



GOD-CENTERED COMMUNITY

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite to open it with me to 2 Timothy 3. 2 Timothy 3. Praise God, He clothes us in the righteousness of Christ. This morning, we are in the second week of looking at a church covenant for the faith family called The Church at Brook Hills. Last week, we looked at the value, the benefit of church covenant and saw how it's not mandated in Scripture by any means, but not prohibited by Scripture, and I just want to remind you that, in no way are we saying that the new covenant we have in Christ needs to be improved on or needs to be added to. It's a completely different picture. We relate to God through faith alone in Christ alone.

A church covenant is an expression of our relationship to one another. It's not a new burden we put on each other, "Now we've got to do this." No, it's really an expression of who we are, according to the Word of Christ and what the Word of Christ says about us as a community of faith in a central prominent expression. It's a reminder to us. This is not about having a blood signing covenant ceremony. This is about us continually reminding ourselves, "This is what it means to be the body of Christ."

A Church Covenant for The Church at Brook Hills

You see in you see in your notes, on the front page of those notes there, a pretty significant of this church covenant for our faith family, and it's a pretty significant chunk, because there's really, I don't believe, anything in those three paragraphs that is new or surprising or something we've not already looked at, intensively, in the Word at different points. We started last week...and I meant to put this on there...I apologize for the first sentence from last week, "As members of The Church of Brook Hills, we affirm this covenant with one and another by God's grace, for our good, and ultimately for God's glory."

Last week, we talked about how we are a community of faith only by the grace of God, and the only way we will survive as a community of faith is by the grace of God, and by the grace of God, we promote one another's good, and we live to demonstrate God's glory in the way we relate to one another.

So, in light of that, the covenant starts by saying some things. I just want us to walk through this, and we're going to walk through this briefly again, because there's really nothing new here. When we get to a couple of points in a few weeks that are somewhat new, they're not new in Scripture; they are things that Scripture talks about, but not things we really looked at as a community of faith, and we're going to camp out on those things in particular.

However, when you look at this, I hope you see in the Word, the grace of God, all over this picture. An expression of who we already are: "Having been brought by divine grace to

repent and believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ." That's a foundational understanding of conversion, what it means to be a Christian. When you come to Christ, you turn from yourselves, you trust in Christ and to surrender our lives to Him. We've looked at Luke 14, "And if anyone would come after me he must give up everything he has." This is not just having a savior on the side in our lives that we can compartmentalize. He's Lord of everything. Our lives belong to Him. It's what it means to be a follower of Christ.

"...and having been baptized as Christians, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." as we've seen. We've studied that baptism is a public identification of Christ with His church. It's a matter of obedience in a relationship with Christ; one of the first things we do once we've trusted in Christ. I praise God for the number of brothers and sisters who have followed Christ in obedience through baptism and are in the process of that now. If you still have not been baptized a follower of Christ, let me encourage you to do that, to follow Christ in that way as soon as possible in obedience to Him. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ and be a part of the church.

Then it says, "...we covenant together to glorify God by making disciples of all nations." That's what we spent the whole month of February looking at. If you had to nail down one sentence that sums up our faith family, "What is The Church of Brook Hills about?" We are about glorifying God by making disciples of all nations. Now, the question is, "How does that play out in the way we relate to one another, in the way we live in community at the church with one another?" That's what a church covenant expresses, how we express our commitment to one another, our commitment to love one another.

We've studied Hebrews 10:19-25, talked about this last week, that the author of Hebrews says, as recipients of a new covenant, because we're a community united by the new covenant we have in Christ, he says three phrases. "Let us draw near to God, let us hold fast to the hope we profess, and let us consider how we can spur one another on toward love and good deeds." So, the three phrases, this is what we do together as a result of our covenant with Christ.

So, there are three kind of bullets, so to speak, in this church covenant. Two of them are listed there, and they're based on Hebrews 10, those three "Let us" statements. "Let us draw near to God in worship." What does that mean? Scripture is abundant, and this is just a picture, I hope, a representative picture. "Together...we will delight in the glory of God, depend on the presence of God, grow in the knowledge of God, and submit to the Word of God as the all-sufficient authority in our lives and in His church." You see all the Scriptures that are listed there.

Then, Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the hope we profess." So, "together, we will hold fast to the hope we profess." Now, Hebrews 10, that's not a specific allusion to the Lord's Supper, but when we look in the New Testament church, we see that the Lord's Supper was the central celebration of hope for the people of God. It was their gathering together and saying, "We hope in what Christ has done and the fact that Christ is coming back for us." So, we studied...we looked at the importance of the Lord's Supper.

A few weeks ago, we did that, and we saw how it should be a central part of what happens when we gather together as a community of faith, and I repented because and that led us to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly, like we need to do, and we see that we are celebrating the Lord's Supper together today. This is one of the most important things we do as a community of faith together. So, as elders, we said this needs to be primary. So, you see, "We will regularly participate in communion as we solemnly and joyfully..." This is what the Lord's Supper is about. "...remember the past work of Christ and the cross,

celebrate the present work of Christ at the Father's right hand, and anticipate the future work of Christ in His return for His bride."

When you look at that picture right there, hopefully you see nothing new. Again, this is an expression of who we already are. However, the constant theme, I hope, is evident in every single one of those phrases, is that we are a community of faith that is centered on God. This is huge because we live in a church culture where there are strong temptations at every turn to be man-centered, to design church to revolve around men and men's preferences and men's desires, men's tastes, men's opinions.

We have talked about this. If you were to ask the average Christian sitting in a pew or seated in a church building this morning to sum up the message of Christianity, you would most likely hear something along the lines of, "The message of Christianity is that God loves me." Or, "God loves me enough to send His Son, Jesus, to die for me." What we have is that that is not biblical Christianity. That's not the essence of Christianity.

If "God loves me" is the essence of Christianity, then who is the object of Christianity? "God loves me, therefore, Christianity is about me, and church is about me and my preferences and my likes in music and my taste in this or that area. My life is about me, where I want to live and what I want to do and my dreams and my plans and my ambitions." That's not Christianity. Christianity does not say, "God loves me. Put a period on it and go home." Biblical Christianity says, "God loves me so that His glory and His majesty and His greatness might be made known in all nations. He is the object of Christianity and everything centers around Him."

So, that begs the question, "How do we do community with one another? How do we love one another, and yet, be centered on God instead of each other?" How do you do that? How do you love one another to the glory of God? How do you guard against loving one another and seeing each other as the end, the ultimate end, of that love? How do you love one another for God's sake? That's where we come to the nonnegotiable Word of God and the reason why we have the Word.

God has given us His Word as the foundation of our community to fix our eyes constantly on the glory of God. That's one of the primary reasons we have the Word, and there's no question the more I go to different places, the more I'm convinced that we have deluded and minimized and marginalized the Word of God in the community of faith called the church in our culture. We need to realize that if the Word of God is not at the center of Christian community, then you no longer have Christian community. If the Word of God is marginalized, then you have undercut the very foundation for the community; you have, and you're just a crowd that gathers together.

You might even be a successful church in our culture, but you're not a Christian community. You're not a local church according to what Scripture defines as a community of faith because the Word of God is central in the community of faith, and that's what I want us to look at this morning. We're going to come here, 2 Timothy 3:10, and it's one of the most, if not the most, clear descriptions of the importance of God's Word amidst the community of faith for every facet of our faith.

So, I want us to read what Paul writes to Timothy. Paul is nearing the very end of his life. These are like his parting words, what's most important to say to Timothy, his friend, who he has mentored, his brother in ministry. What's most important for him to say? Listen to what he says, 2 Timothy 3:10.

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecution, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you've known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Father, we pray that, amidst a day where there is constant pull toward newer, trendier, more creative, more innovative means of growing, building your church, we pray that you will mold us into a community of faith that forsakes all of those things in order to trust in your Word alone. We pray, God, that you would teach us the importance and the beauty and the glory of your Word in the community of faith. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

This is a stout passage of Scripture, and for the sake of time, we are not going to be able, unfortunately, to dive into every single word and every single phrase that is contained here. What I did this week is I took those first three paragraphs of the church covenant and said, "Okay, is there a passage of Scripture that is referenced here that really summarizes the basis for all of the others?" 2 Timothy 3 and 4, which is the end of the second paragraph, is that text.

The Word of God in the Community of Faith...

So, what I want us to do is I want us to take this text. I want us to put it alongside a variety of those other texts that are mentioned in that church covenant. I want us to see the importance of the Word of God in the community of faith. I want us to see why the Word is so important for defining who we are. This whole passage revolves around the Word. Paul says, "Timothy, the only reason you are who you are is because of the Word, because the Word is poured into you. So, stay in it, continue in it, remain in it. In the church, keep it

central. Preach the Word." That's one command that precedes and supersedes all these other commands. Just a litany of commands there in 2 Timothy 4, and it's all starting with, "Preach the Word." Keep the Word central because there will be all kinds of temptations to minimize the Word.

We are a community formed by God's Word.

So, why...why must the Word be central in the community of faith? First, because we are a community formed by God's Word. We're formed by God's Word. What do you mean? What do you mean, "The Word of God forms the people of God, the community of faith"? Well, what does the Word do? Think about it with me, what Paul has expressed here. First of all, we are saved by the Word; we are saved by the Word. Now, I want to be careful of the language here, because the reality is we're saved by Christ, who is the living, incarnate Word of God. However, the revelation of Christ that we have, who He is and what He has done, is the Word of God.

It's the Word that opens our eyes to see who Christ is, and it's the Word that describes how we are saved. We don't have to come up with means or methods of salvation, a plan of salvation, a path to salvation. The Word describes how we're saved. It's the first sentence there in that part of the covenant we're looking at today, "Having brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and surrender our lives to Him..." That's how the Word describes salvation. It's what the Bible describes as trust in Christ for salvation. Repent. Believe. Surrender. Give up everything you have. Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Him. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ, to come to Christ.

Now, we have come up with all kinds of substitute phrases in our day in order to try to reach as many people as possible. We have taken those phrases, put them out the door and said, "No, just accept Christ." Or, "Invite Christ into your life." Or, "Pray this prayer, and you will be saved." None of those phrases are in Scripture. None of them. In our efforts to reach as many people as possible with the Word of Christ, we have thrown out the Word of Christ and put a superstitious prayer in front of people to pray. Repent. Believe. Give up everything you have. See Him, not as a Savior who's begging for you to accept Him, but as a Lord and God who is infinitely worthy of all of your surrender. Trust in Him. He will forgive you of your sins and reconcile you to God and clothe you in His righteousness. These are biblical terms.

We are saved according to the Word. The last thing we want to do is dilute the gospel in order to reach more people with the gospel and, in the process, lead people to follow our path to salvation, our words, and end up thinking they're saved when, according to Scripture, they are not saved. Maybe it's better put by Christ according to the Word. It's fundamental for our salvation. It's what Paul said, verse 14 and 15, "Continue what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." The Scriptures make you wise for salvation through faith. We're saved by faith. Faith in what? In the Word. Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the..." What? "...by the Word of God." We're saved by the Word.

Not just saved by the Word, though, not just justified before God, not just born again according to the new and living Word...we are sanctified through the Word. Second, Paul says, "The Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation", and then, he continues, verse 16, "All Scripture is God-breathed..." God breathed it. What an incredible picture. "...and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..." Paul says,

"Timothy, when you were saved...when you're saved, you don't graduate from the Word and move on to something else. The Word is where you live and continue in."

Christian brother or sister in this room, when we are saved, we do not graduate one day to the latest hit in the Christian bookstore to now help us grow in our relationship with Christ. We don't need it. We don't need any of those books. Now, follow with me here. I'm not saying that every book in the Christian bookstores that surround us are bad. In fact, there are some good, some very helpful books and resources. However, the reality is there is only one book that God has promised to bless to sanctify you, make you holy, grow you into the image of Christ, and that is this book. There is not one book...the best one in the Christian is not able to sanctify you. God has not promised to bless it for your sanctification. This old song, *I Want to be Holy*, if that is true, there's one means God has promised to bless to make happen, and if all of those books and resources were gone, we would still have everything we need to grow in the image of Christ.

Now, to this point, some people think, "Okay, I hear what you're saying, but let's be honest. There are some things I'm facing in my Christian life today in the 21st century that this book doesn't address. There are some questions I have that this book doesn't answer, and there are some situations in my life that I'm facing, as a Christian, that this book doesn't deal with." We ask those questions and the response is, "You're right." There are tons of questions we have that this book does not answer. There are a variety of situations that every single one of us faces in our Christian life that are not addressed in Scripture.

Now, some of you are thinking at this point, I'm a little heretical, but just follow with me for a second. There's all kinds of things that this book does not address, silly things like UFOs and dinosaurs. When your child asks you about UFOs and dinosaurs, what verse do you take them to? Okay. There's some stretches. Okay. There are some stretches. There's not a book, though, that says, "So, you wonder about dinosaurs and UFOs?" Practical things like how to raise teenagers. You don't find the book, a verse that even talks about teenagers. No such thing, in a sense, not like we have in our culture today. How to manage your money. What verse talks about what to do with Social Security and 401(k)s and stocks? How to walk through a divorce recovery and how to live as a single parent, how to walk through cancer?

Now, certainly there are truths, certainly there are principles in God's Word that help inform our understanding of these things, but here's the deal: The Bible was never intended to answer all the questions we might have or address every specific situation we may face in life. You say, "What was it intended for then?" It was intended...it is intended to conform each of us into the image of Christ. That's the purpose of the Bible, to mold us more and more and more into the image of Christ. That's the whole purpose. I can show you that from cover to cover in Scripture exactly what Paul is saying here. Literally, it's all over. This is the purpose God has given us. You wonder, "Why Leviticus? Why some of these things?" It's a picture of how God is conforming, redeeming us into His image, conforming us into the image of Christ.

Now, here's what we do today. We've got all these questions, "How do you do this?" and, "How do you do this?" and, "How do you do this?" We want those questions answered. If we're going to get them answered, we need to get them answered in church, right? So, preachers need to answer all those questions, and so, you have sermon series on how to manage your money, how to walk through this or that in parenting or divorce recovery or this or that. Here's helpful tips. Well the problem is, in order for a preacher to address those things, since they're not specifically addressed in the Bible, now we need to begin to minimize the Bible, and now, we need to bring in the stuff from the Christian bookstores.

All of a sudden, sermons become very light on the Bible. Have you ever heard a light on Bible sermon? Maybe the preacher uses the Bible, maybe, like a springboard or a diving board and stands up and, maybe, reads a verse or a text, and then jumps off, never to return again. Or, maybe...or to use the...keep using the analogy...is more like the pool furniture, and the preacher jumps into the Word and swims around and all the bright ideas of the day, every once in awhile, makes a reference over here to the Scripture, or over there to that Scripture, but we're really soaking in his good ideas.

The other option is for the Bible, the Word of God, to be the pool itself that we swim in, and we saturate ourselves in, and we soak in and everything else is supplemental. Some might say, "Well at least in the first two options I get some practical advice. The last option there, maybe I soak in Leviticus, but how's that going to help me as the parent of teenagers this week?" It's going to help you more than you will ever realize, because here's the deal: Leviticus has something all that other stuff doesn't have: It has the promise that it is going to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to conform you into the image of Christ.

Now, here's where I find myself as preacher in this community of faith. I've got some options. I could go those first couple of routes, but let's be honest. Do you really think I'm that good? Like, are you really looking to me, parents, for how to raise your teenager when I'm struggling with a 16 month old and a 3 year old? Did you really come this morning looking for financial advice from me? How to walk through a divorce recovery as a single parent or this or that?

I'm certainly not the expert on all of those things, and even if I was, even if I was Dr. Dave in every single one of those areas, I still have something infinitely better to offer you. The Word of God that is guaranteed when it is studied and soaked in and swam in, saturated in, guaranteed to conform your life in the image of Christ, to bring you intimately in touch with the very Holy Spirit of God that is living in you. By the way, the Holy Spirit of God, that will be right there with you in every parenting decision you make and right there with you in divorce recovery and living as a single parent and trying to figure out what to do with your finances and this or that. This is good. It's what we need.

The Character of Christ

Think about it this way: You've got in your notes there, kind of a bull's eye, the concentric circles. Think about it this way, and this will be kind of tough to write in because you might not write small enough, but just do some notes or lines out by the side or whatever. In the middle circle, write this, write the "character of Christ". I want us to think about how the Word of God sanctifies us from the inside out. Follow with me here: Character of Christ.

When we're saved, when we're followers of Christ, Christ lives in us, the very character of Christ dwells in us. This is the purpose of God's Word. We just talked about it, to mold us more and more and more into the image of Christ. Every word, every page in Scripture...Leviticus, Jeremiah, Song of Solomon, 2 Timothy...all of it is intended to conform us more and more into the image of Christ. God has breathed it into life for that purpose, to teach, correct, rebuke, train us in righteousness. So, as the Word feeds us, the character of Christ grows.

Second circle. Going from the inside out...second circle. Write "conscience". The conscience is how we think, what we believe, what we feel. The reality is, our conscience as Christians is affected by the character of Christ in us, right? Christ changes the way we think. Christ changes the way we feel, not instantly, not everything. It's a process. It's what sanctification is about. Where we begin to think "Christianly"; where we begin to feel what Christ feels, and we begin to desire what Christ desires and begin to want what Christ wants.

We begin to see all the stuff this world has to offer us does not satisfy anywhere close to what Christ does. Our desires begin to change, and we see we don't need that stuff anymore. I want Christ. The character of Christ in us affecting our conscience, the way we think, feel, believe.

Third circle, moving out. Third circle, "conduct". Our behavior, the way we act, what we do. The reality is what we do, our conduct, is based on how we feel and what we think, what we believe. Don't miss this. We always live out what we believe. We always live out what we believe. Our lives are a reflection of our beliefs. Even when we sin, it's not a conduct problem as much as it is a belief problem. When we sin, we say, "I don't believe God on this. I believe I've got a better route to take." So, the whole picture in Romans 1, disordered worship leads to disordered desire, disordered thought which leads to disordered action. It doesn't just happen in a vacuum. There's a basis upon which we act.

This is what we talked about in the "Radical" series, isn't it? It's where we're confronted with the reality that with all of our big houses and big cars and lifestyles that are filled with stuff, we're showing that we believe our comforts are more important than the poor in the world. It's a reality. It's a humbling reality, but it's the reality. We have a belief problem. "Do we really believe the gospel?" is what we ask each other. Do we really believe what this Word says? Because if we do, our lives would look so radically different. The conduct of the fruit of character of Christ in us affecting the way we think, feel, believe: Conscience.

Last circle on the outside, write "Church." Church. As we behave in the culture around us, people see the conduct of us, and it reflects on the church. The church is intended to be a reflection of the character of Christ. As Christ transforms us, individually, from the inside out, He's also transforming the community of faith from the inside out. The world will judge the picture of Christ based on the conduct of Christians that make up the church. They see that.

So, when you look at that, you think about the push for us to say, when we gather together, "We need some practical stuff to do. We have some conduct things. How do I raise teenagers? How do I walk through this? How do I do this? How do I do this?" The answer we've come up with is, "Well, let's talk about things to do. Do this. Here's ten steps to do this. Here's five steps for this. Do these things." The only problem is, even if those are good things to do...don't miss this...even if that's great advice, the reality is, if it's Christian advice, if it's a Christian way to live, "Here's how to live out the Christian life", then the reality is, every attempt to try to do that will fail miserably.

Do you ever feel like that? Ever feel like Christianity, maybe church, is you just get a list of things to do every single week, and you try to do it for, maybe, a week or two, but you end up falling back and you can't do it? That's the reality. It's the whole point of Christianity. You can't do it. You can't live out the Christian life. You need Christ. The whole thing is designed so that Christ does it in you, right?

So, we find ourselves at best, legalistic Pharisees who are trying to follow all of the commands, but what we're missing is the nourishment we need of Christ in us from His Word in order to enable us to live out all those commands. Only Christ can do these things in us, and if we're not being fed at the core of who we are with the means by which God is transforming us in His image, then we're hopeless to live out the Christian life. Now, the world sees the church as a bunch of people who are following a bunch of rules or the tips of a preacher, and they say, "What difference does it make?"

Think about it. Case in point, we prayed this morning for high school and college students. I was speaking at a conference this last week with college ministers and college leaders from around the country, and it is alarming...it is absolutely alarming to see the statistics of supposedly "Christian churched" college students who, within the first semester in college, if not the second, will fall completely away from their faith. The overwhelming majority will. I pray those statistics are not true in this community of faith, but the reality is, according to statistics country-wide, the majority of students who were standing up here graduating from high school, this time next year, will not still be following Christ. Why is that? Could it be...could it be that we have created a whole system of Christianity in which they've grown up, and which they've been told, "Do this, do this, do this, do this, do this. This is what a Christian does." However, along the way, we've failed to feed them at the core of who they are with the character of Christ in them, so that their first semester in college, as soon as they get in front of an atheistic college professor, they have no idea how to think "Christianly"? As a result, they cave in immediately.

Or, the first time they see a pleasure in this world on that college campus, they've not learned how to feel what Christ feels and desire what Christ desires and, as a result, what happens is, in one semester, they're exposed for what is, ultimately, a hollow Christianity that we have given to them, because we've not given them the one thing they need to change the way they think and feel and believe and empower them to walk onto that campus and live in victory. To see all those pleasures on that campus and say, "I don't want to have that. I've got Christ. He satisfies. He's gloriously satisfying. Why would I want that?" Or, "This atheistic professor has no clue what he's saying, and so, I'm going to pray for him and pray that he sees the truth that I know that's hidden in my heart."

Only the Word can do that. Only God's Word can do that. High school students are now struggling with impurity in a day where they are bombarded with so many temptations...children, students...bombarded with so many temptations today. How do we help them face those temptations? Aim at the conduct here and say, "Well you need to be pure, so do it. Be pure. Do these things, and you'll be pure." That only goes so far.

What happens when the character of Christ is being fed in them, and then, they begin to think like Christ and feel what Christ feels, and they realize this boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't have anything to offer that Christ is not filling in them? The Word does that, empowers them. Adults all across this faith family, the men in this faith family, the men in our culture and in the church, so few men living as spiritual leaders in their homes. Astounding statistics of men who would far rather be looking at an image in the Internet than leading their children to study the Word of God.

How do you change that? "Stop looking at the Internet. Don't do it anymore." That'll go so far, but what happens when men in this faith family begin to really feed on the Word of Christ and it begins to fuel the character of Christ in them, and they begin to think what Christ thinks and feel what Christ feels, and they actually begin...men begin to want Christ? They want Christ more than they want football, and they care about Christ more than they care about what 18 year old is signing with their team to play for their school? They care about Christ, and they want their kids to know Christ more than they want their kids to play games this world has to offer. They want their kids to know Christ. Now, men are being raised up in a faith family who are strong husbands and fathers and who lay down their lives for their wives, just like Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

How does that happen? Only the Word can do that. No speech. No expert. Nothing else can make that happen but the Word, and now...now, the world looks at the conduct of Christians and sees a picture of a church, not as people who are following a bunch of rules,

but a people who are reflecting the beautiful transformation that Christ brings in our lives. We are formed by this Word.

I want to be very careful here. Do not misunderstand. I'm not saying that it's not helpful, good for us as a community of faith to give counsel to one another on parenting, marriage and struggles and divorce recovery and grief and walking through cancer. That's what we're here for each other for. We do that in each other's lives. Small groups are doing that all across this faith family. We help one another in those ways. It's good, and it's not just saying, "If you read Leviticus, everything will be fine." However, it is saying, "We can't be good parents without being formed in the image of Christ, and Leviticus is here to conform us in the image of Christ. I'm going to go to Leviticus, and I'm going to go to Jeremiah, and I'm going to go to 2 Timothy, and I'm going to go all over this Word, and I'm going to let it fuel me, and then, I'm going to be in a community of faith where we're able to figure out how this works together in each other's lives and in each other's struggles, and we're going to pray for each other."

Now, the Word is the foundation, and what we've done is we've taken that which is foundational, and we've made it supplemental. It's helpful over here. That's tragic because we're undercutting the very foundation by which we're going to be able to live out the Christian life and be able to persevere to the end. Okay, I've got to move on. We have a lot to cover. All right. Sorry.

Okay, we're saved by the Word, sanctified through the Word, and we're servants of the Word. We're going to fly through this. Okay, flying through. Verse 17, "...so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." What a great picture. The Word equips us to be servants of the Word. Side note, real quick. Verses 14 and 15, listen to what Paul says to Timothy. "As for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how..." Listen to this, "...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures..." "Those you learned the Word from and you heard the Word from, from infancy..." Who's he talking about?

Turn back the page to the left, 2 Timothy 1:5. Listen to this. This is incredible, beautiful picture, 2 Timothy 1:5. Paul says, "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your..." Who? "...grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." Isn't that great? Timothy had the Word in him because a grandmother and a mother poured it into him. Did you catch that?

Parents feed your kids the Word. Saturate your children in the Word. Prioritize family worship. Read the Word to your children. Teach your children to memorize the Word. These are biblical patterns, expressed in commands for us as parents. Do not teach them how to swing a club or a bat and fail to teach them how to love the Word. They need that from you...teenagers, young children...from infancy.

Statistics...there was one study that was done that said, "What separates those adults who had faith that persisted into adulthood...from childhood to adulthood...and adults who left their faith that they had as children?" What separates them? They said, "Three biggest factors..." Listen to this. "Three biggest factors that determine a child's persisting faith into adulthood. Number one, spiritual conversations with mom; number two, spiritual conversations with dad, and number three, serving together as a family." Moms and dads who talk with their kids about the Word, and then show what the Word looks like in action.

Realize that all three of those things are not up to a children's ministry or a student ministry or a preschool ministry. All three of those things are up to mom and dad. So, moms and

dads, pour the Word into your children. Take other children who don't have parents who pour the Word into them and pour the Word into them as well. This is the picture. Servants of the Word, every single one of us, every man, woman, mom, dad, husband and wife, single, student, every single one of us, when we have the Word, is equipped to be servants with the Word. God, may this be so, so that man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. I love this picture.

I was praying this week in my quiet time in Hebrews 6. Got to the end of Hebrews 5 and 6, and I was just brought to my knees on your behalf, on my behalf, on our behalf together. Let me read it to you real quick. End of Hebrews 5 says, "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!...But solid food is for the mature. ...Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go onto maturity, not laying again the foundations of..." He lists specific faith teachings.

I was just brought to my knees praying on behalf of us, "God, help us, as a people, a year from now, to be feasting on even more solid food, greater food than we are now." "God, help us now, a year from now, to be drinking milk still and talking about the same foundations all over." No! "God, help us ten years from now to be diving in some real steak, some good solid food, and twenty years from now, to be soaking in things that we never could have fathomed at this point today. God, take us to deeper and deeper maturity." This is the picture, "So that all of us may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

What a great picture of the church. Not so that a select few are equipped with the Word, but what happens when all of us, all of us are equipped, thoroughly equipped for every good work? Church alive, church multiplying the gospel. It happens to the Word. God do it. Okay, need to move on.

We are a community in awe of God's Word.

We are a community formed by the Word. Second, we are a community...second, it's like near the end. Second, we are a community in awe of God's Word, in awe of God's Word. He says, "Preach the Word." Gives this command in verse 2 that the triumphant...it's the triumphant, solemn, humbling picture in verse 1. Listen to the set up. Timothy, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing in his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word."

"Timothy, you preach the Word because there is gravity, magnitude at stake in this whole picture. You're in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead. Get the point, Timothy? You need to preach the Word." This is serious stuff. Why? Because...and this is hopefully reflected in this covenant...the Word evokes the worship of God. This is how God reveals Himself to us through the Word. The Word is the self revelation of God, which is why the Word is central in our worship, because God reveals Himself, revelation, and we respond.

This is why I never, ever want to share with you my word because my word does not evoke worship, but God's Word evokes true, deep, authentic, whole-hearted worship of Him, because it's revelation of who He is. It drives me nuts when I travel and somebody will get up, and they're kind of introducing me or what I'm going to do in the service, when I'm preaching. They'll say, "We're going to have some time in worship, and then Dave is going to come up and talk." What's that about? Like, what am I going to do? "We're going to worship, and then we're going to listen to this guy." I'm going to worship, too. I'm not just hear to talk. I hope...I hope that when we study the Word that we are so saturated with the

Word that we see the glory of God, and we're worshipping as we see, glimpse His glory in the Word.

I pray that God will raise us up as a community of faith that, when we are in situations where there is "Bible light", our taste buds will be so dissatisfied, and it may be funny and entertaining, but it's not the glory of God in the Word. God raise up students, so when they go to a student conference, and they hear a bunch of funny, entertaining stories, they walk away saying, "I miss the glory of God in the Word." That's the picture. That's what we see.

Charles Misner, scientific specialist in relative theory, studied, knew Einstein, and he commented on why Einstein had so little regard for organized religion. Einstein, who knew everything in the universe, listen to what he said. Misner said,

The design of the universe is very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preacher said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that, in the religions he had run across, did not have proper respect for the author of the universe.

I don't want to blaspheme. I come to the Word to see the glory of God. This is what it means when you see the phrase, term, "expository preaching". Has anybody seen that and thought, "What's that about?" I was introduced at one conference and said, "David Platt teaches down in New Orleans Seminary. He teaches 'suppository' preaching." No, expository. So, anyway.

What does that mean, "expository" preaching? It means that when we come to the Word, we want to expose the voice of God. We want the voice of God to be magnified; voice of man, minimized. Voice of God, magnified. That's the picture when we come to the Word, and I'll be honest. This so frees me up because now, I don't feel the pressure every week to come up with something cool and hip and innovative and catchy to try to wow you, because I don't have to come up with anything at all. I've got this, and this is what you need. Now, I've got to study. I got to make sure that I'm saying what this says, but I'm not the chef here. I don't create the food in the way that...My job's to bring this thing to the table and bring it hot. All right, here we go, moving on, moving on. We got to move on. It's one of those lines like, "Should I say it, will they think I'm just a loser if I say it?" But anyway, all right.

The worship of God, and it reminds us of our need for His presence. We're in the presence of God, the presence God, and this is...you've seen in the covenant that we will depend on the presence of God. Here's why this is absolutely imperative that we depend on the presence of God, because we have created, in our church culture, a whole host of means and methods for doing church that, in the end, require little, if any, help at all from the Holy Spirit of God. We don't have to fast and pray today for the church to grow. We've got marketing to do that. We don't have to be on our faces, pleading for lost souls. We've got publicity to try to reach them, and it's not true. We can do all the stuff we do, and if we're not careful, we'll get to the end and see all the stuff we've done without absolute desperation for the Spirit of God, and we must avoid that at all cost. Because everything we do without the presence of God will be in vain. I'm convinced this church can accomplish more in the next month under the power of the Holy Spirit of God than we can in the next

100 years with all of our innovative techniques and ideas represented around this room. So, let's be dependant on and desperate for His presence.

The Word evokes the worship of God. The Word exalts the Son of God. "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom..." The Word centers on Christ. It focuses us on Christ. The whole context here, Paul is reminding us of our submission to His authority, the authority of Christ. This is good. Christ leads the church. Christ leads the church. You say, "Well, how can Christ lead the church if you're a pastor, or they are elders or this or that?" We're going to talk about this, but the reality is, Christ leads the church through His Word. This is the means by which He leads church. The Word, His Spirit in the Word, so we are submissive to His authority.

We are a community trusting in God's Word.

Finally, we are a community formed by God's Word, in awe of God's Word, and we are a community trusting in God's Word. "The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn away from the truth and turn aside to myths." There will be a time when the people of God no longer want the Word of God. Instead, they'll want that which is palatable to their lives and pleasing to their ears, that which adapts and adjusts to their lives instead of their lives adjusting to it. They will want a Word that does not infringe on the comforts they find in this world. They will want everything but the Word, and Paul says, "Preach it anyway with great patience and with careful instruction. Keep your head. Don't lose your mind in all the new and innovative stuff. You give them the Word." We, as a community of faith, need to realize that it may not always be the recipe for that which is most successful or that which is most comfortable or that which even draws the most crowds.

Walter Kaiser, a great Old Testament scholar said,

Many pastors can preach whole messages with little more than a tip of the hat to a clause or two taken from a biblical context that few, if any, recognize. Even more pastors have decided that using the Bible is a handicap for meeting the needs of the different generations. Therefore, they have gone to drawing their sermons from the plethora of recovery and pop psychology books that fill our Christian bookstores. The market forces demand that we give them what they want to hear if we wish them to return and pay for the mega sanctuaries that we have built. Even when the Word confronts us, challenges us and threatens our ideals in the American dream, let's embrace it.

Let's embrace it. Why? Listen to this summary of ministry. "I am already even poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for departure," verse 6. Verse 7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day." Why do we want to be found faithful to the Word? Because we want our lives to count. We do not want to fade away.

This is the end of Hebrews 6. As I was praying in that over you, it's prayer that they would remain faithful and patient and firm to the end. God, do that. God, do that in these high school and college students, firm to the end; firm to the end. Brothers and sisters all across this room, if the Lord tarries, and you or I are still here in ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years from now, we will be firm to the end, because we want our lives to count. We're not going to waste them on the fleeting fads of our day, and we long for our Savior to come

back to all, not just for me, but to all who long for His Spirit, and that is what the Lord's Supper is about. We're going to celebrate it this morning, because we are reminded every time we come to the Lord's Supper, that our lives must be seen in the context of an eternal reality. That what we are living for now, is for Jesus to come back and to take us to a place where, ten billion years from now, our lives will have counted.

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