It's pride. But just as pride is the root of all sin, humility is the root of all virtue. At least as I understand it, because from humility is this fertile ground that patience can blossom and kindness and gentleness and self-control.

I love what C. S. Lewis said, that humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but it's thinking of yourself less.[2] That's exactly how Paul defines humility when he's saying in Philippians chapter 2, I want you to have the mind of Jesus. What does it look like to have the mind of Jesus? He says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves." Think of yourself less. "Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus."

Humility is what promotes and maintains unity in the local church. Humility is what makes true community possible. Humility is what enables us to become aware of our own need for growth. These seven expectations, these six expectations, all flow from humility. When you're humble, when you think of yourself less, you're a little more willing to sacrifice your extra hour of sleep on Sunday. You're a little more willing to miss the first quarter of the Cowboys game because it's not all about me. It's about my commitment. I made a

commitment to a local church to deploy my gift and to stir other people up and to be used by God to encourage and to bless.

And so if I had to sacrifice a little bit of time on Sunday morning, I'm willing to do so because I'm looking to the interest of others ahead of my own. Humility motivates attendance. Humility motivates growth. Because you're not thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think. You think of yourself with sober judgment. You always see there's room for improvement because the closer you get to God, the more aware you become of your need for God. Humility makes growth possible. Humility is what enables you to embrace your gift for ministry, not thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but with sober judgment and being willing to deploy that gift in service to others instead of serving yourself.

I could go through every— I'm not going to, but I could go through every single one of these expectations and show you how humility is the root. And when we embrace humility as a church, here's the other thing. We could do all seven of these expectations. If we're not humble, we will be one cold-hearted, legalistic, unpleasant group of people. And we've all been to churches who just feel ice cold. Yeah, they know their doctrine. Yes, they don't sin, but they're a bunch of self-righteous, egotistical, anti-Christian folks. What keeps us from becoming that way, what keeps us a loving bunch is humility.

And when we embrace humility and we commit to these seven expectations, we'll begin to see God use our church in ways that are amazing. And you'll begin to see God use you in ways that you never thought he would use you before. You'll begin to see yourself in ways that you never looked at yourself before. You'll become more confident, more bold, more excited about your Christian life because the church is not a gas station. I'm not just coming, sitting and soaking, and trying to live till next week. But I am actively engaged and involved in God's mission to change the world, and I'm changing that world with my brothers and sisters at Broadview Baptist Church because I'm all in and connected to what he's doing.

That's the vision. And so if you're here this morning and you're not a member of our church, I would encourage you, if God calls you, to commit to membership, to commit to these seven things and say I'm all in. The church is not a gas station for me; I want to join the gym. If you are a member and you're slacking in some of these areas, I would ask you to allow the Lord to examine your heart and convict you and prompt areas of obedience that maybe you haven't considered. Maybe you've kind of grown comfortable in your level of generosity or your level of engagement or your level of friendship making.

Maybe the Lord's calling you to make a friend. Get on the phone. You know, you've been waiting for them to make the move. Maybe you need to make the move. Maybe that's what the Lord wants you to do today. And if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, I would invite you not to join our church, but to join the body of Christ. Because all of these

things flow when you're filled with the Spirit, and that happens when you give yourself to Jesus. If you'll repent of your sin, put your faith in Jesus as Lord, you will be saved.

And so I'll be here at the front if you want to make that decision public. The altar is open if you want to pray about anything as the Lord leads, but let's take a few moments to respond to the Lord. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning. We thank you for your word. And we thank you for the church. And I know in my own life there's been seasons where I've taken it for granted and have not been as committed as I know I needed to be. And I repent of that.

And I pray that for every single one of us you would open our eyes to see the potential of who we could become as a local church, the impact that we could make in our city, and the changes that we could experience personally if we would simply be all in and commit to what you're asking us to do. Would you give us wisdom and clarity to know what this looks like in our day-to-day life? And would you bear fruit in our church? Help us to be effective and powerful. And grow so that we can continue to be a blessing to the people who belong to our faith family, and to the city of Abilene and around the world.

We give you this time. Would you have your will done and our hearts fully surrendered as a result of the decisions that we're about to make? And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Galatians chapter 5, or chapter 6, verse 5"; "faith working through love" is Galatians 5:6. Source: Galatians 5:6 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: this line is widely attributed to C. S. Lewis, but it is not in his writings. It comes from Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (2002), Day 19. Lewis's closest line is in *Mere Christianity*, Book 3, ch. 8, "The Great Sin": the truly humble man "will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all." Left as spoken. Source: C. S. Lewis Foundation, "Quotes Misattributed to C.S. Lewis"; Essential C.S. Lewis, "Humility Is Not" (2015). ↩