

A Life Pleasing to God

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[0:00] Thank you, Nathan. Wow, what an exciting day. It was just so, so good. And just to see the four of you make that just public declaration. I pray that it's the start of something extremely special.

Um, we're going to jump into the word of God now. And as we gather, that's, that's what I want to ask you. What's, what's the thing that you live for? What's the thing that you live for? And has becoming a Christian changed that at all? Is there a before and after for you? Is there a before and after for you? And we've been going, we had last, we had last month, we went through missions in terms of just thinking about it.

Thinking about what, how we gather and how we scatter. We're going to go back into the book of Thessalonians now. Uh, if you have forgotten, this was a series that we started just prior to the missions month. And we were just going through this book and just to rewind your mind again, this is a small church he's talking to. This is a church that he started two years ago. And then because of some issues, he had to leave. But then this church kept growing. And chapter one, he talked about, Hey, I, I've heard of your labor of love. I've heard of your faith and I've heard of your steadfastness in hope.

And it is great. And you are a model church, man. You are doing well. And actually the rest of Asia is starting to hear about you and they want to copy you. This is a good thing. You are a model church.

And then the question that I asked was, Hey, if someone modeled after your life, if someone tried to pattern their lives against your life, Wesley, if someone looked at your life and said, I'm going to follow and be like Wesley, would that person end up looking more like Christ?

[1:37] That's the question that we asked. If someone looks at over here and looks at Z-Way and goes, wow, I love the way Z-Way lives. I want to be more like Z-Way. Will that lead her to being more like Christ? That was the first question. And then the second chapter, Paul was talking about the motives of a leader.

He was saying, Hey, there are some of you who have heard some bad stuff about me. People are spreading rumors and lies and scandals about me. I want you to remember what I was like when I was with you, that I was a leader. There was one that actually was accountable to God, that I was not here for my own personal gain, but I poured out my life for you.

And then chapter three, he talks about, Hey, you're going to be mistreated. You're going to be mistreated being a Christian because you're going to be different to the world. They're going to look at you differently and they're going to mistreat you. And your business plans are not going to go as well as you want to.

Your family plans are not going to go as well as you want to because you're identifying with me. Stay strong. Stay the course. And that's what he was talking about. And now we move into one Thessalonians four, which is actually really packed.

And so we're going to split it into two weeks. So this week I'll do the first half and then the second week, next week, we'll do the second half of chapter four. So right now, as always, if you're here for the first time, what I do now is we're going to read the word of God.

[2:53] I'm going to invite you to stand because we truly believe this word, this book here, these letters here have the capacity to speak into every circumstance in our lives and they give life.

And if we model ourselves after this book, we will live fruitful lives that make us more like Christ. So can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? So Lord, we open up your word now. We read. So may these words just come to life and speak life into ourselves. One Thessalonians chapter four. Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor.

Not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgression wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things. As we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you, for God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

[4:08] Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. Now, concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

For that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more and to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs and to work with your hands as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. Please take a seat. So Paul does this a lot. He writes this letter to this group of people that he knows, and then he basically just drops theological bombs.

He's just telling them who Jesus is. He's telling them who they are. And then towards the end of every letter, he then says, finally. And you all know, you've been there when you've signed sermons, and when the preacher says, oh, finally.

That's when you usually wake up, oh, finally, he's finishing. And so he says, finally. And what nearly always happens when he says, finally, is, hey, I've taught you about theology.

[5:20] I've taught you about God, and your heads are now filled with theological truth. Now, finally, I want to show you how to live it out. This is when theology turns practical.

And you all know people. You all know people. I know people who are so filled with head knowledge, who grew up in the church, who understood all the Bible stories, who memorize scripture, but they look nothing like Jesus.

Have you met those people? Can you just nod if you've seen someone like that before? Who just knows the Bible inside out, but just looks nothing like Jesus? That's why Paul, each time as he writes a letter, he says, finally, now I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of what I've just taught you.

Basically, what he's saying is, hey, you've got to live out what I'm teaching you. Just because you have this head knowledge doesn't mean that actually you're doing it. Just because you know the Bible story doesn't mean you're a Christian.

Or doesn't just because you come to church and listen to someone talk to you about the Bible that you've actually done it. Doesn't that happen in church a lot? Right? So you hear a preacher talk about the Bible and talk about Jesus and you're like, oh, yeah, yeah, that's good.

[6:36] And then you pretend you've assumed that you've done it yourself. And Paul here says, chapter four, follow along in your Bible. He says, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

The book of James says, hey, don't be just doers. Don't be just hearers of the word. Be doers. Actually live it out. If an alien dropped into your life and did an audit on your life right now, who would that alien think that you're living for?

Who are you trying to please? If they looked at the way you behave, where you spend your time, the way you spend your money, who are you trying to please? Who's the most important person in your life?

Maybe there's a boyfriend and a girlfriend here and if someone dropped into your life, they'd be able to see that actually everything that you do is trying to please your girlfriend or boyfriend. Or maybe if they drop into your life and they look at how you work, they're like, everything that that person is about is about pleasing his or her boss.

He's saying here, hey, walk in a way where the only one you are pleasing is God, that you have an audience of one.

[7:50] Galatians 1.10, Paul asks that question. Am I here for the approval of man or of God? And now, if we're all honest with ourselves, if we really dig deep and ask why, but why, but why, so often it's actually, we want to please people.

We want to please people, but why do we want to please people? Have you thought about that? I usually pick on Gaps first, so I'm going to pick on him again. Why do you think we are so obsessed with pleasing people?

Because we're fearful of rejection. Because we're fearful of rejection. So true. But actually, we want to please them so that we will be accepted into that community.

And one of the perks of when you get accepted into a community or a club, you experience pleasure. Because you get to do the, like, I've been wanting to be Ken's friend for the longest time. Because Ken loves food. And so I know if I become his friend, he'll take me to these nice places to eat this glorious food, just as he did yesterday evening. They say, actually, since the beginning of time, the chief end of humanity has been to take pleasure in life.

[9:05] If you think about just every generation of mankind, what have we been trying to do just to get pleasure in life? But Paul says something different. He says, hey, it's not about that.

The catechism actually says the chief end of humanity should be to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Is your will, is your bottom line, is your motive to really to please God and to glorify him and to enjoy him forever?

Only you will know the answer to that question. But if we're honest, as Kenneth was honest with us, none of us are really that good people. We all have selfish desires.

We are all still selfish, looking for pleasure in our own lives. Paul's saying, hey, put your money where your mouth is. Live in a different kind of way. So the question I want to ask you is, are you any different?

Are you any different? If you looked at your life, other than how you spend your Sunday morning, are you any different to if you were a non-Christian? Have a think. Other than how you spend your Sunday morning, where you go, or maybe your midweek evening group, are you any different at all?

[10:15] Have you changed? Because sometimes I think the church is guilty of actually selling the same product that the world sells. If you think about why people go to church, they're like, okay, come to church. Why? Oh, because there's great coffee there in the morning.

Come to church. It's such a nice vibe. There's nice coffee. And there's someone who's really good at singing, who is going to sing a few songs and lead us in karaoke. And it's just nice. And then you get to hang out with some people. And then you get the warm fuzzies because people start to know you.

And then you get to hang out. And then you go to wine tasting. And then you go BJJ. And then it is just so good. And then the speaker comes. And he's usually quite short.

Not in height, guys. Just in the talk. And then. And it's like a TED talk. And the TED talk makes you feel warm and fuzzy because it tells you you are loved. You're a good person.

But there is purpose and there is meaning in your life. And everything's okay. And then you sing one more song just to kind of cement what he just said to you. And then you all leave. And then you go and grab lunch together. It's such a fun time. Whew.

[11:15] Has the church let the values of the world, the pleasures of the world, seep in? So I ask again, why are you here? And how are you different? So if you weren't a Christian at all, is there anything that's different?

Verse 3 says this, for this is the will of God for your sanctification. What does the word sanctification mean? Francis, what does the word sanctification mean? Made clean.

It's definitely a part of it. The process of sanctification is being made clean, being changed.

Changed to what? What are we supposed to look like as we are being transformed?

What's the ultimate goal here, Sam? Sorry, someone like Christ. Genesis 1.26, from the very beginning, the Trinity, the Godhead, says, let us make man in our image.

We're supposed to look like him. But somewhere along the line, we make decisions and we look nothing like him anymore, even those of us who are sat in the church.

[12:22] Romans 8.29 says this, that we were predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. Is this a room filled with people who look like Jesus?

Now, in a family, you all look at baby MJ and you all look at him and then you go, oh, looks just like you. Clearly, you're just influenced by the hairstyle.

And of course, just by the way, that really confuses me because I stand next to him. And then you go to him and then you say, oh, you're so cute. You're so beautiful. You look just like your dad.

Can you just spare a moment just to have a think how that makes me feel? It's just so many mixed, confused messages there. My head is already quite big. I just got to be careful when you compliment my son and then you tell him he looks just like me.

But if we're children of God, do we look anything like our fathers, our father in heaven? If we looked at your life, do you look like God? That's his will.

[13 : 21] It says here, for this is the will of God, your sanctification. And then he goes into, and then he drops some real bombs. Because he's like, okay, so you're like, okay, I'm a Christian.

I want to be more like Christ. What does that even look like? Where do I even start? And then Paul says, let me tell you where it starts. Let's talk about sex. And then I'm like, oh, this week I have to talk about sex.

Because this is what the word of God says. And so we're going to just, let me just read it to you again and let God himself speak. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God. That no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

For God has not called us for impurity and in open holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. He's talking about sex. He's like, I want you to look more like Christ, but you don't look like Christ.

[14 : 34] And how do I know that you don't look like Christ? Because of the way you deal with sex. And this is one of the topics that, hey, church pastors do not like to talk about. I assure you, it's not what I really want to talk about today.

But here it is. And I realize there is a message for us here. But let me just give you a little bit of context. The Greco-Roman world that he was writing this in. This world was, in some ways, a very sexual liberal world.

Sexually liberal world. It was very different. Men had unlimited rights when it came to sex. So just have a think about a person, okay? He's a businessman. He's in finance.

And he has different things going on in his life. And he travels for work. And he has a wife that looks after his household. But he also has a concubine where, when he's a bit tired of his wife nagging, he can go and stay with his concubine.

And that's completely okay. And then when his concubine is getting a little bit annoying, then he'll say, well, actually, I've got a mistress. So when I'm away for work, I'm going to go hang out with my mistress. And then after that, if he's a little bit bored of that and he wants something completely different, he'll then go to the brothel and then meet someone else there.

[15 : 39] I just wanted to imagine that context. That the men had unlimited rights when it comes to this issue of sex. Now, imagine that man meets Jesus, commits his life to Christ, and then sits in this room.

Of course, we stop there and we think, oh, that man's going to live happily ever after. And he's just going to be more and more like Christ because he's going to go on this journey of sanctification. No. Can you imagine all the dilemmas that he has to go through?

Because all the things that he's used to doing on a Saturday night, on a Wednesday night, on a Thursday morning, now has to change. He's got to suddenly be like, wait, oh, wait, that's not okay? Wait, wait, that's not okay? And can you imagine from a woman's perspective, in that kind of society, where you are treated in such a way, where your chief end is to be the one that pleases man, and that's it.

Can you imagine what that is like? Every context that a woman walks into, she's just wondering, how do I protect myself? How do I hide from attention? How do I not get myself abused again?

[16 : 56] That would have been the norm in the culture that he was writing to. And just before you go, well, that was then, and now is different.

And yeah, on some levels, it is different. But if you ask yourself seriously, deep in your heart, is it that different? There's no kids here now.

Is the addiction to pornography, the industry that that is? Isn't it really just doing and saying the same thing?

If you forget what you find on the internet, what about just what you find on the MTR? The adverts? What message is that giving to our society?

What are we valuing here? We're valuing how someone looks, how someone stays young, how someone attracts as much attention as possible. I think about my sons, I think about my daughter.

[17:59] What, if they walk through the MTR, which they do every day, and they see these adverts, what is the world telling them is important? And so we may not be as explicit as a society in how we deal with sex, but in our hearts, you know there is a ton of problem.

The question here is this, are the people here in this room different? Are the people here in this room different?

Paul is saying, please be different. Why? How do I know that? In verse 7 he says this, for God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. That word holiness, Aidan, what's the word holy mean to you?

Set apart. Set apart. What does the word set apart mean to you? Something that, say something sacred. It feels like it has importance.

Yeah. Something sacred. Something that is important. Something that is different. What Paul is doing here is, he is casting a vision for a community where, hey, do you think we can be a place where women can feel safe coming into this community?

[19:12] Where they don't feel as though there are predators all around. Can we come into a place, can we be a community where men are respectable and respectful? That we treat one another with the highest regard.

Why? Because that brother and that sister sat next to you is made in the image of God. Can we be that kind of group?

Can we be that kind of people? I was talking to my son recently. As you've all noticed, my son is undergoing some transformations himself.

He's going to be taller than me probably within the next 12 months. And I asked him a question and I ask a lot of young people this question. Tell me about sex. Tell me, what do you know about sex?

And he's like, oh, actually, the reason why is, Christina and I, we've been doing this since our kids have been young. Literally six. Because we believe in something called the law of first mention.

Which is, if you're the first one that mentions something, you have authority on that subject.

[20:17] You all know where you heard about sex from. I heard about it from my grade six friend at school. And he, I have now since found out, is not the authority on sex. But he was the one that told me about it.

And it's funny, because where you hear it first, you will go, subconsciously, you will go back to that source for reference, for information. So we try and beat the crowd, we try and beat the world, and we, so we will start first.

And they had no idea what we were talking about, but I was like, you know what, the only thing that you need to remember is that I got there first. So whenever you have any question, you come to me first. But isn't that true?

Because if we don't disciple the next generation, the world will. Because they will have questions, just like you and I had questions, but if they don't come to us for the answers, and they go somewhere else, then they will tell something different.

And he said something interesting, he said, oh, well, it can be used for bad. I was like, yes and no, that is, that is so true. But my goodness, it is not a bad thing.

[21:19] Sex is not a bad thing. But yes, what we've used it to become, what we've twisted it to become, is now a wicked thing. Actually, interestingly, the word wicked, the Anglo-Saxon, kind of just, the background of that word, the word wicked simply means twisted.

If you think about a candle wick at the top, it's just something that's twisted. So there's no such thing as darkness there's no such thing as evil, it's just good that has been twisted. Interestingly, the word judgment simply means to straighten out.

And so what you have here is, we've taken something that God has created that is beautiful, that is good, and then we have twisted it. We have weaponized it.

What's your relationship like with sex? Do you have a high view of sex, or do you have a low view of sex?

Because, God knows, if we've grown up in the church, and there's the whole purity thing, culture that went around, maybe in the 90s and the early noughties, as Christians growing up, you've been

conditioned to think that sex is a bad thing.

[22:27] Now, everyone's thinking about it, and behind the scenes, we're doing all kinds of things, but in church, in any other context, we don't talk about it.

We've simply twisted. We've simply twisted what is supposed to be a good thing. There's a couple of really interesting quotes that I wanted to read you. Our sexualities, our capacity to love, and be loved, is intimately related to our creation in the image of God.

What a high view of sexuality. Sexuality, our sexuality, sex, was created for our pleasure, and for procreation. I won't linger on this point too much, but we are all sat here, products, of two people having sex.

Procreation. But there is pleasure in it as well, but we have twisted it. And what we think now to do is just to kind of just keep it under the rules and don't talk about it, don't think about it, pretend it doesn't exist, pretend it doesn't happen.

When in reality, the quote continues, and I love this, but it says, notice that the biblical stress upon relationship helps to enlarge our understanding of human sexuality. And here's, just pay attention to this next line.

[23:41] The problem with the topless bars and the pornographic literature of our day is not that they emphasize sexuality too much, but that they do not emphasize it enough. The problem with the topless bars and the pornographic literature of our day is not that they emphasize sexuality too much, but that they do not emphasize it enough.

We've reduced sex to something which is simply just a physical thing when it should be so much more. As children of God who bear his image for procreation and for pleasure purposes, it's supposed to be this incredibly beautiful, indescribable thing, yet we turn it into a series of images that we scroll through on our phones.

The problem isn't that we have too low a view of sexuality, it's that we don't have a high enough one to what it is supposed to be. We have turned something good and we have twisted it.

I've often said, Richard Foster is the one who said the three big idols of the world are money, sex, and power, which per se are not necessarily wrong things.

Money is not a bad thing. The love of money is the root of all evil. Sex was a good thing that has been twisted. Power, authority, dominion was what he gave mankind and it was supposed to be good, yet we have abused it for our own good.

[24:58] Are we any different in the church? We've taken something as beautiful as love. Now, the biblical interpretation of love is what you can give, what you can sacrifice.

John 15, there is no greater love than this, that someone would lay down his own life. That is love. But now we've reduced the word love to what we can take. When I love something, it's what it can give me.

All right? We've twisted that word again. And it's interesting and it's fascinating. And you hear a lot about this amongst the next generation that are struggling with the issue of pornography and of loneliness.

And so they've given up on relationship altogether. Why do I need to go through this whole process of courting and relationship and friendship when I can just find satisfaction by myself at home without any trouble from any people?

And so you know, you can see now, there are tons and tons of the next generation who have just basically given up on engaging in relationship, in friendship with other people because they thought, well, that is so much trouble, I'm just going to stay at home myself.

[26:02] But then the problem is it hasn't really satisfied us. Loneliness is at an all-time high. Suicide rates are at an all-time high. We thought, we cracked the code that we can have the friends with the benefits and without any of the challenges that come with it and yet somehow it's left us more lonely.

Have you thought about that? Somehow, it has left us more lonely. We've simply twisted something that God created for good, tried to do a shortcut and we realized we've run into a dead end.

That is where we're at. And of course, one of my favorite verses, only just for comedic value, is verse six, the Lord is an avenger. That's it.

Just, the Lord is an avenger. Just, just, just, just interpret that, take it where you will. But it speaks to something, which is this. James, leave me alone.

The stuff that I do in my own time, it's not hurting anybody. It's not affecting anybody. Just leave me alone. What we've done is we've separated sexuality from spirituality, which is something that the people in this day did and that was a group that was called the Gnostics, which were basically saying, hey, you can do anything you want with your physical body and it won't affect your soul. [27 : 19] It won't affect your spirituality. So go ahead and do whatever you want in this life. It won't affect your next life. Go ahead and do whatever you want in your own time. It won't affect the other people because they'll never know.

And somehow, and somehow, what we need to really understand is man, sexuality and spirituality are connected. And every time we think about someone in a way that God doesn't want us to think about, it's taking something from them and they've not even agreed to it.

And when you give yourself to someone in a way that you shouldn't give yourself to, you're giving, you're taking yourself away from someone in your future who is going to be your future spouse. You're taking something away from them as you give yourself to something else and someone else. What it's saying here is that sexuality, spirituality and community are all intertwined. And the Lord is an avenger, which means he sees.

the conversation with the young person will go, well, sex is kind of like a bad thing. I was like, oh, why is it so bad? Oh, well, because people, okay, well, so what do you do with it then?

[28 : 27] Well, just avoid it. Don't really talk about it and just leave it. clearly that's not the solution. And then you say, well, what is bad? Oh, well, you're not supposed to have sex before marriage.

Oh, well, why is that? Oh, because God said so. Why am I not allowed to do this? Oh, because God said so. And really, actually, that's what Paul is kind of saying here. He's saying, for God has called us not for impurity but in holiness.

Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man but God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

You see, sometimes you go into church and you say, I don't want to be a Christian. I don't want to go to church because people have such conservative values here and you're not allowed to do this and you're not allowed to do that.

And Paul's saying, hey, it's not about what we tell you not to do. God tells you not to do it. It's different. This isn't just a person trying to have authority over you. This is God telling you not to do it.

And God isn't doing it in a way just because he's a stickler, just because he's here to ruin your pleasure. Why does God tell you not to do those things? Because he knows that they're bad for you. Because he knows that if you go down this path, it doesn't end well.

[29 : 32] Because he knows that if you just choose your own pleasure and ignore everyone else, sadly, you won't get that pleasure that you're looking for. And we've all been there.

And I'm not here to say as your pastor, I've been completely, completely with a perfect record. But so I can tell you that I know and I know that you know every time you choose something for yourself and you know it's not God wants and it might be nice for that moment, but you know the feeling that happens afterwards.

I don't need to convince you of that. What God is saying is, I don't want you to do it because this hurts you. Don't have sex with someone before marriage because when you, when you, when you connect with someone at that deepest, most vulnerable level, but you're not even sure whether you're going to commit to each other in the future, then you will hurt one another.

That sex was created for a place, so there's a place where two people can feel completely known, completely loved, and completely safe. And it's only then will you enjoy all the pleasures that I created, that he created.

So before we just kind of say, well, we're not allowed to do this, that or the other because God says no, think about why he says no. Think about why I as a parent don't let my children eat McDonald's three times a day.

[30 : 55] As much as, well, it's because my wife wouldn't let me. Because it's not good for me. It's not healthy. And then he carries on, and this is where we're going to kind of quickly fly through.

Verse 9 to 12, he jumps into something else. He says, now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. So he jumps into a second part, and he's talking about brotherly love. The word he uses there is Philadelphia. Okay, so that's where we're here, the city of brotherly love. And so he moves into a second part, and he says, hey, I want you to be different when it comes to sex.

I want you to be different as a community, and recognize that actually, sexuality and spiritually are not enemies, they are friends. And then he moves into a second part, which is this, hey, you guys, can you love one another as though you are siblings?

Of course, if you have a sibling, you're like, actually, I don't love my sibling in a good way. But love each other in a way where you're not here to kind of just satisfy your own personal agenda. live in a way that is different.

[32:00] Now, here's another problem that I think we in the church have really struggled with. When we preach from the pulpit, what we're actually doing constantly is we're trying to help you feel better about yourself.

And this is not, this should not be our own goal, our only goal. But what happens here, and this is a quote that maybe sums it up way better than I, most of our pulpits, Protestant and Catholic alike, have read scripture, but then preached a psychological personalism for decades with sin as a psychological dysfunction and salvation as inward good feeling.

What it's saying here is it's too long. We've taken this book that keeps telling you love one another, that you cannot separate spirituality from community. And yet what we've done is we've basically just preached the gospel where, hey, sin is bad, it's making you feel down.

And so, hey, you're saved. So feel better about yourself. Have some warm fuzzies on your own, and that's it. But what he's saying here is love one another together. You can't do life, your spiritual life, on your own.

I look at Ken, and I'm thinking, I don't know if I can imagine a life here in Hong Kong without the friendship of him and Hillary. I look at him and his group, which I won't share you the name of his group because it's...

[33:17] Anyway. And I saw the picture of them this morning. I'm like, I don't know if Ken can do his spiritual life without his brothers around him.

I look at Joyce and I see the group of girls that is now around her. I'm like, this is the only way to do spiritual living, to have people around. I look at Sigmund and I'm like, how did Sigmund even get to churches because there were people around him that bore him who are now with him.

I look at Ebenezer and go, man, I love that man. and I can see other men that love him too. Let us not separate spirituality from community.

Let us live in a way that actually knows that they are intertwined, that we need each other. Not in a dependent, needy kind of way, but that we wouldn't be where we are right now without the people around us.

And just a shout out to Victor and Mavis for your different strategies of just relentlessness over the years of praying and just inviting and then at the right time dropping words of wisdom.

[34:25] And then it says something really interesting and this is where I'm going to finish just in case you're keeping track of time. Verse 11, and to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs and to work with your hands as we instructed you.

Something was happening in the church as they were growing in hype, as they were growing in number and they were like, Jesus is coming back. So straight away if you're a kind of lazy person, you'd be like, oh, well if Jesus is coming back, then I kind of don't really need to work anymore.

I'm just going to hang out. I'm just going to hang out and get my Jesus on and pray and sing and just going to be here. And Paul's saying, no. Don't do that. Be the best worker that you can be and live a life that is worthy of the calling.

Be different. So here's my second question to you. Maybe especially in your workplace or in your school, do people look at you and go, man, that person, that person is different.

It says live quietly and work hard is what it's saying. I think the challenge here is can you be the best worker that you can be? If you're a teacher, can your colleagues look at you and go, you know what?

[35:33] That person is such a good teacher. She works so hard and she loves the Lord so much and the kids love her so much that is so good. It's what Jesus says in Matthew 5, let others see your good works and see your light and give thanks to your Father in Heaven.

And I know this is convicting for some of us because we're like, hey, look, work is just work. It's just a job. I don't need to be great at it. I just need to be good because Jesus is the center of everything and I'm saying, he's going to come back anyway so it's all going to be okay.

I know what Paul is saying, what Jesus is saying, be the best person that you can be at work. If you're in finance, can you be the hardest worker in finance that still maintains a healthy work-life balance that makes deals that are with integrity and with honesty?

If you sell houses, can you sell the most houses in the history of mankind? But people look at you and go, there's something different about you. There is a humility and a diligence about you that can only come from Christ.

If you are someone who's at home looking after kids, can people look at you and go, man, that dad or that mom just loves their kids in just this godly, holy way.

[36:49] Can people look at us and go, wow, they are different? And I'll share with you and Ken was being over-flattering and kind when he says, James just seems to have this peace about him and I'll tell you this and this is just a little opening of the window, I rarely feel peace.

I rarely feel peaceful. When I was training as a school teacher, the analogy that was given to me was, you've got to be like a swan where on the top you're just floating and regal but under the water you're just flapping.

So maybe you need to hear it from me, hey, it's okay that you're not perfect. Sanctification is a progress. We are a work in progress but God is good and he can take what you're flapping underneath and still bless others on the outside.

Can you be that person in your workplace and I'm going to here to challenge you because some of you are working in really tough environments with really tough colleagues with really annoying bosses. Can you, because of Christ, live in a different way?

So when others look at you and you go, oh, Jay has a really annoying boss but my goodness, Jay just treats her in such a supernaturally different way.

[38:05] Why? Because he trusts in God because he knows that someone else is in control, not his boss. And live quietly and you might ask, what does living quietly mean?

I don't know what living quietly means. I think for those of us who live on social media, living quietly is kind of counterintuitive to what social media is about because social media is kind of like living as loud as you possibly can to show everyone the latte that you're drinking, the party that you're going to, the holiday you're going to.

But how can you live in a way where people don't know what you're up to? That you may be the most successful in your field but on a Sunday morning they know that you're ushering at church, doing something completely quiet, filled with humility, filled with integrity.

Maybe we look at the way we even manage our social media accounts, who we're following.

Scripture says, live a quiet life because actually if God is for you, he will be the one that promotes you.

My mom used to tell me this, she said, I think, correct me if my Chinese is wrong, I think it just means that actually flowers, if they are just, they smell nice, they would just naturally just exude this aroma.

[39:20] You don't need to promote it out. You don't need to shout about it all the time. Live a quiet, humble, hardworking life and people will notice that you are different.

Can we be people who are heavenly minded but also earthly good? What he's not saying here is, hey, when you follow Jesus, move out into the desert and just live a life of recluse on your own because people are annoying, the world is on fire, so stay in your little gathering with your warm fuzzies and your karaoke and your TED talk and just feel better about yourself.

He's saying, you have to be in this world but not of this world. Even, there was a group of people called the Desert Fathers who were so disillusioned and so disappointed with the way the world and with the way the church would go. They moved out into the desert and they're like, we don't want anything to do with this but even then, they would spend time praying for the world.

We cannot be heavenly minded but not earthly good. We have to live in a way where our eyes are on heaven but we are, we are the best event planner, we are the best actor, we are the best financier, we are the best teachers.

I think that's Paul's vision. That he sees a group of people standing up who are different, who are the best at what they do but live quietly, live with integrity, live with purity, live with holiness.

[40:49] And you, this is my final thing, you might go, well that's impossible. That's too hard. And this is my final message to you. It's not about you.

Jesus is the one that's going to do it. You think Ken saved himself? You think Joyce decided to save herself? The whole message of Christianity is that we can save ourselves. That we can't become the people we want to become. That's why God needed to intervene and send his son down to save us. the whole message of Christianity is let go and let God. Even that process of sanctification, Jesus will do. Philippians 1, 6 says this, and he will bring to completion the work that he started. Hebrews 12 says this, Jesus is the author and perfecter of your faith, not you.

Would you let him? Because one thing is true in John 2, it says this, Jesus knows the heart of man. Jesus knows your heart. He knows the challenges that you're going through.

[41 : 58] He knows how wicked you are. He knows how twisted you are in all the things. But thank God, thank God, that even though he knows all of that, Romans 7, that what we should do, we don't do, and what we don't do, we do do, what wretched people we are.

But thank goodness that even though he sees how we've twisted everything, he then takes to the cross to straighten it all out. That he takes on all of the judgment for us. And through that, we are now made right.

We have now been straightened out. So if you're sat here going, I don't even know where to start, well then just start with your hands wide open. And say what the word in Galatians 2 says, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Let's pray. We're going to move into a time of communion now.

So as we close our eyes and just respond to the word in our hearts, can we ask, can we together as a family ask God, what is there that has been good that we've twisted?

[43 : 15] What is the wickedness inside us? How have we ended up looking exactly like the world outside? As I invite the stewards to help distribute the elements, let's just spend a few moments just to reflect on that.

Lord Jesus, as we hear your word, that you call us to live lives of purity, restore to us a higher view of what sexuality is, a higher view of who you are.

as you call us to live quiet lives, diligent lives, lives with integrity, humility.

We sit here this morning and this afternoon and we confess that we fall short.

That we have twisted what you intended sex to be. We have twisted what you intended community to be.

[44 : 47] we have twisted what you intended work to be. And the truth is we've gotten to a point where we can't untwist ourselves.

So if the Lord is revealing to you anything that you have twisted, would you bring that to him now? And would you surrender it to him? Actually, with all eyes closed and heads bowed, if you know there is something that's twisted in your own heart and in your own life and you would like to just confess it, would you join me in just raising your hand if that's one of you, if that's you, if you're one of those people that have twisted something that isn't what God intended, would you raise your hand with me and just, just as a sign of confession.

confession. And this is not to embarrass one another in any way, this is simply just there is freedom in repentance, there is kindness in repentance.

It's just a way of saying, Lord, would you help me untangle and untwist and we sit here, we stand here as a community of broken people, wicked people who couldn't save ourselves, but around this table, we take the bread, we take the bread as a symbol of your body, Lord, broken for us.

[47 : 12] You paid the wages of sin. you allowed your body to be broken, nailed to the cross, straightened out for us.

And so we take this body now in remembrance of you. and then around the table, you took this cup and you raised it and you said, this cup is a symbol of the new covenant, that the debt has been paid, that he straightened everything out and this new covenant with him and with each other is now available and accessible to each of us and we seek as a community together to look more like him. Let's take this cup in remembrance of him. Let me say a final prayer.

So Lord Jesus, would you continue to work in us? We are not done. We know we're not done. We are a work in progress. And your will to make us more like you, we know it's slow, but we pray that it would just keep moving, that we would keep growing to be more like you, that we here in this community would be part of a mosaic that bears your image, that each one of us here plays a role as a part of your body, that points people to you.

We seek to be holy, set apart, sacred, different, bearing your image, declaring your name.
[49 : 31] Show us how to love one another and then remind us to love one another. And when we forget, remind us again. Thank you for this day.

Thank you for the sun that is breaking through the darkness and the cloud. allow this community here as we finish this gathering, as we scatter out to be children of light in a dark, twisted, crooked world, declaring that there is a savior.

There is hope, there is joy, there is peace. Thank you, Lord. It's in your name, your precious name we pray.

Amen. So this is the end of our time here.