

The Very Best Place to Work

Ephesians

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:19-22, Ephesians 4:11-16
Preached on: Sunday, January 13, 2019

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This morning I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 2. We're continuing a series of messages we began last Sunday on the doctrine of the church and just shared as we were prayerfully considering moving forward with building needs, you know, to try to expand parking, possibly add space, just prayerfully seeking what the Lord wants us to do, that we really felt like it was important for us to put first things first and to really understand the priorities of God and God makes very clear in his word that the building that he's building is the church, it's the people of God. That's what's precious to his heart. We come to another passage that shows us that this morning and we're going to look at a couple of passages in Ephesians 2 in kind of an introductory way to help us continue our thoughts about this. Last week, we said that the most beautiful place on earth as we look at what the Scripture teaches us and the beauty of Jerusalem and the typological way that the Lord shows us that is the most beautiful place on earth is the church of Jesus Christ. Wherever God's people are gathered around his word, that's what's precious and delightful to him. So the most beautiful place on earth we talked about last week, this week I want to talk about the most wonderful place to work. That's the title of the message, "The Most Wonderful Place to Work."

I was reading an article, "The 10 Best Places to Work in 2018," and you may have seen some of these things, you may have heard some of this. I actually heard someone talking about this a couple of weeks ago too, they had a brother who worked for Google and had left Google and then went back to Google and he says he's never leaving there again because of the benefits package of working at Google. You know, the folks out there in northern California, they're an interesting group of people apparently. You hear about Facebook, Google, they love it because at work you can get cooking classes during the day, anytime you want to go and take a cooking class, you go and take a cooking class during the work hours. I mean, obviously they were getting their work done somehow around that, but all kinds of things: free food, the best food, massages at work, stuff like that.

Anyway, that was in the article. One of the other great places to work was In & Out Burger and I don't think you have the massages or anything like that at In & Out Burger but they take very good care of their employees. They have a profit sharing plan that includes all their employees. So there are these different ways of looking at it.

One of the top 10 places I was encouraged to see of these top 10 lists was St. Jude's Children's Hospital because of the mission of what they're accomplishing. You've seen the commercials or you're familiar with that ministry to children with very very serious problems. That was one of the top 10 places. It was only number 9, though, because all the other stuff in our society I guess is more valued.

But I want to share with you I think the most wonderful place to work for all of us, the most wonderful place to work because of the value of the mission. Yes, the benefits package too. It's the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the most wonderful place. It is where you can work and you will know that your work will last. Your work will go on into eternity. There are lots of noble things that people are doing. God has created us to work and so anytime we're doing something that's adding value to life or bringing his dominion that he called us to have over the earth, that's good, that's noble, that's what man is created in God's image to do, to work, and so many things are wonderful areas of endeavor. But those things, as wonderful as they are, will burn up when the earth is burned but the one thing that will not burn up is the souls of the believers that belong to Jesus Christ and that have been impacted as we work.

So the most wonderful place to work is the church of Jesus Christ and we see this, particularly the Apostle Paul makes this point in Ephesians 2. We're going to read chapter 2, verses 19 to 22, and then I want you to see as we read, I want you to listen for key words. I'm going to kind of pull them out for you and I want you to see how the words are echoed again in the same book a couple of chapters later in chapter 4. So the most wonderful place to work, the church of Jesus Christ, and it's the most wonderful place to work because it's where Jesus is primarily working.

Now his work, of course, when we're working on the church, we're working on evangelism too because that's bringing people into the church, but then once we get them in, the work is not done. The work continues as we one-another the word with each other; as we walk through life together; as we learn to work and serve one another, we're building up the body, making it more like Christ, doing things of eternal lasting value, and we get a window into this at the end of chapter 2 in Ephesians. After he's shared the glory of the Gospel in the first 10 verses, that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we're not saved by works. Then he unpacks the wonder of now the reconciliation that happens, that when we come to Christ, we are made one with each other. There is now the opportunity for oneness that crosses every dividing wall, and in light of that, he then comes in verse 19 to say this, chapter 2, Ephesians 2:19,

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we ask now that You by Your Spirit, the Spirit that inspired these words, might now illumine them in our hearts and that You might send forth Your word even in this time together and build Your church to the glory of Your Son. We pray in His name. Amen.

The very best place to work, the most wonderful place to work is the church of Jesus Christ and I want to just gather our thoughts around three basically questions that will help us unpack this a little bit this morning, and the first is where, and I've already kind of said it but I want to start off there and enunciate that more clearly. Where is it that Jesus is working? Where is Jesus' primary focus? I mean, we know that he's upholding all things by the word of his power, God is doing all things, but there is a sense in which the apple of his eye is the people of God and what he is doing, everything else exists for the purpose of what he's doing with the people of God, how he's preparing for himself, the Father is preparing for his Son a bride; the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to seek and to save the lost and to prepare us for eternity in heaven.

So that's what we see here. Jesus is at work in the church. He's the one that's doing the work. When you look at the verses carefully, those verses we just read, one of the great comforts that we should take from this is that he is, himself, at work. He said in Matthew, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it," and he is building his church. One of the things that we must always remember as we try to join him in the process of doing what we're called to do, we're going to see there's a real parallel between this passage in Ephesians 2:19-22 and Ephesians 4:11-16, and 4:11-16 talks about what we're supposed to be doing in building.

The key word, it's really amazing, building, growing, fitting together are the same words he uses in Ephesians 4 when he's talking about the body. So he's saying that building the body is another metaphor for building the temple, but what we must see is that Jesus is the one that's building, and even as we're trying to build our confidence is, he's building so we don't have to be afraid. A lot of times we think we need to wait, we can't really get involved in the work because we're not ready. Well, what we're going to see as we begin to understand the word more is that God wants us to get involved in building. As soon as you're saved, you're to get to work. You've come into the family and you've come into the family business. You now by virtue of your birthright, you are required to work on what God is doing. He's building his house and it really is like the family business.

I know there are folks, you grow up in a family where the family has a business and it's expected that the children are all going to take their part. There was a family like that, a well-known family like that in Duluth, the Parsons family. They used to have a store in downtown Duluth that was, it was everything. Back in the '70s before, there was a time when there was not even a Winn-Dixie. Now do you guys remember Winn-Dixie? Winn-Dixie was the first outside grocery store that came to Duluth. I grew up here, my wife and I grew up in Duluth and so we remember when Winn-Dixie came. Before that it was only Parsons, Parsons Grocery, and there was a little other place called Hamrick's Grocery that

was the competing grocer, and that was basically a glorified, Hamrick's was a glorified, you know, QuikTrip so it was really Parsons.

Anyway, the Parsons family had a grocery store, they had a hardware store, they had a building supply, they had a dry goods store which was basically a department store. It was all connected. Anything you needed, you went to Parsons. Well, every child that was born to the Parsons family, they were all girls, they all worked in the business and that's what happened. The one took the building supply. One took the hardware. One took the dry goods. And that's what's continued on.

Well, when you come to Jesus Christ, you become not only his child, you become a part of the family business and that's what we see. He's building a house and we're called in to build the house with him. That's where we work. And this is truly our greatest work. No matter what your job is, your work is this. Like I said, there are many noble professions. Everything that you do to honor the Lord in every business that you can operate in that's not unethical in its essence gives glory to God, but the reason that you're doing it if you belong to Jesus Christ, the primary reason you should be doing it is you're trying to build his kingdom, you're trying to build his church, so that whatever you do whether you teach, whether you're a salesman, an accountant, you're doing it for the glory of God to extend his kingdom. That's the family business. So where we work and it's the best place to work.

Now that was the first question, where. Where is the best place to work? It's in the church of Jesus Christ. Secondly, what. What is it that we're called to do? Well, we're called to build the house. This is an ongoing building project that's being described here. It's a project that has been started and it is well on its way but it is not completed.

When you look at the words carefully, it becomes clear, there are really three key words in the passage that I want to highlight that tell us what's going on here and the first word is the word "built or building." It occurs three times. Verse 20, after we're told we're part of God's household, "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," that when you come to faith, you are incorporated into this building. Now you're a part of the building even though you're working on the building and part of your working on the building is working on yourself to be a more fit piece of the building, a stone that is more crafted like Christ.

So having been built, that's the first time you see it and you see it three times in this passage, the word "build or built." "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," that's the first time. Verse 21, "in whom the whole building, being fitted together." Verse 22, "in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God." So it's a building project. We're building and we are building people. That's what we're called to do. We are called to invest our lives in building up one another. Another way the Bible sometimes translates that, the King James says edifying, seeing people grow in their love for Christ and their likeness to Christ, and that is your and my job.

Do we think of it that way? When you come to church on Sunday morning, do you think, "I'm going to try, Lord, by Your grace to pour my life into other people today to see them grow up in Christ"? Do you leave with the same kind of intensity that you leave when you're going to work to do your job in whatever your task is on Monday morning? If we were thinking biblically, we would have more earnestness and more focus on Sunday morning even than we do on Monday through Friday because this is what's going to last. Now it's true, then as you go Monday through Friday, you're always building. This is the primary. It's like whatever job you have is your second job. Your first job is this, to build the kingdom.

So the first key word I mentioned under the "what" that we're doing is the word "building." To help us to continue to unpack this, look at a couple of other key words. The next word I want us to highlight is the word "growing." Verse 21, "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord." It's a present, Greek present tense which means continuous action; that Jesus is building a church and he's trying to grow people up.

Then the last key word that I want to highlight for you is the word "fitted together; being fitted together" in verse 21, the whole building being fitted together. So Jesus is building a church, he's growing it up, and it's being fitted together.

Now what you're going to see is all three of those key words occur in chapter 4, 11-16, talking about the body. Built. Building. Growing. Being fitted together. This word "being fitted together" is a really rich word too. It is a compound word of actually, well, it's actually three compound words. It's the preposition with, the idea of with, plus a word which takes a word for joining something, and then another word, according to a plan. So to join something according to a plan is the main word there and then it's intensified with this idea of with. So the idea is that we're fitted together. He says you're being fitted together and growing into a holy temple in the Lord. This word "being fitted together" connotes the idea of a plan and skill; that God is putting together his church when he's building his church. When we come together, Jesus is here and this is what he's doing and he's fitting it together according to a perfect plan. It's not accidental.

You know, the image that came to me as I was thinking about this this week is a tongue and groove kind of construction. If you know much about construction, you may know of that, or if you try to put in wood floors, a lot of times they're tongue and groove. The wood is put together such that there are openings in the wood that fit together with the other wood and it actually could be installed without any nails. Usually you nail anyway on top of it but tongue and groove is really high-quality stuff.

This is the idea here. When Jesus puts together his church, he does it tongue and groove. Now I say that because a lot of times we don't think it looks that way. I told you last week, we don't think the church is that beautiful either. I mean, we weren't thinking, I don't think that way normally, that the most beautiful place in the world is where the people of God are. I don't think that way because I think in what I can see too much, right? But the word of God says the most beautiful place on earth is the people of God

and a lot of times I don't think that the church is put together like it needs to be. I'm thinking, "Hey, we're missing some people here. We need this over here and maybe we've got too much of this over here. So, Lord, this is not right." No, Jesus puts his church together tongue and groove and a lot of times there are things that we don't like, the conflicts, the difficulties, the personality conflicts that we have are exactly there according to tongue and groove specifications. They're there because you and I need to be shaped because what's happening is iron is sharpening iron. There is perfect wisdom of God. He's putting it together.

So he's building this church. He's doing it with this kind of skill so that we might grow up into the people of God and this is happening, he's always seeking to do that, the problem is we're not cooperating within that so often in that endeavor, but if we'll make ourselves available, we will see him accomplishing more and more and more. I think one of the problems that people have is that when it's so easy in our consumer mentality that dominates our culture to church shop. You know, when we find something we don't like, well, we'll just move on and find another one. I mean, that's what we do with our grocery shopping. That's why Parsons doesn't have a grocery store anymore because people shopped around and found they could get it better at Winn-Dixie and Kroger and all these other places, right? That's okay with your grocery store but it's not okay with the church. Just because I'm not really crazy about this aspect of the church or this way that the church does this, I'm going to move on. When we do that, we are missing out on what God has intended for us. When he puts you in a place and part of it is to trust in his sovereignty, "He's put me where he wants me, with the people that he wants me with, and I'm going to embrace that and I'm going to receive that and I'm going to rejoice in that, and I'm going to do what he's calling me to do."

So the fact that he's doing the building is the emphasis in these verses. In fact, the entire emphasis is on what God is doing, not what we do in these verses 19 to 22. The key verbs in the passage are passive voice verbs. The building is being fitted together. You are being built together. You have been built. You see, those are all passive voice verbs. It means you're not doing the building. You know, the active voice verb is where the subject is the doer of the action. "I hit the ball," that's an active voice statement. Passive, the subject receives the action of the verb. "I was hit by the ball." That's passive voice. These are passive voice verbs so that when he's talking about the church, he's talking completely about what Jesus Christ is doing and it's not about what we're doing at all. You didn't have anything to do with it. When you were born again, if you have come to know Jesus Christ and you've repented of your sins and you've placed your faith in his finished work, his life, his death, his resurrection, at that moment you were built onto the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, basically a shorthand way of saying on the word of God with Jesus himself being the corner stone, the word of God, now you're being built on this foundation. And this building is still going on. The whole building is being fitted together. We're not having a part in it, we're not choosing it, he's doing it. He's the craftsman picking up the wood and placing it together. We're not. And we continue being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. He's doing this and his objective is to build a house for God to dwell in.

The corporate body of Christ is the dwelling of God and we saw this last time when I mentioned to you that the New Testament, we often interpret it in ways that reflect our culture and our worldview in our society. We read a verse like Colossians 3:16 which says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and how do we interpret that? How I always interpreted that and I think how most of you do, is that means I've got to really be meditating on the word, memorizing the word. I've got to be thinking about the word. I think of it atomistically. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in me richly, but that's not how the New Testament reads, that's not what that passage says. That passage says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you all richly." It's not atomistically. He's saying, "Let the word of Christ dwell in the church of Colossae richly," and you can see this if we had been a little more attentive, I mean, once you see it, it's like how did I miss that because what does he say right after that? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," if it was just me it should say meditating on the word, memorizing the word. What does it say, though? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching one another and admonishing one another." Do you see? The way it dwells in us is as we speak it to each other. Well, the problem we have is that we tend to naturally think that way so much and it's just ingrained in the very fabric of the way we think and the New Testament is calling us to change the way we think. He's building his church, he does it through his word, and as we come together and we seek to grow together, he's doing the work.

So we looked at where, we looked at what, now how does Jesus do his work? The main point of those verses I just read you is he's doing his work. In fact, let me just say before I move on to the third point, in verse 21 it says, "in whom the whole building, being fitted together." In whom, in Christ. In Jesus the whole building is being fitted together. He's fitting it together. It is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, emphasis again upon what he's doing, in the Lord. Verse 22, "in whom you were also being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Everything that's being done is being done by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit according to these verses.

Now that's so important to know because that's going to help undergird our confidence for what he's going to tell us that we're about. Later on Paul is going to say, "It's time for you to get to work," and that's what he turns to in Ephesians 4:11-16. So the third question is how do you join Jesus in his work? How do you go to work? We looked at where the best place to work is, what we're to be doing, building a house. How do you build the house? That's what he turns to in Ephesians 4:11-16. Now he does change the metaphor from a house to a body but the key words are still dominating the passage. Listen for those words I mentioned earlier: built, grow, fitted together. Built, grow, fitted together.

Ephesians 4:11,

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to

the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

In the first verses the word "build" occurred three times and those verses in chapter 2, 19-22, built or building, three times. Here it was twice in these six verses. The word "grow" occurred once in Ephesians 2:19-22, it occurred twice in the passage we just read. And that very unique word "being fitted together" occurred also in both places, here in verse 16. Here it's the whole body being fitted and held together. He changes the metaphor but it's the same idea. We're to help one another as parts of the body help one another to grow.

Now how do you do the work? I want to consider, I'll give you three imperatives to think about how to get to work with Jesus in building the church. When we come together on a Sunday, when we come together on a Wednesday, when you meet together with a brother or sister for dinner or coffee, these are the things that we should be seeking to do. We should be, as it were, putting on our hat to go to work and there are three things. How do you work? How do you join Jesus in the work? Ephesians 4:11-16 gives us, I think, three things that we should do.

The first thing is determine to go on being equipped. Be equipped. "He gave some as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service." So we need to be being equipped. We need to put ourselves under the word. That's what he's saying. Those gifts to the church in verse 11, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/teachers, are gifts of the word. The word is what equips and so we must put ourselves regularly under the word. We need to be in the word, under the teaching of the word, under the preaching of the word. We cannot live without the word. The word of God is our life and if we're going to be at work, we need to be because the word of God is our tool. That's how we build, we build with the word.

Isn't it wonderful when you're doing a project and you have the right tool? I don't do a lot of stuff because I'm not very good at it, but when I do, it's such a joy when the screwdriver is exactly the right size for that particular screw or you have exactly the right size Allen wrench for what you need, you have exactly the right tool for that and it works. Man, that's great and a while back I was trying to take my battery out of my car and I had everything done except for this one bolt that needed an extension on a ratchet and I didn't have the extension and so there I am, I've done all this work and I've been thinking, "I'm going to get this done and I'm going to change a batter myself. Patti is going to be amazed." She wasn't amazed, she was confirmed in her normal skepticism because I didn't have the right tool so what I had to do was put everything back together, I had unhooked all the different cords, pulled out four different things, but I couldn't get

that one thing that I didn't know was there until I tried to lift it out and it wouldn't come. So I put everything back together, drove to the Advance Auto Parts and the guy there put it in for me.

Anyway, if I want to do it by myself, I've got to have an extension. You, when you are called to do something in the church of Jesus Christ, you have everything that you need in the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Now you could become more skilled and you must. That's what he's saying, "Be equipped. Don't just sit here and be content with your present level of skill. No, be being equipped. Get better at the work." You get better as a carpenter as you drive nails, as you learn how to measure and you measure twice and cut once, and you make the cut straight because you've learned how to do that. We are called to learn the skills of ministering the word of God to one another. That's your work. That's my work. That's all of our work.

So be being equipped. The idea of being equipped, the word that is translated "equipped" is a word which it's "katartismos." It comes from artios, to be fit or complete, but it's intensified with the preposition before it. It means "to be made fully fit; to be made fully complete." The idea is thoroughly furnished for what you need and the word of God will do that but we must be in the word. If we're not reading the word, if we're not studying the word, if we're not meditating on the word, if we're not under the preaching of the word, then you go on being not fully equipped.

Now think about that. Would you do that in your job? Some people would, right? Isn't it amazing, you know, are there some stores that you go to and you know you need help but you think it's no use asking anybody here that works here? Have you ever had that feeling? You ask one person and they've never thought about the question you just asked them and you think, "This is, like, your job here, isn't it?" Well, okay, imagine if the church of Jesus Christ looks like that. Isn't it wonderful when you go somewhere and actually the person you ask knows exactly what you need, knows exactly where it is, and if he doesn't, he finds it, and you have a sense, I've had this happen before on a rare occasion, that, "Have you thought about it, have you got this other thing that you need?" "No, I didn't even know I needed that. Man, you are..." You almost want to go give him a hug, "Can I send you a Christmas card? What can I do to express my gratitude to you?" But imagine you're going to church is like trying to be the best employee that you could be.

Learn the skills that you need to learn. Learn where everything is on the aisle. Anticipate what people need. How do you do all that? It's the word. The word of God does that. It gives you skills and Paul is saying, "This is your work." Again, the reason I read the first passage first is a lot of times you're going to feel like you don't know what to say. "I wish I had more skill." That's when you trust that Jesus is building this thing. Jesus let this person with this problem run into me and I wish I had done more reading and more studying but I haven't, but he let them run into me. He's running this whole thing. It's not just me. It's not happenstance. He's building his church. He has fitted it together. He's brought the opportunity, this person's need to my perceived inadequacy and he's making

me cry out to God even now and I'm going to do the best I can at this moment to use what skill I have, and I'm going to trust that if I mess it up, he's going to fix it.

We must have that confidence, he will fix it, otherwise we'll never help anybody. We'll be like the person that runs away when somebody looks like they might have a question. I've run into that too, haven't you? They're trying to avoid eye contact with customers. We're not to be like that. We need to be people who are willing to make eye contact with somebody who has a problem that we don't feel adequate to, we're not ready for, we don't think we have the resources for. We may be feeling like we have problems that we need to be sharing with other people and yet God then let's us run into somebody who has more need than we do at that moment. He loves to do this kind of thing. When you think you have nothing to give, he loves to give you an opportunity to give because what does it make you do? It's the time that you are the most prayerful and dependent as you move into that circumstance because we have a Savior who says, "In your weakness, I am strong." So Paul says, "I glory in my weaknesses." We must continue to try to be skilled and grow, but we're never going to feel adequate, and if we feel adequate in ourselves, we are trusting as Jeremiah that we read earlier said, we are trusting in flesh. "Cursed is the man who trusts in flesh. I will trust in the Lord. I'm not going to trust even in my skill level, I'm going to trust in the Lord, and I'm going to trust in His word, the things that I know His word says, yes, I can speak with confidence on."

So be equipped. The second imperative is the word "be active." The idea of start working now. Don't wait until later to work. You may have gotten saved in the last year, you're a new Christian, good news, you have a job that is just as important for you to come to work on Sunday as it is for a Christian who has been a believer for 55 or 60 years. God is calling you to work and he's going to use you, and he wants you to be active now, coming ready to serve, and if we can learn this, to be ready to minister to others, that's a hard thing for me and I'm a pastor. It's so hard for us to really think biblically. We have to let the word guide us even as we come to church.

Talk to that person. Ask that question, "Hey, I don't know if I'm seeing this right but you seem down. You seem different. Are you okay?" And trust that we can enter into that with them as unprepared and as inadequate as we feel, we can move toward that person and sometimes what we'll have to say is we'll love them, "Hey, I'm going to pray for you. Can we talk to, I think we need to talk to an elder. We need to talk to this lady over here. I know that you need some skills that I don't have." That's a good employee too, isn't it, the guy who says, "I don't know where it is but I know the guy that does know where it is and I'm going to go and find him for you." But start working now. You don't wait.

The idea is everybody is doing their part. In verse 16, "the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Each individual part doing its work. We need every single believer to come to work every Sunday and we need to remind each other that we're at work. That's part of the work and it doesn't mean that we can't, we still talk about life in general, but we should be looking

for opportunities to really build one another up spiritually so that small talk doesn't just stay small talk, it moves beyond that to life.

So be equipped, be active, and the third point is be confident. It really comes back to what I was saying a moment ago, that Jesus is building his church even as he puts me in contact with people that I may feel uncomfortable with, I might not understand, I don't know what to say, I don't know what to ask, be confident that he is working. So you can move and you can go forward and you can fall on your face even. It may feel like you're falling on your face but with Jesus it's not falling on your face because even when somebody moves towards you and they may not say the right thing but you know they love you, isn't that incredibly valuable? Because we know how hard it is to ask those questions and so you're showing that you care about me, but even if the other person doesn't appreciate it and often they won't because sometimes we're going with words of confrontation. We may be saying, "Hey, I don't know if I perceive this correctly but it looks like you're angry, are you okay?" "I'm not angry! Leave me alone! Mind your own business!" Well, don't be discouraged, that was good work that you did. It was even proved by his response.

There is some good follow-up that can happen. Maybe it's not at that moment, "Hey, you know, the other day when we talked and you kind of got upset, I want to talk to you about that." And that's part of what love is, speaking the truth in love is what he's calling us to. To be active, speaking the truth in love with confidence, this is one of the things that it's elusive. I think this sometimes, I struggle with and I've become convinced over the last few years that a lot of it is cultural that I didn't even realize and I think some of it is being in the south. It's not just the south, other places have their issues too, certainly they do. Every culture has its own things that sort of work against just speaking the truth in love.

I remember hearing about one of the most famous airline crashes in history was a Korean air flight. Do you remember hearing the story of this? And the copilot would not offend the pilot by telling him they were about to fly into a mountain because it would have not allowed, it would have violated the saving face thing. So the plane crashed. That's letting culture go too far.

Well, we have the same things. We have things in different areas and one of the things in the south I think that we have is we are genuinely warm on the surface and we're pleasant, try to be friendly, but it's often tough to get below that to the real issues and so we kind of have, we can kind of end up pretending that everything is okay. We feel pretty good as long as things really are sort of okay. You know, we go through life happily but that's not speaking the truth in love.

I had an experience with this a couple of weeks ago, actually less than that, last week, where a brother was telling me something and I did what instinctively comes to me. He said, "Hey, I want to confess I've had a bad attitude." Essentially something like this, "I want to confess my attitude has been wrong," and I really at the time now, I had not been offended by him genuinely. "I didn't know that you were having a bad attitude toward me at all." I've been that checked-out or whatever and sometimes we are, right? We don't

know that somebody is mad at us and they come and they say, "I've had a bad attitude toward you," or whatever. So I said, "Well, hey, I didn't even notice that so, you know, I forgive you but..." and we moved on, and I thought about that, the Lord brought that to mind the next day, or maybe that night, and I thought what I should have said was, "What do you mean? What are you talking about with your attitude? How have you been struggling?" I should have let him unpack his sin in my presence, loved him enough to do that, and the image that came to mind that the Lord put in my mind is foot washing, that that's love. Remember Jesus washed the disciples feet and then he says after he's washed their feet, "I've given you an example that you should follow." Then shortly after that, same conversation he says, "A new command I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another, and by this will all men know that you're My disciples." Foot washing, loving like that.

What is foot washing? I think it was Kris Brackett who was talking about this a little bit. Was that right, Kris shared about that when he was here in December? Anybody remember that? Okay, never mind. Kris did not share about that, by the way. I just wanted to point that out. He should have. No, seriously, he was preaching on Christmas so why would he have brought up foot washing?

Okay, foot washing in the culture of the day of Jesus. People had sandals, their feet were exposed, they were walking through the streets, their feet got dusty and sweaty and dirty, before air-conditioning, and also it's muddy in the bigger towns, there is no sewer system, the trash goes in the street, refuse goes in the street, urine goes in the street, people walk through that, then they come and they sit down and it's time to eat and they sit at tables that are not this high from the ground like ours. We sit at a table and our feet are a good ways away from our mouth and our food. They recline at tables where their feet are more like my feet if I'm reclining at a table maybe 18 inches from your nose, and you're trying to enjoy your meal. You see the need of foot washing. Foot washing is nasty business, that's why the lowest servant did the foot washing because if you're going to wash somebody's feet well, you've got to get down there and get into it and wash them, scrub off the stuff that doesn't need to be there, even be willing to get in between the toes. That's real love.

Now think about that. So my brother says to me, "Hey, I think I had a bad attitude. I need to confess it." For some reason he's convicted and he feels like he needs to confess sin to me. I need to be willing to get, now I'm thinking, "I don't have a problem with you." I'm thinking about what I want to do. I've got stuff on my mind. I've got an agenda. What does love look like? Love listens to this brother and says, "Something is on his heart." It doesn't pass over it with a kind of general, "Hey, yeah, everything's fine. Let's move on." What is his need? I'm willing to kneel down, take the position of a servant and examine his feet. "Hey, let's talk about this. What's going on with you?" This may get a little nasty. It may get a little unpleasant. "You know, I've really had this attitude toward you, what you did." And he may expose some of my sin. It's often the case. "You know, you really offended me the other day when you said this."

So now this has become my foot washing, his foot washing. This is unpleasant but this is the will of God. By dealing with that, he then is really cleansed. His heart is being purified. My heart is being purified. We're becoming like Jesus. We're putting aside sin. We're turning away from heart issues and we're worshiping our Savior. It's learning to take moments like that and seize the moment and do what God calls us to do and if we have a mindset, that is the work that you're called to, that I'm called to. That's the work. We come together to help one another be like Jesus and that's going to involve getting involved in each other's lives, not in a nosy way. No, Jesus gives the example. The lowliest servant, he of the greatest value and worth, of any human being, God himself, he lays aside his robe, dressed now as a slave and he kneels and washes the disciples' feet. He says that is what loving confrontation in the body of Christ looks like and that is beautiful to God.

Listen, think about this. You have a community of people who start loving each other like that, who are willing, because it's unpleasant and you now have to work through it. And after we had this conversation where he said some stuff he was upset about, I said some, now we have to work at forgiveness and we have to work at pursuing loving each other. We don't just end it with, "You know, well, that's okay. I forgive you," and now I'm not going to pursue a relationship. No, you reconcile. You work at loving this brother harder now that you've gone through this, and in doing that, when you have a community of people that are doing that, the world looks on it and says, "That is something I've never seen before." Surely Jesus truly is who he says he is. How lovely, how lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. And they see in our love and our service of each other, they see Christ. They see his beauty, his glory. That's the work we're called to do and we need to each time we're going to gather together, we need to ask the Lord, "Lord, help me realize I am going to work," and let's serve one another for the glory of Christ.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how grateful we are for Your grace. Lord, we are hard-headed, so self-centered. I know I am and we need to learn to die daily and to die continually to our agenda, to our desires, and to line ourselves up completely with our great Savior Jesus Christ who did not come into the world to be served but to serve and to give His life away. Lord, help us stop trying to be served and help us start serving and help us give our lives away. Because of the great love that You've shown us, may that love captivate us, capture us, and make us like You. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.