**Godly Unity**

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**Introduction**

Today, the message that I bring to you this morning is the Lord’s exhortation to you, His church. Last week Pastor Timothy and Ben Jacques spoke on the church and the mission. The mission to *Pursue Jesus Together* is accomplished by Exalting God, Edifying His Church and Evangelizing the World. This mission affects not only the people, but the place in which they gather – the building. Are we using the building to pursue Jesus? Is Christ and His Kingdom our goal?

Today, we move to the people within the church – you. Those here who have joined this body as members have committed to pursue Jesus together, and in that have committed to edify His church. How are the people of God relating to one another? What is Christ’s goal for us, His bride? The topic this morning is about the relationships within the church.

Before I begin, I want to make it very clear that intent this morning is not to preach another sermon on *WHAT* you need to be doing for one another. You already know *WHAT* you should be doing for one another. The intent this morning to aid you in understanding *HOW* you should act toward one another and *WHY* it is important.

You may have heard me use this illustration before, but I love the concept of a ship. A ship leaves harbor and sets sail through difficult waters. The ship cannot operate on her own but needs a crew to carry out various assignments and tasks so that the ship would be able to reach its destination. That crew aboard the ship must be committed to one another and drawn together through bonds of unity, dependence on one another and ultimately love. You see, the crew needs one another in order for them to reach their intended destination. If one falls overboard, seven jump in after that one to safely retrieve him and bring him back on board. This ship is the church, her captain is Christ and her sails are filled by the power of the Holy Spirit taking her to her final destination – glory.

How are you committing to one another through bonds of unity, dependence, and ultimately love?

**The Problem with Godly Unity**

In the early 1900s, *The Times* posted occasional essay questions in which the general public could discuss and respond to by mail. It was a response to one of these essays that grabbed the attention of many readers and caused the public to stop. The essay read, *“What’s wrong with the world today?”* to which the alleged G. K. Chesterton responded, *“Dear Sir, I am.” [[1]](#footnote-1)*

In order for us to truly identify how we should be relating one to another, we need to have the right understanding of who we are as fallen beings. Adam was created perfectly in the garden. He had communion with God and with his wife Eve. The relationship they had was perfect unhindered and void of sinful desires and ambitions. But in Genesis 3, Adam rebelled against God and inherited the curse of sin. We too have inherited this curse following in the footsteps of Adam. [[2]](#footnote-2)

What’s wrong with the world today? The very same thing that has been wrong with it since the fall of man – sin. Many of us look at sin as only an outward action or visible manifestation of rebellion against God. I do not agree that this the only definition given in Scripture. Sin stems from something deeper. The actions (or visible manifestations) that we call sin are just the outflowing of what is already present in the heart. Our Lord says in Mark 7:20-23,

*“What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” [[3]](#footnote-3)*

Jesus reveals to His disciples that the outward disobedience is an outflow of a sinful heart. The heart is the root from which sin stems. A recent Bible professor of mine stated that all of our actions and motives stem from the well spring of the heart. [[4]](#footnote-4) He argues that point from passages such as Proverbs 4:23 and Luke 6:45, that the emphasis is placed on the heart being the instigator behind the motives of men.

*“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). [[5]](#footnote-5)*

*“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). [[6]](#footnote-6)*

If these words here are true, then the reality is we need a pure heart which produces good. In order for us to be able to relate with one another the way that Christ has called us to we must look inside of ourselves and change our hearts to stop producing evil intentions and to start producing good intentions. We need a heart change. We need heart surgery.

That’s the problem. But it’s worse that you think it is – much worse. It is a problem that you are unable to change. It is a problem outside of your ability to alter. It is impossible for you to perform your own heart surgery. For one, we don’t really think we need one. According to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” [[7]](#footnote-7) And two, in rejecting God we have darkened our minds and have been given over to foolishness. Romans 1:24-25 and 1 Cor. 2:14 say,

*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools,**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. [[8]](#footnote-8)*

*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [[9]](#footnote-9)*

I think the world around us is experiencing the reality of this problem on a day to day basis. Why can’t the young business man who had it altogether in his 20s stop the growing addiction to substance abuse? Why can’t the mother of four children have just one day of peace where she does not revert to anger and rage? Why are there so many homicides and racial wars being fought in our cities? Why are women being kidnapped, raped and abuse in order to fund a multi-billion dollar industry? Why are schools and movie theaters no longer safe for our children to attend? And the list goes on and on and on… What’s wrong with the world today?

All of humanity has followed Adam’s footsteps and we have all been cursed. The list of texts that follow make it very clear to us. (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 3:10-18, 23; Oba. 1:3; Gen. 6:5; Rom. 1:24-25; Matt. 6:22-23; Jer. 13:10)

So why is this problem such big problem? As a crew boarding the ship and making ready to get under way, if they are unaware of the problem, then they will get out to sea and the ship will be destroyed. The church must be aware of the problem of our sin. Galatians 5 makes it very clear that sin (the flesh) will lead to destruction.

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,**idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [[10]](#footnote-10)*

Those who do such things will never reach the intended destination that the ship set out to reach. Beloved, the problem must be recognized. The problem must be changed.

**The Foundation for Godly Unity**

So what hope do we have as people gathering here to worship and fellowship together? How are we to love one another, forgive one another, be patient and kind to each other if our hearts are messed up and inherently sick? How are we going to get a “heart change”? Ezekiel 36 gives us a glimpse,

*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. [[11]](#footnote-11)*

I love how the Gospel Transformation Bible comments on this passage.

*This is a powerful image of the new life that God gives to His people when they come to Him in faith. What is needed is not simply a new ethical direction or a decision to live a better life. What is needed is “a new heart, and a new spirit” – and not a new heart created in some self-generated way, but one given by God. [[12]](#footnote-12)*

So how does this happen? How can I have a new heart? People all over the world are turning over new leaves in life and are quitting former addictions, bad habits and behaviors. They go to great lengths to turn their lives around, but is this what the prophet Ezekiel is talking about? Here the credit goes to God’s transcending power to reach into our broken, filthy lives and make us clean. How are we washed clean? By the cleansing power of God given to us through the sacrifice of His very own Son – Jesus Chrsit. He came, He lived, He bled, He died and He rose again to set you free. How does that old Hymn go….

 *What can wash away my sin?*

 *Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

 *What can make me whole again?*

 *Nothing but the blood of Jesus*

 *Oh, precious is the flow*

 *That makes me white as snow*

 *No other Fount I know*

 *Nothing but the blood of Jesus [[13]](#footnote-13)*

Don’t sing it if you don’t mean it. Do you mean those words? If you do, I praise God! His cleansing blood has changed us from the inside out. We were once born of Adam and inherited sin, but now (if you believe these words) are born of Christ and have inherited a changed heart.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).*

*But that is not the way you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:20-24).*

*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:5-6, 11).*

This is the good news of Jesus Christ. It’s believing that He paid the price for your ransom. It’s understanding that He cleansed your heart from the inside out while you were dead in your trespasses and sins. [[14]](#footnote-14) Now as believers, we can fellowship with one another, love one another, forgive one another and submit to each other because we have been united by bonds of love. If Christ bought each of you who profess to be believers with His blood, how in the world can I justify quarreling with you, being divisive, or not associating with you? Will we diminish the sacrifice of Christ?

Once we have this “heart change”, now we can begin to bear good fruit with one another out of a heart that is pure and treasures Christ. Now the desires of our heart have been changed and we no longer seek our own benefit, but the benefit of others who we gather with. [[15]](#footnote-15) But here is the question. We know what we should be doing for one another, but why do we still struggle? Why is it so difficult to love everybody in the church? Why is it so hard to forgive that person who hurt you? Why does it kill you to think about apologizing to someone you wronged? Why do you avoid speaking or befriending some in the congregation but not others? Why is it so easy to judge someone or to pass blame? Why is it that we struggle to get along?

Let’s turn to Philippians 2:1-11.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [[16]](#footnote-16)

I remember back in high school I played some basketball and we had a new coach come to our school. Our team, we were all about the fancy plays, the trick movers and the crazy jokes that we thought would really draw an audience. Most of it came from the TOP 10 or some YouTube videos we had watched. The only problem was, we never really won. But we had this new coach come and started to put us through drills – drills, drills and more drills. All of us guys thought, “We don’t need any of that. Just let us play.” But you see the coach had a bigger picture. He was taking us back to the basics of the ball game. He had us start from the bottom and learn the foundational principles for playing ball. We had forgotten them and become lazy.

My point is that I think the church has forgotten the foundational principle to why it gathers together. We treat the Gospel of Jesus Christ as some trivial event that we needed in the past at our conversion, but now that the dust has settled we move into deeper, more practical understandings of the Christian life and have forgotten the Gospel message. This in itself is a fallacy because we cannot grow spiritually in Christ if we have forgotten the price that He paid for our ransom. The reason we find it so difficult to love one another, to forgive one another, to submit to one another, and so on is because we do not have our minds set on Christ. Paul tells to have this mindset among ourselves – all of us. The mindset of knowing Christ and remembering the price He paid, the humility He accepted in order that we might become brothers and sisters in Him.

You see, if we have that mindset among us, then we don’t need to think about *WHAT* we need to be doing for one another because it will already be an outpouring out of us. Why? Because the problem has been fixed. God has performed heart surgery on us, and now out of the good treasure of our hearts, we will produce good. [[17]](#footnote-17) This is the effect of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are not speaking, or thinking, or acting in accordance to what is good to one another, then I implore to stop and question the treasure of your heart. Is it good? Or is it evil?

Foundationally, have you experienced the change? And if you have experienced the “heart change” have you forgotten what took place that day? Blood that flowed and purchased sinners. A church that harbors rivalries and dissentions among its people is a church that has forgotten the sacrifice of Christ.

Notice the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in Philippians 2:1, “any participation in the Spirit.” [[18]](#footnote-18) Later on in Philippians, Paul says, “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.” [[19]](#footnote-19) We worship God by the Spirit, glory in Christ Jesus and battle the flesh. We must worship in the Spirit because we need the help of the Spirit to battle the desires of the flesh in which we formerly lived. Look at what Galatians 5:16-18 and 22-26 say,

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. [[20]](#footnote-20)*

If we as a church could worship by the Spirit of God bearing fruit of the Spirit toward one another, all the while glorying in Christ Jesus Who bought us and paid for us with His blood, then we would be a church that displays the glory of God.

**The Purpose for Godly Unity**

What is the point of all of this? What is the ultimate purpose of God’s church? Here is where we answer the *WHY*? The function of the church today has been forgotten, destroyed, deformed and even rejected by people who profess to be “Christians.” The church, God’s visible manifestation of His glory, must wake up and see the importance of this gathering that takes place here. The result of our glorious transformation is the gathering of brothers and sisters that takes place here – the church. The purpose of the church here on earth is seen through three visible acts of the people. [[21]](#footnote-21)

**The first act** is to Exalt God. We worship and glorify our God in heaven Who is the sovereign ruler and creator of all things. Everything He does is for His glory and His name’s sake. Let’s take a look at Ezekiel 36:22-23,

*Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. [[22]](#footnote-22)*

God declares that He will vindicate His holiness and His great name through the *church*! The church is a testimony of His power and greatness because He is saving sinners and bringing them into this holy place. Every soul that God saves and draws into His church is a blow in the face to the demonic rulers of darkness who cannot withhold anyone from His saving grace.

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. [[23]](#footnote-23)*

So in praise we worship Him in this place as each and every one of us is a testimony of His glory and power. We exalt God here. We welcome one another with open arms and share the graces of God. We embrace each other as brothers and sisters because God saved us from the forces of darkness and spiritual wickedness. How then can I not love you? What reason do we have to quarrel with one another? What grounds do have to judge one another? Beloved, we are living miracles here in this congregation. Now embrace one another as such to the praise of His glorious name.

**The second act** is to edify His church. If you are a part of the church, then you have committed to edify it and exhort those who are a part of it. Just as a crew of a ship has committed to each other so that the vessel may sail and reach its destination, so you too must commit to the welfare of this body, to building it up and encouraging it so that that ship will reach its destination. This means that each and every one of you are important to the voyage the lies ahead. We need each other. How can I be excited about the destination of this church if I am not excited about the fellowship and communion that takes place right here within these walls? To be anticipating the final destination is to embrace one another with love and compassion.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. [[24]](#footnote-24)

Ventura, are you edifying the church? And are you anticipating its destination – glory? Let us continue to exhort and encourage one another in Christ. Having peace with one another and love. If you can’t come here on Sunday morning or gather in the middle of the week with a resounding joy for each other, then you are not edifying the church and you are missing His purpose for it. The unity that takes place in the church is to be a reflection of the unity we have with God. [[25]](#footnote-25) How am I displaying the glory of God when I can’t get along with His people? How am I edifying His church if I struggle to love everyone in it? When unbelievers look in through our doors to find hope and love, but only see division and quarrels, we have desecrated the name of our God here in this place because we are not functioning for His glory. God help us, to set aside all manner of disunity and to embrace one another in love.

How many times have we heard this when growing up, “you don’t have to like them, just get along with them.” Just make peace so that there is no quarreling or fighting. That fool’s talk! Nowhere in Scripture does God call you to “just” get along with His people. These are the ones He came and died for. Do you think He will not be concerned with your lack of love for them? You must get along and love one another, even as Christ loved you Ventura.

**The third act** is to evangelize the world. The church has a mission to proclaim the glorious mysteries of Christ to those who have not heard. There are numerous passages that speak on how a healthy church is to demonstrate God’s love to the world around them.

*But thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. [[26]](#footnote-26)*

The church is present in the world so that those who have no hope may see those represented here in this place and desire to become a part of this community. [[27]](#footnote-27) As people wander in a dark world searching for meaning and purpose, we shine the light of Christ for all to see so that they may come in and find life in Him.

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.**Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.**In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. [[28]](#footnote-28)*

Ventura, how are you relating to one another that would cause that burning light to shine? There is something beautiful about the unity of believers found in Christ – something mysterious and unnatural that the world stops to ponder, “What is that?”

**In Conclusion**

We have to be reminded daily of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether that means praying with a brother or sister in Christ every morning or starting your day off with devotions. We must fix our eyes on Him if we are to be unified with one another. We must understand the problem to which we faced, the change that occurred in our hearts and the result of His saving work.

Beloved, we are the living heartbeat of Christ. We are gathered here to show the world what being a child of God really means. Love one another even as Christ loved you. [[29]](#footnote-29)

1. *American Chesterton* Society (Minneapolis, MN 2012). http://www.chesterton.org/wrong-with-world/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Romans 5:12 (ESV) –* “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – “ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Dr. Tedd Tripp, *Pastoral Counseling Course* (Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary, Owensboro, KY) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *The ESV Gospel Transformation Bible.* Crossway, 2013. (Wheaton, IL) – “We are people whose hearts are naturally made of stony rebellion toward God. None are exempt from this. Our only hope of salvation is for God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to perform the miracle of removing those stony hearts and giving us “hearts of flesh” instead (v 26) – that is, hearts that respond to Him and love Him and desire to know Him. We are dead in our transgressions, and we need to be brought from death to life (Eph. 2:1-7). As Jesus said, we need to be born again (John 3:1-8). The new life that the gospel brings is not a new set of clever strategies, or spiritual rehabilitation, or fresh resolve to live in a new way out of our old resources. It is an utterly new and foreign importation of divine power that changes us at the very core of who we are. We are changed from the inside out. It is a transformation so profound that even our very desires are changed. The Bible calls this regeneration, or new birth (Titus 3:5). Here in Ezekiel 36 we see one of the Old Testament’s most beautiful and clearest anticipations of this inside-out change. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Lowry, Robert. “What Can Wash Away My Sin.” By Robert Lowry. *Communion Songs.* DECCA, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV) “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Matthew S. Harmon, *Philippians: A Mentor Commentary*. (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2015), 195. “Our natural instinct is to make much of ourselves and little of others. But a heart that is being transformed by the gospel gives evidence of a growing desire to regard others more highly than ourselves and which works itself out in tangible words and actions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Luke 6:45 (ESV) “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Philippians 2:1 (ESV) “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Philippians 3:3 (ESV) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 69. “The proper ends for a local congregation’s life and actions are the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments.* Crossway, 2011 Edition. (Wheaton, IL) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Colossians 2:13-15 (ESV) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 75. “In a local congregation the fellowship as a whole is to display the holiness of God through its holiness. God’s love is to be reflected in the love they show one another. The unity of God is to be reflected in their own unity.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 2 Corinthians 2:14-15 (ESV) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 74. “The church itself is a means of grace not because it grants salvation apart from faith but because it is the God-ordained means His Spirit uses to proclaim the saving gospel, to illustrate the gospel, and to confirm the gospel. The church is the conduit through which the benefits of Christ’s death normally come.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV) [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV) “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29)