

Mission Statement 2

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Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. Good morning. I'm going to move this over here. Good to see you all. Stephen, hey. I thought we were going to have some space today, but it's a holy pilgrimage for sure.

John, good to see you. I've been trying to convince my family that I can rock a bucket hat, and every time I put it on, my daughter's just like, oh, daddy.

She literally just has, mm, OK. We're doing this. Next time, we'll wear it together. Because I think I'll rock it. But anyway.

Good to see you all. We've been going through and explaining the mission statements that we've had. And the first one, can we just go back to the number one? Number one, the first mission statement.

There we go. We read through these three statements usually because we want to remind ourselves why we're here. And it's so easy just to get caught up in the motion, oh, Sunday morning is church.

[1:22] I turn up to church. And you really forget why you're here. So we're trying to just remind ourselves. I'm just trying to remind myself why I'm here. And the first one, the first calling that all of us have is to know and enjoy him.

And that's life. We all have different callings for the poor, for the young, for the old, for the different places in the world. We have so many different callings.

But there really is the one calling that rises above them all, that basically is the umbrella above everything. And that is that we should know and enjoy him. And as we know God, we become more like him.

Just when you, I said last week, married couples who spend decades together, they start looking like each other, right? So in some ways, as we spend more time getting to know God, we become like him.

And how do we enjoy him? We worship him. And that's the highest calling. Because when we do that, we're living life to the full and we're walking in the way of Jesus every day. And so that's really the call.

[2:16] But one of the problems is, it's really, really hard to do it alone. Life on one hand is very short and you blink and it's gone. But on the other hand, life is a long road. And the African proverb where, if you want to go somewhere fast, you go alone.

But if you want to go somewhere far, you go together. And so actually, if the main calling is to know and enjoy him, then you should be able to do that at home on your own. We're not for the fact that life is a long journey.

It's hard. So you have to get together with people to do it. And that's why today we're going to go through the second one. Now, COVID really, I mean, last week I said this little device here. This little device here was the thing that really dealt a blow to just personal spiritual life or even health, mental health for that matter.

Because we're just addicted to this. Our lives are just disrupted by this little block that we carry around everywhere with us. We cannot leave the house without this.

We're in Shenzhen. And then, no, you can't do anything in Shenzhen without this. Right? So that's the first thing. But then the thing that really dealt the blow to this second mission statement was actually, I think, something like COVID.

[3:24] Something like COVID where we started to hear, oh, actually, I don't need to go to church anymore because I've realized I have access to all the sermons preached by all the pastors around the world.

And I can access them all myself. And I can just tune in online and do church there. And there's these well-intentioned, creative ways to do church now online. I'm not saying that they're not good. In fact, they're probably sometimes the only way we can access a certain group of people. So even, you know, I slam social media a lot, but social media has these really good things. It's a neutral platform that often slips into a negative impact in our lives.

But actually, it can be used for good. But when we're coming to talk about church, we can't say, oh, I've got an online church. That doesn't work. I mean, a lecturer from Dallas Theological Seminary said this, Dr. Michael Spiegel, he says, an online church makes as much sense as an online family. An online church makes as much sense as an online family. So I'm going to challenge you. Of course, I'm preaching to the converted. I'm preaching to the choir because you are here. It's also a reason why we deliberately don't have an online offering that's a live stream because we all know when we wake up on a Sunday morning at 9, 10 a.m., you're like, oh, actually, if there's an online side, then maybe I don't need to get dressed.

[4:35] Then I can just tune in. But then that's not church. An online church makes as much sense as an online family. Philip Yancey was the one who said, actually, church for him. I go to church as an expression of my need for God and for God's people.

I go to church as an expression of my need for God and for God's people. That's why he goes to church. And that's why we've been saying, you don't attend the gathering. The moment you step into this place, you are the gathering.

You are part of the gathering. Church isn't a building that you go to. It is a family that you belong to. So as we look at this second mission statement, this is really us.

Okay, so the first one is all about me. First and foremost, I need to enjoy God. I need to know God so I can live this abundant life that he's called me to. And I can know him. But you can't do that alone.

So therefore, there is a mission statement too, which is actually, we need to get together as a family. As a family. People often say, actually, people go to church for different reasons.

[5:37] Sometimes for convenience because it's just the closest church that you go to. Sometimes you go to church because you like the preaching. Sometimes you go to church because you like the worship. But people stay at church for friends. We grew up, and I told you a little bit last week about the church that Francis, Joe, Christina, and I, Charlie, and Jenny, we grew up in the church in England where you go to church simply because that's where your friends are.

It's not because the preaching is great. In fact, sometimes it's quite the contrary. Not because of the worship is great because it's often quite the contrary. You're there because you're friends. Now, I'm going to push that a little bit further today because it's not just even about friends.

It's not just about being here because we are acquaintances. As I often like to quote the great theologian, Vin Diesel, acting as Dominic Dettoreto, I don't have friends.

I have family. I don't have friends. I have family. It's in the Fast and Furious, Chapter 5, Scene 17. Family.

Can you get that in your mind? Does that even compute that this is family? And we can say, oh, we are the church family.

[6:51] We are the Kung Fu family. We are the gathering family. But really, on a real one, this is family. But before I go any further, I want to just stop here for a second because I know we all come from very different families.

In fact, the moment I bring up family, the moment I bring up father or the moment I bring up mother, you have your own experiences about those things. And you're like, oh, if church is family, I don't want anything to do with family.

I'm trying to run away from my family. My family is chaos. And it impacts the way you even approach God, right? Because you've got these Christians all singing about, I am a child of God. He is my father. Oh, I don't like, I don't connect with my father. I've never been able to connect with my father. So you telling me that God is my father is actually a bad thing for me.

It actually turns me away. It puts me off. Because I don't have a relationship with my father or for my mother or family in general. But I want to challenge that today.

[7:49] And I want to encourage you, if we're to be what God is calling us to be, if we're to sing that song like we mean it, that we are really a child of God, that there's blood is running through our veins, what does that even mean?

Right? What does that even mean? And I want to challenge you today to really delve into, think about family. And just, I know that I'm famous for picking people out and putting people on the spot. But don't worry, I won't pick you on the spot about your family, because I know with family, that's something else.

But I want you to think about it today. So even though I won't pick you out, I want you to promise me that you'll at least think about this. What's your own experience of family that is impacting the way that you approach church?

What's your experience of Father God that is impacting the way as you approach your father in heaven? These are super important things. Just because we all come from broken families, and we all are very often hurtful, traumatic experiences when it comes to family, it doesn't mean that family is not the answer.

In fact, I think actually the breakdown in society comes from the breakdown in family. The breakdown in society, everything that you see on a macro, on a micro level, in my opinion, all comes down because the family has broken down.

[9:04] Because the family, what it's supposed to do has broken down. And when the family itself is broken down, it's raising people who are hurt. And what happens with hurt people? Hurt people hurt people.

And then suddenly you have all these problems that are coming up in society because the family is not right. What does God want to do with family? What does God want to do with this family here to bring some restoration, to bring some redemption to society?

I think it starts with, do we understand as we gather here, we are spiritual fathers and mothers. We are a spiritual family. And what does that mean? I will ask you this question and I will ask some of us this.

What should a family be? I'm not asking about what your family is, but what should your family be? What should a family offer to people growing up in it?

Ailey, you've just become a dad. Tell us, what should your family be? Comfort and security. It's a place where actually someone can go home and just feel safe.

[10:02] It's a place of refuge. What are the things? Kenneth, you're pretty close to your family. What should a family be? Places of support.

Recognizing that you can't do it alone. I mean, EJ, if she's walking around, she's only just started to walk. She can't figure her life. But actually, humans as a species are pretty useless in the early ages, in the early days.

We need people around to support us, to frame us up. What are the things does a family bring that is needed? Flay? Safety.

That's the same thing. Just a place where you can rest, where you don't have to be fending for yourself. I think there's a couple of things when it comes to family that I think of. One is rest. A place where you can act. Now, I know, again, I'm going to keep saying this a few times.

I know that often our homes, our own families do not provide this. I get this. What I'm trying to kind of tackle here is if we're to be God's family, then we should have a place where we can find these things.

[10:59] You with me? So, first of all, is rest. You can come to a place where you can actually just relax and be completely yourself. That you can recharge. That you don't have to prove anything to anyone. You don't have to maintain a certain level of kind of appearance.

You can just be yourself and you can just rest. You can be in a place where you can sit. Actually, this is a great space now that we have the God's gift. I know that plenty of people have taken afternoon naps here because it's just a place where it's a good time, a good place to rest.

Even when other people are around. A place of refuge. Outside there is a dogfight. It's a rat race. To come back to a place where you don't need to stress, strain or strive anymore.

Where you can just, this place is safe. Well, Kenneth talked about support to provide resources.

How do we get to where we're at? It's because we stand on the shoulders of the parents who go before us and they pave the way for us so that we can then go into whatever school we need to go to, whatever university we need to go to, whatever.

Support. The resources that that comes with. I think it also is a place where actually we get reproved. What does the word reproved mean? We are disciplined. I literally just did that to our daughter who was at the front here who threw something at the screen whilst we were worshipping.

[12:10] And I was playing. I was like, that's not okay. You and I both, though, we need to be told. There are things that, as children, as babies, and then as teenagers, teenagers, and then as older people, we just need to be reprov'd and guided.

Why? Because we all fall short of the glory of God. We are all people with sin inside us. And we all choose and make mistakes all the time. And so we need a place where we can be reprov'd.

What does that look like? Do you have someone in this place who will look at you and tell you, hey, you're a little bit off there. There's sin in your life that I think you need to try and figure out.

Do you have that person? Or maybe just to put it in a maybe more funny way. Do you have someone who, when you're sitting across the table, when you're eating with them, they'll tell you that you've got veggies stuck between your teeth.

Like, put your hand up if you think you have that person. Yes. Okay, about half. Man, do we need those people. Because Chinese veg.

[13:16] Chinese, because Chinese veg, dao meal is the worst. It just gets stuck in everyone. And you don't want to be that guy where you're just eating and go for a whole meal. And there's two pieces of veg just stuck there.

But when you're with family, what happens? Your family tells you. Your family tells you that.

It guides you and tells you what other people are seeing. You know who doesn't tell you? People who aren't your friends. They're just like, oh my goodness, it's so awkward now. Now I've let you talk for too long.

And it's too hard to tell you now. And it's going to be embarrassing. I mean, I have the privilege of having the stage here. Can I just tell you, if I'm having lunch with you, and I've got something stuck on my face, please tell me.

It doesn't matter. It's much better that you tell me than to leave that bogey on my head. It's literally way better. That has happened, but Christina has told me that before.

[14:15] So please, do we have those people? Are we a family that can actually tell people each other out of love? That's what a family is. And so we're trying to figure that out. Because often we don't know how to do family.

We confuse proximity for community. Just because you're probably sat next to someone who you barely know. So you're like, okay, well, of course I'm not family. But here's my goal.

Here's the vision. Can we be a gathering where we can actually know each other, that everyone can be known? Aidan was bugging me about this the other day when we were having breakfast. He was like, James, what are we doing here?

What are we doing here? Where are we going? And then he gave me the answer. And he's like, you know what? We're here because we believe that the true expression of a church is in the form of close-knit relationships.

We're here because we believe the true expression of the church of God, the family of God, is through close-knit relationships. It's more than just attending a service.

[15:12] It's more than just having the same kind of beliefs. It's more than just singing the same similar kind of songs. It's we've decided that out there we have no business being with each other.

Because I'm way too cool to hang out with someone like Julian. But because of Christ, we now hang out and spend lots of time together. We live quite close to each other, but it's not just the proximity.

We have the intentionality where we're like, because of what Christ did for us, we're going to spend time together. I love you, Julian. Gigi. Oh, thank you.

Thank you. Oh, my goodness. What's my heart? Sermon's finished. We're good. But I want to read this in, actually all of this in what the Word of God says here. Because if what the Word of God says here is that we are family, that we are children of God, then do we truly understand what that means?

And there's a passage that really has been one of my life passages in maybe the last 10 years or so that I just love. And those of you who have been around me, and I'm sorry if you see me in Young Life and you see me in The Gathering, I'm really sorry that you always hear me talk about this verse.

[16:20] But this cuts deep into my heart as to why I do what I do, how I live the way I live, and how I speak and hang out with the people that I hang out with. And it's 1 Corinthians chapter 4. And I want to spend some time in this this morning before we actually have an activity that we do

together.

But 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 14 to 17 is where we're going to be. But before we read this and go through this, can I ask you just actually just to pray in your own heart.

Lord, if there's something that you want to speak to me today about the way that I approach church, the way I approach what church family means, open your heart now. Open your mind now to what this might be. Okay? I think this is huge and this is important.

This is why we gather. There's plenty of churches that gather for great reasons. All good reasons. This is why, this is something that, if you're going to gather here with us, this is what you need to know. This is what is in my heart.

Okay? Can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? We do this. We stand for the word of the Lord because we truly recognize that there is power in this word.

[17:22] That it isn't just funny words that are spoken from the pulpit. But these are the very living words of God that we take seriously, that we realize that we give us life. And they are appropriate for every context, every circumstance that we live in.

So I'm going to be reading from 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 14 to 17. I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you then, be imitators of me.

That is why I sent you, Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. This is the word of the Lord.

Please take a seat. The church has many problems. This one, the church of Corinth, has tons of problems.

[18:22] Later in chapter 6, you'll see that they're having lawsuits against each other. And it's a church that's so obsessed with gifts and just kind of going a little bit wild and crazy in services, things are getting really chaotic and messy.

So Paul has tons of things to say to them. And actually, the passage leading up to 1 Corinthians 4:14, it gets to a point where actually Paul's pretty sarcastic. You don't usually see sarcasm in scripture, but you see it here.

He's like, well, you guys have everything sorted. You guys know what you're doing. You guys totally are God's gift to mankind. And he's clearly being sarcastic here, so it's fascinating.

So spend some time looking into that if you're interested. And then after he finishes this little spiel, he then goes into verse 14 to 17. He's saying, verse 14, he says this. As a parent, that's often maybe our own experience when our fathers and our mothers have rebuked us.

That's what comes out, right? Shame. But Paul's saying here, I'm not trying to shame you. I'm doing this because I love you and I'm rebuking you. I'm admonishing you because I love you.

[19:38] Why? Because you're my beloved children. Man, this is the thing. This is the thing about the veg in the teeth. He's doing it because he loves you, not because he's trying to embarrass you.

Whereas so often, I think we have experiences of parents who are literally trying, well, they're telling us off. But really, the rebuke is hitting us in a place where there is no love, where it feels filled with shame.

And it's like, this isn't what it is. I need you to know that I'm doing it because I love you. I love you enough to tell you that you have rice on your face. I love you.

And that's why I'm disciplining you. That's what Jesus says to the church in Laodicea, right? To whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Do we understand that? And this is starting to really challenge our perception of God.

Often, we have a perception of God who's angry, who's here to discipline, who's here to basically tell us off when we go out of line. But Paul's here saying, no, no, no, I'm doing it because I love you. And here comes the line that, verse 15 is the one that hits me the most.

[20:41] For you have countless guides in Christ, but you have no fathers. You have countless guides in Christ, but you have no fathers. When I first read that about 10 years ago, I was like, man, that is so true.

That is so true. We have all these people in our lives who are guiding us, ushering us, protecting us, providing us all these things. And now we have coaches and we have counselors and we have teachers and we have pastors who barely know you.

We have all these things going on. Everyone's just telling you what to do. Everyone's just telling you which way to go. Just chipping in with their advice. Guides. He says you have countless guides, but you have no fathers. Guides. As you go deeper into that, the word guides there is actually, it's describing a person back in that time who is basically a guardian.

The word there really means guardian. A guardian who actually would be taken on by a family and take the children to school, to protect them, to guard them. Basically, your modern day nanny. Or in Hong Kong terms, the foreign domestic helper.

Okay. So this is someone who's been hired or brought in or a slave at that point to basically guard someone and guide them. So he says you've got plenty of those kinds of people. What are those kinds of people? Those people aren't your family.

[21 : 46] Those people have a very deliberate and clear start and end date in terms of their relationship with you. But your father has a very start and a deliberate one too. But that's from the moment you were born to the moment you die.

So the role of a father is different here. He's like you have countless guides. You have constantly people who you can go to and ask for advice. But you don't have any fathers. Again, pause. I know this may not match up with your experience of your father.

I know that. Maybe particularly in the Chinese culture, the role of a father, the relationship that a father has with their children is one that is completely broken, distant, and fragmented. Where there is no emotion.

There is no, well actually forget emotion. There are no words. Often. People can count often on one hand how many words they've shared with their father. But he's saying, hey, you have countless guides.

People who are paid to be alongside you. Who are forced to be alongside you. But you don't have any fathers. You don't have people who will lay down their lives to protect you. To provide for you.

[22 : 47] To help prepare you for manhood. And to help give you a pattern of actually modeling after. And this is where the role of a father has really changed over the years.

And maybe in this last century, you've got the industrial revolution that sent all the fathers away because of war. Because we all know that the consequence of war isn't just what's happening immediately right now.

The people that are dying. It's the men who were sent away. Where the family now, the original design of the family is broken down. And so then you have women who have to compensate. Who have to play the role of that as well.

And then, so they're overstretched. And then you have children who don't have the balance of both father and mother in their lives. And so then you have all these problems that are cropping up in society because of this situation. And now, of course, the role of man is completely changing.

I'm personally of the belief that fathers have a role where we are preparing our children for the world they are about to step into. There's a book that some of us fathers are wanting to start going into.

[23 : 48] It's a book by John Tyson called The Intentional Father. And his premise is the church has failed miserably at initiating their children into life.

Into the world. In the past, they'd have loads of kind of initiations. The Jews have all this initiation kind of procedure to go through to help prepare their sons for the future.

Now the church completely has stopped. We've stopped initiating our kids. We've stopped discipling our kids. So who's doing it? I'll tell you who's doing it. The world. Their friends. Their teachers.

Social media. The YouTube. Is now the key trainer. The discipler. You have countless guides, but you don't have any fathers. You don't have people who are willing to lay down their lives to protect and guide you.

And then he says this. Verse 16. He says, imitate me. I urge you then be imitators of me. Oh, you know what that means.

[24 : 45] When someone says imitate me, that person is someone who is walking the walk and talking the talk. He's saying, hey, watch and learn. But so often in this society, what do our guides, what do our teachers do?

It's not watch and learn. It's listen and learn. Hey, do as I say, not as I do. You know what Paul's saying here? Imitate me. Actually, there's another passage. If you've got your Bible, turn to it.

2 Timothy 3. 2 Timothy 3. Verse 10. Again, I'm one of my favorites. So Paul's talking to one of his mentees.

He meets Timothy when he's a teenager and he takes him on to his wing. He says, hey, come with me. And then he says later on in his life, he says, 2 Timothy 3. Verse 10. You, Timothy, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me.

In Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured, yet from all them, the Lord rescued me. He's saying, you followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecution, my suffering.

[25 : 58] How many teachers and coaches and pastors can say that to you? Often it's just, oh, you've listened to my teaching over these years. Now go do your thing. You've been in enough classes with me now.

You should have learned enough. You should have taken notes. He's not saying that. He's saying, that's only the first one. All the other ones are what? They are life things. He's like, you've heard my teaching. But more than that, you've seen my conduct, my way of life.

You've lived with me. The way I live is what you should imitate, not just my teaching. But so often, and this is to our shame as the church, we rely, the only point of discipleship that we seem to have is just this right here.

Just the teaching. But I'll tell you, I can't have all of you in my house, even though as much as I would want to. But for those of you who I've had the privilege and honor and opportunity to spend time with, I mean this from the bottom of my heart.

I hope my living is better than my preaching. I hope that when you are in my house with my family, you learn way more from me than just listening to me sit here. That's what Paul's saying here.

[27 : 06] You've seen my teaching, but you've also seen my aim in life, my conduct, my faith, my suffering, my perseverance, all those things. Those are way more important. So as he's talking to the church in Corinth, back in 1 Corinthians 4, he says, I urge you then be imitators of me.

That's a person of integrity. That's a person who's like, you can look at my life and you can follow. As we make disciples, what does disciple mean?

It means learner, student. And Paul is talking to Timothy and talking to the church saying, I am your sifu. Chinese culture will understand this.

If you look at all the martial arts films, when someone is kind of approached to be someone's sifu, that person is learning from them in every way. It's like a rabbi.

It's just, I'm spending all my time with you, learning the martial arts, learning the way of life, learning everything. But now we've distilled church into just countless guides. People who just say a few words and then leave.

[28 : 06] Lord, help us as we gather that we would be a spiritual family. That we are a close-knit community where we actually know. I personally can't know everyone, but between us, we can.

Between us, we can make sure, as much as we can, that people are known with us in this community, that we can point to people that know us. That's the heart. That's the goal.

And then he brings up his example, verse 17. He's saying, That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in every church.

That's his thing. That's his jam. That's his message that he's repeating over and over again to every church everywhere. And I'm sending to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord.

Another part of the scripture, he says, my true child in the faith.

Paul was Timothy's spiritual father. He talks to the church in Philippi and he says, I can't wait to send Timothy to you. For they all have their own interests, but Timothy, his interest is in what Christ is doing.

[29 : 08] And I'm going to send him to you so you too may rejoice at seeing him again. The question is, this is where we're gearing up to actually having a little activity of our own now.

Do you have those people? If I look at someone like Timothy, he did. He had Paul. Teenager. Teenagers. Teenagers. You're Timothy.

This Paul comes into your village and he's like, I want to walk with you. I want to mentor you and I want to follow you. So Timothy had Paul, but he didn't just have Paul. He had some other people as well. Does anyone know who else Timothy had who really poured into his life?

Yes. Grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. What passage is that? It's at the beginning of one of the letters. To Timothy chapter one.

It says, I remember your tears along to see Paul's writing to Timothy. Timothy. I'm reminded of your sincere faith. A faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. And now I am sure dwells in you as well.

[30:11] Timothy had a whole heritage. He had spiritual parents. He had his grandmother Lois, mother Eunice, and now Paul. Paul himself, of course, has Timothy as a student.

He had a mentor. He had a mentor. But he also had a mentor himself. Who would be Paul's mentor, if you ever think? I mean, the great apostle Paul, the most prolific church planter in the whole of history.

Barnabas. Barnabas would have been someone that actually had to guide Paul. Because Paul, when he first met Jesus and his life was completely upside down and he was blinded, who's the one who's guiding him? Barnabas.

Barnabas. Of course, Barnabas then becomes Paul's friend. So he goes from mentor to almost kind of friend and peer. So you see, Paul has all these people dotted around him. Timothy has all these people dotted around him.

Who do you have? If I ask you now, give me three people who you can switch gears immediately and go, Hey, I want to ask you about, how's your soul doing?

[31:14] Can we pray right now? Do you know that those awkward social gatherings that we have with Christians? At the end of the time, we're like, Oh, should we pray? Should we not? Oh, okay. I guess we're not that kind of people.

Okay. All right. Bye. See you next time. High five. And then there's other people who are like, Oh man, I should pray. We should pray. Can we, can we pray before we leave? You know that thing? I'm not asking for many.

Do we have three? Do you have three? And they can be a Paul to you in terms of someone who's mentoring you, who's pouring into you. Or they can be a Timothy to you as you're pouring into.

Or they can be a Barnabas who's just your friend. Someone who you can go, Hey, I want to spend time with you. I want, I need you to hold me accountable.

I need you to come, I need you to come to the gym with me and spot with me because I can't do it alone. Do you have those people? It's interesting here because later in 1 Corinthians, Paul goes, he says, he first says, imitate me.

[32:15] But in 1 Corinthians 11, 1, he says, imitate me as I imitate Christ. What Paul's doing, he's not trying to build mini Pauls. He's not trying to make everyone look like him.

We're not here trying to make mini Jameses or mini Cristinos or mini Joes or mini Alexes. That's not what we're trying to do. He's like, imitate me as I imitate Christ. What we're trying to do is make mini Jesuses.

Another term for mini Jesuses, Christians. Christians. We're trying to make Christians real followers of Christ.

Imitate me as I imitate Christ. Do you have people in your life, whether it's a Paul, whether it's a Barnabas, whether it's a Timothy, P, B, or T, it doesn't matter.

Often there's people in your life that kind of like a Paul-abus or a Barnabas-Timothy mix. It can be anything. But do you just have three who you can switch gears with and go, let's get our Jesus on.

[33:19] Let's talk about Jesus. Let's talk about, because that's the goal, to know and enjoy him. Can you challenge me? Can you pick me up on it when you don't think I'm enjoying God? Can you pick me up on it when actually I'm not pulling my own weight when it comes to my own faith?

Do you have those people? But final note before we do the activity here is this. Why? Why must we be family? Because that's a good question, right? Why must we work so hard to be family?

It isn't because we share a similar interest. It isn't because we all are bored on a Sunday morning and have nothing to do. It's because someone died for us. That's why.

We are family, not because of our own might or will. We are family because you look to the person on your left and look to you. Do it now. Look to the person on your left and look to the person on your right. Hello.

We are family because someone died for us. Can we appreciate the magnitude of that? I know it's lost on us often and we sing about it and it's like the blood of Jesus.

[34:21] Look to the person next to you and go, man, someone died for you. And someone died for me. And it's because of that blood that we are now united as family.

That's a whole different ballgame. That isn't us trying to be family because we're nice people, because we believe in this book, kind of, and we live for him, kind of, so we're going to be forced to be family here. No, we're family here because someone died for all of us and that's the one thing that unites us.

That Jesus, the Son of God, paid the price for all of our sins, all of our debts. We're here because we owe a loan shark so much money that we can't pay off. And someone came and paid for us all in one go.

And that's what makes us family. And because of Jesus, we are now family and we must act that way. And Jesus then says, John 13, you love one another just as I have loved you.

That is the blueprint to how we live this as family. Because man, it's hard sometimes living with family. But when we put it front and center, it's because that we are united by the blood of Christ.

[35:23] So we can tolerate anything. We can be as kind to each other. We can let people stamp all over us. It doesn't matter because without him, we wouldn't be here anyway. That's the blueprint for the family.

Now I ask you, what's your experience with the spiritual family? What's your experience and who are your people? And as we jump into this activity, I actually want to bring Nathan up because Nathan's part of my family here.

I've known Nathan since he was actually, I think our families knew each other when you were born. I have this picture. Actually, we have this. Okay. Block your minds for a second.

Because there is a picture of me, Nathan, and Joe all in the bathtub together having a shower. That is a thing. So we're in a Lester church together and we're a family.

I wanted to bring him up because, of course, he's had lots of just experience in church. They're going to different kinds of churches. But I wanted to ask him what really spiritual family, when I say spiritual family, when I say mentors or brothers, what does that mean to you and what experiences have you had?

[36:35] Yeah, thanks for that. Yeah, I just want to speak quickly into spiritual mentor first. Thankfully for me, I've been blessed with a mentor who actually I just met last week.

But he's also, so I work in the legal industry. So thankfully, this mentor is both a spiritual mentor and he also works in the legal industry.

So we get to actually share a lot of our, just like struggles in terms of the industry and how, you know, for example, there, and there are other kind of people in the industry who we know that we share about.

You know, so for example, I had a friend recently who actually got laid off and he's not a Christian and he works for a law firm as well. And I was just sharing with my mentor, you know, like this is a guy who I feel like we should pray together for and someone we could get to know and also to, yeah, just to kind of help him get back on his feet.

And so I think in terms of having a mentor in both like spiritually and your work is very helpful. And, you know, I'm very, very blessed to have that.

[37:48] And my mentor is also a person of refuge, you know, like you, I was listening to your sermon. But, yeah, so he's also a person of refuge, right? So when I, so last year I was actually going through a big job change and decision of actually quitting my job.

And this is actually one of the mentors who came to me and I really just like poured out and shared my kind of situation. And he was saying like, oh, you know, kind of giving me both advice and also just praying for me.

And, yeah, and that's reciprocated as well, right? So I think with mentors, the thing about being a mentee is you really have to also be quite active, right?

In terms of pursuing kind of, because your mentor is really giving their time to you kind of really just out of their heart and love for God as well.

So, yeah, so that's the mentorship part. And not only are you kind of being poured into, you're actually also volunteer through Young Life and you pour into young people as well.

[38:52] Tell us why you even bothered to do that. Yeah, I mean, actually, I remember the first time I went to Young Life and we were doing this training thing and we were, yeah, we were just being trained to mentor these high school kids.

And I was just saying, you know, I am here because I've been mentored. I've been on the receiving end of mentorship and it's benefited me in so many ways, you know, throughout my career, my life, my different decisions.

So I really, and I think just through that and seeing that, you know, Jesus disciplined his people as well. So you just want to kind of give back in that sense. Yeah.

Final question. I know a lot of people, they struggle finding a mentor or they struggle to kind of really start mentoring. What's one piece of advice that you'd give to people who are even just thinking about this? And we want everyone to think about this.

What's one piece of advice you'd give? I think a big part of it is just to, yeah, just not be afraid. I think, I think a lot of the times we think that when we're seeking mentors, we think that, oh, this person's actually so busy for us.

[39:57] You know, they're, they're, they've got all their own stuff going. Like my mentor has got like three kids, right? So I'm like, you know, he probably never has time for me. But I think just being like not being afraid and just be like, okay, these guys actually have something to, to give and also to learn from you.

And so, and just to be active in seeking them. Um, so yeah, so even as me being a mentor to different people, uh, I actually like, you know, a lot of the times we have these difficult conversations, uh, difficult situations, which actually really ended up growing me as a person, um, and in my faith as well.

So yeah, I just encourage you to be proactive and to, yeah, just to not be afraid of that. Thank you, Nathan. Round of applause for Nathan. Thank you. Um, who are your people?

I would love for us to get to a point as a church where we're like, if you just talking like, Hey, who are your three? You'll be able to reel off three people straight away. They're like, man, I can call that person up at any point and ask them and they will call me out about anything as well.

And they will show, they will tell me, uh, if I have food in my teeth, who are those people? I have spiritual food stuck in my teeth. Uh, in that sense, who are those people for you?

[41:11] I think it's so important. Otherwise we don't need to gather here. Um, I think it's that important. Um, it's funny if this, so I don't usually wear kind of patterns, t-shirts, but if you notice my kids, we're, we're all matching the same kind of shirt.

But actually I realize it's quite an appropriate shirt here. Kenneth loves this shirt. Um, because there's three basketball players on, you may not know who the basketball players are. Uh, but you have one guy who is the greatest of all time. Uh, this guy is, this is, this is Michael Jordan.

Um, he is famous for actually being a mentor to Kobe Bryant, uh, the late Kobe Bryant. And then Kobe Bryant also formed kind of a friendship, uh, a brotherhood with LeBron James. And just this picture, I thought, oh, this is quite beautiful that you don't care about basketball.

So you've just completely switched off. Uh, but that's okay. Uh, but if you can take an image, it's actually, do you have three people who are walking with you? Uh, I want to put up, uh, can we have the slide up about the, uh, with the tree?

This. Now on your, on your table, on your chair, or, uh, and actually there's, there's piles around.

Can we make sure we all have one of this? I want us to finish off with this simple activity and we usually, we respond through song, but today we're going to respond through paper and writing.

[42:17] There are pens coming around, uh, I think. Are the pens coming around? Oh, perfect. So organized. Steven. I want you to have a think. Because we, as we talk about being family, put your hand up if you need a pen.

Just as a small plug, the, the ministry that myself and a few others are part of is called Young Life.

Uh, and it is all about relationship. It's all about pouring into the next generation through connection and relationship. That's what we do. Uh, and one of the things is, and Gabs will know this well because he was part of the training in all of this, was we all have a tree.

Which really matches with the family analogy there is that we have a family tree. You. You sat where you are. You have your own tree.

Now, I know that our trees are not complete. I don't think mine is completely filled. But the idea is that there are people who have been walking in your life. And to get you to where you're at.

[43:42] And there are people that you should be walking to. So this tree here, I'm going to walk us through it. This is our response today. But let me just say again, you don't have to share this with anyone. But I do want you to fill it in. Okay? You don't have to share this with anyone.

But you do have to fill it in because I think it's a really helpful, intentional exercise for us to think and take an audit of, wait, who do we even have in our lives? And actually, who do I need to go to and say, hey, again, no fear here.

You're part of my three. You're one of my three. You don't have to worry whether that person will go back to you and say, oh, uh, thanks. It's kind of like, I love you. Oh, thank you.

We can all have different threes. It all looks different. And it's completely okay. Okay? But what this may hopefully lead to is actually you go to someone and go, I know that we love hanging out.

We love doing all these things together. But can I ask you to be one of my three? Because I need help. I want to go. I don't want to just go somewhere fast. I want to go somewhere far. So let me show you this. So what is here is I would put my name here.

[44:46] So you can put your name here. Okay? Right in the middle. James. Don't put James. Put whatever name your name is. Okay?

From there, I have three people that have walked with me in some way, in some form in my life.

Now, I can go either way here. I can go past.

I can go since childhood. And I'll have Nelson, who is my dad. I'll have Bert, who is my youth pastor. And I'll have Y, who is kind of the youth leader at the time. Okay?

But then I also have mentors now, three people that I could put in. But it's probably more accurate to put in the, well, whichever way you go. It really doesn't matter. So just the three people who have poured into you.

Because every tree needs two things. It needs roots and branches. I'll talk about branches later.

Who were your roots? How did you get to where you're at now? Who was the one who was really spiritually walking with you?

[45:46] Or who is now? Maybe that's the most helpful. Wouldn't be too helpful for my or three. So here we have three here. Can you think of them now? If you can't, do not worry.

Don't make it up. Don't just write a name in. Okay? If you have real people, great i'm happy for you if you don't you can also think well actually i don't have anyone actively walking but maybe one of them could be timothy keller that that's that's okay tim keller would often say that actually c.s lewis martin lloyd jones were his mentors and that's okay but i would encourage you not to have all three people who are just like in the distance you need people who actually know you too okay but i'd say one is okay for that have a think who that could be and if you don't have anyone find someone the goal is the goal is i hope that you can find someone in this gathering that's the goal because we are a true the expression of a church is a close-knit community as a family where you'll have older brothers and sisters spiritual fathers and mothers and kids that's the whole point okay now then you will have now if i ask young life staff i'll be like who's your three who are the three people that you're pouring into okay if this was paul he would put titus timothy mark and all the other millions of people that he silas all the other people that he would put there the three key people that he has walked with okay michael jordan would put kobe bryant right uh who else would that be there'll be an example i don't know anyway just the three people jesus would put peter james john okay the goal then therefore and this is the true sign of whether you're actually making a disciple or not whether your tree is alive and your family life is vibrant is if these three then start making disciples of their own so there are other mentor mentees that are kind of growing out of this tree so that's the idea have a think have a right if you're in one of our midweek groups i encourage you guys to talk about this this week yeah i don't think you have to have all of your people in your one midweek group but i also think it's really helpful to have it as part of the same people of the church that you're going to i think one thing i've noticed in hong kong that is very different to leicester and burmio where i grew up where there's only one or two chinese churches and that was it was that i i meet people who are spread all across the city having people their tree is filled with people from every different church i would not recommend that as much because if you're actually walking with these people that these are this is your family that it's so much nicer to have it all in the same place okay so let's not dabble and say oh i i go to this place to get my worship on i go to this place to get the teaching i go to this place to get my small group i go to this place to get my like wouldn't it be nice if we're a gathering that we are all just the same same place that's the idea of course there are people that hong kong is such a small close city that there are going to be people who are going to different churches but just on the whole okay final word about this these branches here and this will lead into our next two weeks when we're talking about mission statement three we started with me last week today is we the next two weeks is they because we don't just gather for the sake of gathering to stay in the

same place we gather to then what scatter gather to scatter andy stanley said this quote that i actually really like he says

church is a family expecting guests church is a family expecting guests i might actually hijack that and turn that into maybe one of our key statements as we're trying to simplify things isn't that what we are we are people who are committed to being family but we are also actively reaching out and inviting guests to come and we're welcoming them in and we're expecting them to come in and ultimately expecting the main guest the host to come back as well jesus church is a family that is expecting guests so these branches if you're just stuck here people have poured into you but you're not pouring into anything else then your tree there's no fruit then you're just stuck here then actually there's there's not really much use here john the baptist says bear fruits in keeping with repentance if you have a heart where you are just filled by the gospel and just the holy spirit you can't help but do these things you should have a tree because only when you actually i'll tell you this and i've said this before my spiritual faith only kicked off when i poured into my first one my first one here was a guy called kenneth chong chong i i i was 18 and he was 17 and i poured into him that kicked off my spiritual journey why because so often i'll be like man i gotta do this because i gotta show kenneth how to do it if i don't do it then i just know i have no business telling him and that was the kind of journey that i was on so if your tree if you found your tree has stopped here then there's a problem then let's figure it out let's figure it out together and the hope is your tree you'll have your three and just like jesus the three and then they'll keep growing and what have we suddenly got here now we've got us living out of the great commission go make disciples of all nations teach them what i've commanded you and to baptize them in the name of the father and son the holy spirit to be part of a family i want us to leave here with the mindset of thinking okay i don't have my three i need to figure out my three we're going to keep putting this up and if you're like oh i'm just dabbling i'm just visiting great we welcome you uh but i hope you find your church where you can settle down too if you are here this is what we're trying to do this is why i'm fully prepared that this gathering might not get too big because those of us who have been part of bigger bigger things we know that this gets harder and harder as you get bigger and bigger because suddenly you you don't get to know the people that you need to walk with and then it becomes like we're all coming to the same place to watch a youtube sermon and that's not what we want our hope is that we come to the gathering we gather because our people are here our brothers sisters fathers mothers are all here and we're all part of a family all part of a tree all because not because of a shared interest on what we do on a sunday morning but because 2 000 years ago someone died for us and because of that we no longer have a spirit of fear and slavery but one of adoption as sons where we cry out abba father we are now children of god co-heirs with christ let us live as a family because of that reason the love of christ compels us commands us to do that can i pray for us as we hold these pieces of paper in our hands lord as we fold them up and put them in our pockets may they also really dwell in our hearts today holy spirit would you show us who you want us to walk with would you show us who you want us to be more intentional with who are free three are but lord we also just pray through your spirit that we would just learn how to be a family together

we all come from very different places with very different varying degrees of brokenness in our family the lord we ask that your grace and mercy will fill this place that the banner hanging over us is love because of what you did for us help us to walk intentionally with each other help us to not be afraid not to be afraid of rejection or awkwardness but if our goal is to know and enjoy you we press on toward that goal let nothing stop us and bring us people alongside us we thank you lord in your name we pray amen there's a another cheesy quote that came to mind is that as we figure out what this family is you you