

Final Instructions & Benediction

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Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Good morning. Thank you. Thank you, Juju. Yeah, join us for the Christmas open house. We've got lots of different fun things planned and you can drop by for as much as little as you want to.

So for one final time, I'm going to recap what the series that we've been through, which is one Thessalonians. You can read the account of the start of this church in Acts 17. Paul goes and starts this church. The reason why I was really compelled by it was because it's probably around the same size and same age as what we are.

And so as I was looking through this, I thought, oh, this will be really fun to see. And so Paul starts this church in Acts 17. But then he meets some jealous Jews and these jealous Jews run him out of town and they chase all the people that are involved with Paul to the point where Jason, a guy who welcomed Paul in, also gets confronted as well.

And so Paul leaves and then he leaves and he really misses this church because he was like, I spent some good time with you guys. I wonder how you're doing. I miss you. I love you. And so he writes this letter. And actually, there was a part of me that wanted to just actually read out the whole letter.

But I realize we have some of the different things. So we're going to want to refrain from that. But I do highly recommend it. Actually, if you're interested, when you go home, just to read through one epistle all in one go.

[1:10] It sounds daunting, but it's actually usually only about 10 to 13 minutes. And so you would imagine a group like this in a room, maybe around this size. And then someone would deliver a letter and they'll be like, this is from Paul.

Let us listen to what he has to say to us. And basically, the sermon would be someone reading the whole letter out. But we're not going to quite do that today. But I'll give you a quick recap.

In chapter one, he says, guys, I miss you. I am so proud of who you are. You are a model church. Remember that? This will be the last time I rewind this for you. You're a model church. People are hearing about you all in Asia.

And then I ask the question, which is, hey, if someone modeled their lives after you, would they look more like Christ? If people modeled what we were doing here in this church, would it be a church that would they look more like Christ?

That's the question that they had. That's the question that we had. Are we a model church or rather what is a model church? It seems here 1 Thessalonians 1 says that this is the model church. They have this labor of love, this work of faith and the steadfastness of hope.

[2:16] And then he goes into chapter 2 and he goes, hey, I know that people are talking smack about me. I know that people are trying to twist you to basically discard everything that I've taught you.

You know who I am. You know that I spent those years with you and you know my motives. And remember I got my friends around me, the accountability guys that I have. And I asked you, hey, who's your support? Who are the people who ask you the tough questions?

And then chapter 3, he goes on and says, hey, you gathered around here. What you've decided to do, the life you've chosen to live, the Christ you've chosen to follow, isn't going to lead to a smooth health and wealth kind of life.

It's going to be hard. People are going to look at you and mistreat you because of who you follow. And then chapter 4, he really goes into it. He says, hey, because you're following him, your life must change.

And he talks about sex. And he says, some of you here have been living in a different way. But now because you're following Jesus, there is a new way. And that way means you must change. And so we talked about what that even means.

[3:17] Talked about our sexual formation. And then he moves into chapter 4 and he says, hey, I know that some of you are asking questions because people are dying, as we all do and as we all will. And then he's saying, hey, don't grieve as those who have no hope.

We have a hope because why? We believe that Jesus came and he died. But more importantly, he rose again. That is of first importance in 1 Corinthians 15. And then he moves and goes, hey, let me, whilst I'm talking about death, let me talk to you about the end times.

The day of the Lord that's coming. Actually, you don't know when that day is coming. And that's okay. But you should be prepared. The way you live. The day of the Lord, when he comes, should surprise you intellectually.

Like, oh, it's happening. But it shouldn't surprise you ethically. That actually the way you've been living is in preparation of him coming anyway. And then he moves into this final chapter. Well, the final bit, which is basically just the final remarks.

And this is where we're going to wrap up. Thank you so much for protecting me in case I'm going to be tripping. Juju is such a servant heart. Juju is such a person. And so he reaches the final bit.

[4:22] And it's the final part of it. And I'm going to, I'm actually going to invite Kyle to come up to, to read it for us. And as is our custom. And I'll say this and I'll keep saying this all the time. This book is all that matters.

Because this book has the words of life. It doesn't really matter what I say. But if you look at what this book says, it will tell you everything you need to know. Okay. So that's super important. And a special shout out to Kyle, because I know there's a couple of young people.

Because I talk a lot of smack about using your app for your Bible. Because your Bible is so much, it cannot be contained by a smartphone. So I encourage all of us to get an actual real Bible.

Okay. So all of us who are half Christians who use the app, it doesn't count. Okay. It doesn't count. So you need one of these paper things. And our brother here, Kyle, is now formally and officially saved because he bought himself a Bible.

So we're going to invite, I'm only joking, by the way, if you're here for the first time. That's not how you are saved. But okay. But he's going to read to us the words of God. So can I invite us to stand for the word of God?

[5:23] Father, we stand because we are in reverence and in awe of your words. Lord, we are here for you.

And so we ask that these words would penetrate the very depths of our soul. And as we finish this letter to the Thessalonians, we ask that you would speak to us. And so we thank you.

Our ears and our hearts are open. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish and idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks to all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything.

[6:32] Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat.

Thank you, Kyle. Kyle also has little sticky notes in his Bible already that help him find the chapters.

So shout out to Kyle. I also forgot one last bit, and the construction, the drills reminded me of it.

When we talked last week about the day of the Lord, when he comes back to make all things new, I talked about heaven.

Maybe we have a misconception what heaven is, which is just this complete blank space with clouds and with harps. But it isn't that. It is a city garden where he's made all things new, and all the

good things that we experience here on earth are now multiplied to infinite measure.

[7:42] And it will be this city garden that he's building that we read in Revelation 21. And as you hear the drilling that is so just symptomatic of being in Hong Kong, whether you are in a restaurant or a cinema or a spa, and I'm reminding myself, God, you are making all things new.

This world is continually under construction. So I encourage you as you listen to me and you hear that drill that God is, Jesus is working. Jesus is working, and he's doing something very, very special. If I was to sum up the whole letter, he's basically saying, guys, live with eternity in mind. Live with eternity in mind. Keep your eyes on eternity. One of my favorite songs is a song by Phil Wickham called You're Beautiful. And that final verse is, when we arrive at eternity's shore. Actually, when we had the people getting baptized a few weeks ago at Repulse, every time I go, I look at the shore, I'm like, that is eternity, and that is beautiful. And would we keep that in mind as we live today?

As we look to that day, can we live accordingly in the right way today? Jonathan Edwards was the one who said, who prayed, Lord, can you burn eternity into my eyelids?

[8:54] Yes, which sounds a little bit graphic, but I love it. Can we just see eternity in everything? And C.S. Lewis has this quote that I also love, and we always have at least one C.S. Lewis quote every sermon.

If you read history, you'll find that the Christians who did the most for this present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think about the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.

Oh, ouch. There's this quote which is, hey, can we be heavenly minded and earthly good? Because some people we know may be very heavenly minded, but they're not very earthly good.

But the truth is that statement is incorrect, because if you are heavenly minded, then you must be earthly good. You must be of some use to this world here. Because that's the point. Because you live with eternity in mind. Everything you do, every single action that you have, every single thing that you say, is seeking to point people to him.

And at this point, I actually want to bring up two friends. One friend has been with us at the beginning of the gathering, and it's Shigala, who's just been such a key part of this family here. And there's another friend who I literally met about 90 minutes ago.

[10:02] And so I'm going to invite Shigala and Chris up, because I think they've got something really special to share when it comes to this angle of kind of living with eternity in mind. Can we give them a round of applause? Can we also, Uday, Uday, can we grab that other mic?

Thank you. Thank you.

And I think that's kind of the reason, a little bit of why you got involved.

And I wanted to bring you up to ask you one question, which is, what did God stir in your heart that caused you to want to bring CS to Hong Kong, so that your family here can hear a little bit more about it?

Hi, everyone. My name's Shigala. So the heart to start CS is very core to my testimony. Three years ago, I wasn't a Christian, and I wasn't a surfer.

[11:25] I encountered God and the ocean, and it was just really beautiful, like just seeing him out, just seeing the face of the wave, experiencing sunshine hitting the face of the wave, and just like that bringing me back to the beginning of Genesis, the Holy Spirit hovering over the body of water.

That just put me in awe and like so in praise of what God's done for us here. And my heart is that I just want to share this, the joy of surfing in the ocean with everyone.

Yeah, that's the core. Yeah, and actually, talk to us a little bit more about your heart as you go out there, and as you're doing Surf Club and all these other things that are happening.

What's your prayer for the specific people that kind of join you guys on this journey? My prayer is that actually at the beach community, sometimes they're out there not to learn how to surf, but also they're seeking for answers.

They may be encountering mental health struggles. My prayer is that we're out there as surfers, so we're able to point them towards God and to let them know that God was always here in the past, present, and the future, and that we'll walk with them.

[12:51] Can you share one final question? I promise. Okay, Shigala also said that she gets so nervous about being kind of in front of people talking, so maybe just a round of applause. She's been so good so far. You shared with me yesterday about one event that happened for you that

kind of really pushed you over the edge.

You're like, okay, I have to do this, and it was talking to your friend. Would you mind sharing a little bit of that story for us? Yeah, this is a really close friend of mine. Her name is Michelle.

She doesn't know Christ yet, but her mom is with the Lord in heaven now. Her mom was diagnosed with terminal cancer last year.

I think she passed around beginning December, so that was a year ago. And she invited her whole family in the shawl, and she delivered a very powerful message.

And that just touched my heart so much. She shared that there was only two of her last breaths on her deathbed. She shared two truths that just cut my heart.

[13:57] And one is to love people like Jesus does. And two is to share the gospel with everyone. And also, I just think it's so beautiful how God breathed life into us, that life of breath.

And Michelle's mom, she used that last few breaths to exalt God. And we know where she is, but that's just the beauty.

That's the difference between us made in his image and animals, that we're able to praise God for the journey that he sent us.

And that's the moment that inspired you to, hey, I want to bring Christian service to Hong Kong, and I want to spread the gospel in the way that God has placed on my heart. Yeah, those two truths, that just was the final push.

And that just happened a year ago. Incredible. Thank you, Shigala. Can we give her a round of applause? Thank you. You can take a seat. And even when she talks about the animals, from that talk last week, it's kind of like, actually, us humans, there's something built in us that just has eternity.

[15:12] We just crave it. We have a desire for something outside of this world. It's Ecclesiastes 3. He planted eternity into the heart of man. And the beauty of what we do, why we don't grieve without hope, is because when her friend's mom breathed her last, we actually know that it wasn't her last.

Essentially, it was her first. And the moment she breathed her last on earth is the moment she breathed her first on heaven. And it was the eternity that awaits her. And so that's beautiful here.

And so I want to move on to talking a little bit more about CS.

Yes. Well, can you introduce yourself, Chris? Sure. First, I'll just say, I have a paper Bible. But I had very limited carry-on luggage weight.

So I was like, yeah, sorry. Going to have to leave you home this time. So it didn't make you a luggage then, I guess. No. Not your top five. Yeah, not top five.

All right, okay. Deodorant was more important. The deodorant stick. We are grateful. Yeah. Yeah, very cool to be here. And worship, so great.

[16:23] Just really felt the Lord's presence here in this place. And yeah, just so encouraged to be here. My name is Chris Chon. I'm Korean American.

And so I grew up in the States. I've worked with Youth With A Mission for the last 20 years, YWAM. And 17 years of that have been in Taiwan. And it was 14 years ago that the Lord had called me to reach surfers.

Which is, yeah, it's not something that I actually thought that I would be doing. I grew up as a surfer in California. Surfing most of my life. I never thought of doing it as a ministry.

And so that's kind of, yeah, for the last 14 years since the Lord gave me this call, that's what I've been doing. And actually, I'm going to ask him more about his journey to becoming kind of serving in this Christian Surfers International.

But as we're listening to this, what I encourage you to do is, many of you may not be surfers here. But there is your equivalent. There is something that the Lord has placed in your life that actually would be the equivalent of surfing for you.

[17:29] Because actually what we're going to hear is just this incredible story of obedience and creativity almost in terms of how you got to where you were. Because you shared with me on the phone yesterday, actually, that that wasn't always your plan. So talk us through a little bit about how you ended up having not done what you were planning to do.

Okay, cool. Yeah, just a nutshell version. I was living in Hawaii at the time and just got married. My wife's also a Korean-American, not a surfer.

And we both felt a call to move to China. And so we were committed to going to China to help start a new YWAM base over there. And on the airplane, so we were going to Taiwan first to do like a three-month Bible course and then going to go to China.

And on the airplane, I said this prayer to God. And just back story, like surfing was a huge part of my life. I mean, it was like a bit of an idol.

And there were times where, you know, I've been convicted many times on it. And a thing for surfers is like it's really like an identity thing. Like no one says I'm a basketballer.

[18:39] Maybe you say I'm a baller. I don't know if that's a good connotation. But we're proud to say like we're surfers. This is like a prideful thing. On that plane, I said, God, I'm going to be a missionary in China.

And I was like, if I never surf again, it's okay. So you can have it because this is not what life is about. And so it was on that plane ride where I just, I let it go.

You know, this huge thing in my life. And it was easy to do, you know, because it's like, hey, Jesus, it's yours anyway. So like, and so it was when I got to Taiwan that I discovered they were surfing there.

And some friends of mine were like, hey, do you know you can surf here? And I was like, yeah, cool, whatever. And, but I said, well, I'll go check it out. And so I, during my Bible school that I was there, I would go surfing on, you know, some of the weekends.

And I just was researching if there's ministries reaching out to these people because I know there's surf ministries. And, and, and it was on one week on a bus ride home after surfing that I prayed and I said, God, you need to send someone to reach these guys.

[19:49] And immediately, like, I felt the Holy Spirit speak to me and I wasn't like a loud voice. I mean, I didn't even know. It's always weird when you feel like you're hearing from the Lord, but I just heard, why don't you reach them?

And I said, no, I don't. It's like, God, I don't want to do this. And I said, God, my heart is to go to China to go to like unreached people groups where like no one's hearing the gospel.

And immediately I heard the Holy Spirit again. And it's just like, they're like an unreached people group. And then I just was like, wow.

I was like, well, I can't argue against that. And, and my next prayer was like, God, you need to tell my wife about this. Amazingly, the Lord spoke to her and that's what really started our journey to reaching the surfing community.

And, and one of the main things was is like, um, and Taiwan is also a busy work culture there. And, and I, and I see like, okay, most guys, you know, work Monday through Friday, maybe Monday through Saturday, work hard and they get one day off.

[21:00] And if that's Sunday and you're a surfer and there's waves Sunday morning, you're not thinking about going to church. They're like, I'm going to go surf. And so they really are like this group of people that they're not going to go to church because like, that's the only precious time that they have.

And so that's where we feel the call that we're going out to them, you know, taking the gospel to them. So, yeah. Thank you. And actually you guys are hanging around afterwards and look to anyone to, who's interested in hearing more about what they do.

I think it is an incredible work there. So please go and ask them, but maybe just one question, last question here for us to hear is how can we pray for what you're doing around Asia, actually? Cause it's not just Taiwan anymore.

It's how can we pray for you? Yeah, sure. So, um, so the organization that I also work with Christian surfers, I work as a East Asia regional coordinator, just overseeing, um, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, and the newest crew, Hong Kong.

Which is awesome. And I'll, I think Hong Kong surfers love surfing way more than I do because the journey we had to go on to go to Saikong Beach, that was officially the farthest I've ever carried a surfboard.

[22:21] Didn't think I was going to make it. And there was amazing waves yesterday. Like we, we scored big time. Um, and, uh, it's just really cool to, to see these guys out there too, with their friends that they've made in the water.

Um, but yeah, so with East Asia, it's kind of been, um, a newer thing that's happening. Um, so in the Philippines in the last year and a half, there's a new crew starting there.

Um, Korea, which is, uh, a new, just like surf scene blowing up over there. They just started launched last year. And, um, Japan is, used to have a very large surf ministry there with Christian surfers.

Um, they have 3 million surfers in Japan. It's the largest unreached, not just surfing community, but total like action sports community in the world. And they're doing a relaunch with, uh, and Shinsuke here is the national director there.

And they're awesome. And so, uh, in September, you probably heard, we all had a gathering in the Philippines. And it was in this time being there that we all, a lot of us got to meet for the first time and just really bonded with each other.

[23:33] And so a lot of what we're doing is we're just trying to connect with each other to encourage each other. Cause it's not easy to start pioneer a new ministry or nation on your own.

And it was definitely, I mean, the challenges, spiritual warfare, all those things, it's not easy. So we just try to go to each other's countries and encourage each other. And, but at the same time, and this is also within Christian surfers international, that there's a big push right now.

And this is from our international director that by 2030, we're hoping to see Christian surfers spread into a hundred new nations with a thousand new missions started.

And when I look at the Asia region, um, many of you might know that in the last four years at Olympics and the Olympic surfing was, it's the first time surfing was added to the Olympics.

And now like surfing's just, um, popping up in all these countries that you never would have thought of like that you could surf there because people are trying to get like a national team together.

[24:40] And this is, I think the strategy that God has showed me is that in a lot of these Asian countries that have good waves, they're either could be Muslim countries, uh, Hindu countries, Buddhist countries, not easy to access as a missionary.

But with the surfboard, it's just like an open door. Like we walk in with the board and they're like, welcome. You know, um, it's awesome. Um, and because it's such a tribal sport, it's an instant connection.

And it's through that, that we want to take the gospel to them. So, um, so yeah, I think for prayers is for our new crew, just in the kind of pioneering effort, just needing the encouragement, support, um, with that.

And then also with these new places that we're looking at. Yeah. Okay. So. Well, thank you. Uh, thank you. Let's give him a round of applause. Thank you. Thank you. I have two quick action points there for us before we really jump into the word here.

Number one, uh, ask the Lord, if actually you want to find out more about this ministry and what they're doing and how you can support them prayerfully and financially or whatever it is, uh, be thinking about that. Number two is what's your surfing equivalent?

[25:54] Cause I think there's something about when we talk about gathering and scattering a lot. And sometimes we have this conception that when we have to go scatter, it's to go to an unreached people group where we don't understand the language, just like a Korean American is thinking of going to China to reach people.

And actually that is, that is the case for some people. For some people, it really is to go all the way to the Amazon forest or wherever, wherever it is to, to, to spread the gospel. But for a lot of us, we've found that actually short of doing that, there's actually some things that we can literally do right here.

But actually yours may not be as cool as a surfboard, but yours may be, well, actually, for example, I know this, those in dentistry, there's, there's a dental fellowship when there's in finances, there's things that are going on in whatever field that God has placed you in.

You have your equivalent to your surfboard. And the question is, are you using it? Are you gathering? And then are you scattering to share the good news of Christ and to love Jesus as, as to love people as Jesus loves all of us?

That's the question. So those are the two things I would love for us to keep thinking about. Paul here jumps into the final part of his letter. And my goodness, it's not like, Hey, there's actually one point I want you to focus on. If you remember what Kyle was reading, he just goes all into it.

[27:01] And if you can just follow me as we go here, I'm just going to wrap us up. He says this chapter five, verse 12. He says, we ask you brothers to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

He's saying, Hey, I'm finishing this letter. Now I'm reaching my concluding point in this letter. So those of you who are falling asleep, hang in there. We're nearly done. And he's saying, love your leaders, love your leaders and respect your leaders.

And last week I shared a little bit about that, that everyone needs encouragement, that even leaders and pastors need encouragement. And then I encourage you jokingly that you should text me and encourage me. Thank you for all of those who did after the service, all three of you.

But you also did it after I'd asked you, so it kind of doesn't count. So anyway, I'm not asking right now, but if you want to encourage, you can.

But what he's saying here is, appreciate your leaders. We're in a world now where good leadership is at a premium. And actually, your leaders are not perfect.

[28:08] I for sure am not perfect. But he's saying, appreciate your leaders because it is a hard job. And I was sharing with someone more recently that as I've learned to be a leader, as a young leader, we have lots of things to learn.

I went from being sitting at the back of the room, like Jay White is now all cool with his long hair, and just chilling and just kind of just looking at the leader and going, oh, if I was there, I would be doing a much better job than that leader there.

Because I know what's better, but I'm the cool one. I'm the hotshot, so I'm just going to sit at the back on the couch there with my girlfriend and my long hair. I'm totally over his hair, by the way. It's not a thing. And then as I started to be given more things, I was like, oh, my goodness. It hurts to be a leader. There's a target on your back.

These arrows keep coming from all the different sides. Because leadership, leadership is hard. Leadership is hard. And Paul's saying, hey, encourage these people. Actually, I wanted to take this chance to honor some of the people here.

[29:08] Actually, I don't think he's in the room right now, but it was Hank's 70th birthday this last week, and we got to celebrate him. And actually, I don't even know if you know who the leaders are in this church.

And I wanted to honor some of them. Hank is one of them, and he's been the chair of the deacons board for at least 120 years now, right, Tony? And so he's been just a long-suffering servant of church.

Actually, Tony, can I embarrass you and have you stand up? We should give him a round of applause. Tony here is one of our deacons. Thank you. And Agnes at the back over there as well in the famous show.

My goodness. You know, we all have these conceptions of what a Chinese church is like, and you've got these kind of grumpy old Chinese people sat around at an executive table kind of making decisions that are completely distanced from humanity.

That is not true. My goodness. These people, Hank, at least for our context here, Hank, Agnes, Tony, they pour themselves out to the church.

[30:14] Oh, my goodness. Deacons' meetings are long, which is something else. They are long. That's a whole Saturday often gone. But their heart, their fierce love for God, their fierce love for people, I have just such tremendous love and respect for these people.

There's someone else who I wanted to highlight here who actually isn't here right now is my wife, Christina. You guys see me on the stage doing this little thing, but actually this wouldn't happen if it wasn't for her doing pretty much everything else.

She's teaching kids right now with Micah, our baby, strapped onto her, likely. And she was at the ladies' luncheon yesterday, and she was doing Restore, the mental health.

She's just doing all these things. And so many things that you don't see, that I see. And some other people see, but actually you don't see. And so just honoring her, even though, you know, true to form, she's not here right now.

And people like Joe, Alex, who serve in so many different ways in the community and in worship, there are leaders who are pouring themselves out. I remember in Philippians, Paul says, even if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

[31:22] Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. He's saying, I'm pouring myself out and giving my life to all of you guys, and I am so happy about it. I'm so happy about being busy and loving you. You should be glad too.

We get to do this together. I think about Paul Roth, he's not here, and he's been faithful in just serving in the worship team for years here. And then yesterday, he turns up with Gabs and Julian, and they sing some Beyonce songs to the ladies.

I never thought there'd be a day I'd see Paul sing Beyonce, and now I can't unsee it, and it's just there. But just the faithfulness of the leaders that we have here, and Alex and Cara, and all your life group leaders, all the people who welcome you into their homes, I'll tell you this, they're not perfect. I know they're not perfect. They know they're not perfect. Leadership is hard. But let's honor them. Let's give them grace. And if you see your leaders go through a really hard kind of session of discussion, and you're looking at them going, they don't really know what they're doing, then pray for them and drop them a message in afterwards and say, hey, I know that was hard for you. I know that you don't know what you're doing, but I just love that you're doing it. Rather you than me. Whatever it is, be encouragement. And that's what Paul is saying here. Just love your leaders, because leaders have lots of jobs to do.

[32 : 34] And you see here in verse 14, it says, we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, and help the weak. This is part of what we do as a family.

Admonish the idle. Admonish is a lost word. It means rebuke. It means call them higher. You look at people who are lazy. Remember, at this point, there were some people, oh, Jesus is returning. Great. I'm going to quit my job.

I don't like my job anyway. I'm going to quit my job, and I'm just going to wait. I'm going to go to the beach and hang out and wait for him to come. And they're like, no, you've got to keep working. And as church family, as church leaders, you've got to admonish the idle.

You've also got to encourage the faint-hearted. We know there are people. We know ourselves. Sometimes we are faint-hearted. And we are, oh gosh, just dispirited, just discouraged. We're just finding it hard. And can we encourage those people?

And then can we help the weak? Those who can't be helped. Those who can't help themselves, sorry. Those who we look at and go, oh, if only you would do this. Well, they can't. That's the point. If they could do it, they would have done it. But they can't.

[33 : 31] And as a community, as leaders, can we help the weak? Now, here's the interesting thing. Admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. And help the weak. The question that I have as I look at this is, well, how do you discern between who's idle, who's faint-hearted, and who's weak?

Because you know you have to treat them differently, right? That lazy person who actually could do it, they're just not doing it. How do you admonish them? The one who's faint-hearted, who could do it, and has done it, who is just going through a really rough season and is discouraged.

How do you help them? And those who are completely helpless and have been helpless for a long time, who can't pull themselves out of this rope, how can you help them? All that tells me is this.

The only way to really do it is if you know each other.

If you know your people. If there is a sensitivity to each other, when we ask each other, okay, if you know someone, you'll know when they are being idle. You will know when they are being faint-hearted. And you will know when they are being weak.

Well, when they are weak. Simply because you know them. So, it's not a one-size-fits-all. But the call here really is, do we know each other? And can we encourage one another in the way that Christ encourages us?

[34 : 36] And it's interesting. He talks about those three things, and then he says, be patient with all. Now, this is the hard one for me. Because I find it very hard to be patient with those who are idle. Do you?

Those lazy people? I'm like, come on. But he says, be patient with the idle. Be patient with the faint-hearted. Be patient with the weak. That word patience, the 1 Corinthians 13, be patient. Love is patient. I don't know the rest, as I've joked before. Because I can never get past patience. Patience is slowing yourself down and going, you know what? I know you can't run as fast as me. That's okay. I'm going to slow myself down to be with you. Not out of pride, but out of love. Can we do those things? We're going to have to fly through these, because he has about 11 points in this final few verses.

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, and always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. So what he's really saying, if we just break it into two things, is love your leaders and love each other.

[35 : 36] Can you be a community where, hey, if someone does something wrong to you, who's had something done wrong to them before in their lives? Put your hand up. Someone's wronged you in some way. Three, four people. Great.

Four. There is such a desire to then kind of do wrong back to them. Right? I was at a basketball coaching session watching the session, and kids were being kids, and they were kind of not listening to instructions.

And then the coach said this one line that I've heard before as a kid on a basketball court, which is, you're wasting my time. I'll waste yours. Suicides, which is running the court countless times, and it's not fun at all.

Right? We've heard that. Not if you've heard that before. And I was like, oh, I've heard that before. But then I took a pause and go, that's a really unbiblical statement. Of course, I don't know if the coach is a Christian or not, but I was like, wow, but it's so ingrained in us.

You waste my time, I waste yours. You say this to me, I'm going to say this to you. You're going to do this to me, then I'm going to do that to you. How many of us come from a workplace that has that kind of culture, where you are just kind of fighting?

[36 : 43] It's a dogfight every day. And he's saying, Christians, we do something differently. When someone wastes our time, we don't waste this. When someone says this to us, we don't fight back.

It's the Jesus way. It's Jesus on the cross, getting nailed for the sins of many. And then he says, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

He loves the people that are killing him. It's the Jesus way. And my goodness, is it hard? And what he's saying is, hey, I'm going to be with you guys soon.

But right now, can you love your leaders, because they have a really hard job, and can you love each other? What he's saying here is, this spiritual life that you guys have committed to cannot be done on your own.

Relationships are hard. But you must fight for it. You must make it work. Love one another as Christ has loved you.

[37 : 45] John 13 is essentially, he's saying, stick together. Love that person that is super hard to love. There is no room for private spirituality. It is done together.

And then he comes out with, I think, maybe the part of 1 Thessalonians 5 that is most famous, verse 16. It says this, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances. What really it is, is pray now, give thanks now, and rejoice now. It's saying, choose to do all these things right now.

Do them all the time. Your circumstances aren't good because you've just been mistreated on that business deal. And they've completely just pulled the rug from under you. But rejoice anyway.

Give thanks anyway. What he's not saying is, hey, give thanks for everything. It's not like, God, thank you so much for the cancer that you just gave me. Thank you so much for the firing that you just did for my work.

[38 : 46] It isn't that. It's give thanks despite all these things. It's Romans 8, 28, knowing that, hey, God works for the good of those who love him. God, I don't like what's just happened.

I don't like what is happening right now. But I'm giving thanks to you because I know you'll turn it for good. If I ask all of you, and I know this answer will be for all of you, think of a bad thing that has happened in your life in the past, where you look back on now and go, my goodness, I hated it during that time, but I'm so glad it happened.

We all have it, right? Not if you do. That moment where you look back and go, that was such a crappy thing that happened. But my goodness, I'm so glad it happened. That's the perspective that he wants us to have.

Give thanks in all circumstances. Why? Because God will work for the good of those who love him. And then we go to a slightly, he's literally just dropping bombs, and they're not even massively coherent.

He just keeps going. So we just have to keep following. Verse 19, it says this, do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good. He jumps into another realm, which actually I think is a very important realm, which is the Holy Spirit is here.

[40 : 03] Jesus is working. He's sitting right here or right there. Do we acknowledge that? And I've said this many times over the years. Is our church service more like a memorial service, or is it

actually like that Jesus is actually here?

So often we forget that Jesus is here, and we treat him as some great nice guy that lived 2,000 years ago, and here we're just here to remember him. No. He's right here. And what is he in here in the form of?

This is the Holy Spirit. And what is happening here, maybe it's a little bit similar to 1 Corinthians, when Paul talks about it, to the church in Corinth. This is, hey, the Holy Spirit is here.

It is working. There are some people that may be abusing it. There are some, and we may have been there. Been in churches where people have misused and abused prophecies, and sometimes we get scared.

We've all met that person who says, oh, God told me to tell you this. Right? We've had that person before. And I always wonder, well, if God told you, can he just tell me himself?

[41:04] That would be nice. And we've all been in cases where we've had those misused. And maybe there were people in the church at this moment who were starting to get a little bit scared about those things and were completely blocking them out.

But the truth is, my prayer is, I think there's a radical middle that we should aim for, which is we can be completely open to the Holy Spirit and what he's doing here. But also not chase just the manifestations of the Spirit, but to be grounded.

And he says, test everything. Test everything. What does that mean? When someone speaks to you and feels inspired by the Holy Spirit, receive it, but then test it. Don't just take their word and say, oh, God told me to go and stand at the corner of this road and stand there until something. Test it. Look at the word of God and go, is this in line with what he's saying? Is that person who's sharing this to me displaying the fruit of the Spirit themselves?

That's important. Because when someone's declaring to speak on behalf of God, but they don't show any signs of the fruit of the Spirit, there is no love. There is no peace. There is no joy. There's patience. You're like, hmm. If the Holy Spirit is in you, why can't I see the fruit?

[42:14] That's what Jesus says. When you look at prophets, look at their fruit. See what it is. So test it. But don't despise it. Don't quench the Spirit. Because I think there are some churches in the world that have gone completely to this side where they're like, everything is God told me this and let's do it.

And they've completely discarded this. I'm generalizing here, by the way. I think no church declares, hey, we're going to drop this and we're just going to go this way. And there's other churches like, you know what? You guys have gone cray cray.

So we're going to go over here and not talk about the Holy Spirit at all. And we're just going to focus on this book. And the Holy Trinity is the Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Bible. And that's it. And completely neglects the Holy Spirit.

My prayer is, can we be somewhere where we are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, but also know the word of God enough? Where when someone says something or we hear something, we can look back at this and go, is this actually true?

I'll tell you this, though. There is one fear that I have is that we can do a whole church service without the Holy Spirit at all. Tozer has this quote that I want to read to you. And it says this, if the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we would do would go on exactly as it would be and no one would know the difference.

[43:28] If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop and everyone would know the difference. I'm just going to read that one more time.

Tozer says this, if the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop and everybody would know the difference. Isn't that scary? That we can go about and do a whole church service and completely ignore the Holy Spirit and maybe even not talk about Jesus. And we could almost get by with that and then happily at 1230 go and have lunch.

But if the New Testament church, if the early church didn't have the Holy Spirit, everyone would know something's wrong. How reliant are we on both the Word of God and the Spirit of God?

I would love for it to be both. I would love for us to be a people who understand, who know and who love both. Because there is a self-sufficiency that comes when we don't rely on the Spirit.

[44:35] There is a pride that comes when we don't humble ourselves under the mighty hand and the Word of God. Can we do both? And this is where I will finish. This passage or this whole letter finishes with something that's very interesting and is littered with the Word Jesus.

Jesus. And I'll just show you. Verse 19. It says. Sorry, verse 18. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.

Verse 19 says Jesus is in you. Verse 24 says he who calls you is faithful and he is coming back again. In verse 23. Actually, verse 24 is fascinating. He who calls you is faithful.

He will surely do it. Verse 28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. That's how he finishes a lot of his letters. Front, center, left, right is Jesus.

He is faithful and he will do it. Do we as a people know that? And this is probably my greatest fear and I hope it's the greatest fear of every pastor, which is let us not lead churches that have us at the center and not Jesus.

[45:46] And those of you who are in ministry, maybe you think, oh, this doesn't happen. But my goodness, sometimes there are church gatherings and church meetings that we can sit through. We can participate in that have no mention of Jesus at all.

That scares me. If you come in here and all you got was Florence sang a few nice songs and James shared a few nice funny words and you left and you didn't meet Jesus and you didn't hear from Jesus.

I will be I will be sad. I would have failed you. Jesus is front and center of everything that we do here. It has to be the case. There is no other way.

Paul talks about this. He's the head and we're the body. Can you imagine a creature that doesn't have its head anymore? Can Jesus be the center of everything? Because when he is, then everything will go right.

And when he isn't, everything will go wrong. There is no church that you walk into that will be perfect. Zero. And if there is one, Nikki Gumbel says this, if there is a church that you find that is perfect, it will cease to be perfect the moment you walk into it.

[46:54] You will bring your imperfection into that place. Actually, maybe it's a good time as we continue to learn how to grow, just like this church in Thessalonica.

Can we just acknowledge and just be able to articulate that we are not a perfect church? There are groups here that maybe aren't studying the word as much as we want them to. There are some groups here that aren't socializing as much as we want them to.

There are groups here that aren't discipling. There are leaders. There are people who aren't preaching the best sermons here. But if we could not rely on any of those things and we can look to the source of life, the author and perfecter of our faith, then we would be in a good place.

Let us not even, let us not idolize surfing. Let us not idolize even community. Let us worship only him.

Let us keep our eyes on just him. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this, the person who is in love with their vision of community will destroy community. But the person who loves the people around them will create community everywhere they go.

[48:02] That person who loves people around them is really the person who loves God, who keeps their eyes on Jesus. And everything will work around them. So maybe that's just my final question.

Beyond what you're doing in your life, beyond what you perceive church to be, beyond what you experience church to be, are you in love with Jesus? Is he the center of your whole being?

Is he the center of this church? I encourage you, if you're a part of this church, if you're a part of this family, hold me accountable. Hold your leaders accountable. Let's keep the main thing the main thing, and there's only really one main thing.

You're really cool to hang out with, and it's fun. We should go bowling again. But where's Jesus in this? Can we draw each other to Jesus?

Florence is going to... Actually, no. Oh, no, we've got time. You know what? I just glanced at your watch. This is about knowing your people. Florence has this thing where she's time challenged, punctuality challenged.

[49:07] So she's decided to fast-forward her watch 15 minutes so that she'll scare herself into turning up to events on time, which is hilarious. Anyway, I just looked at her watch, and I thought that we were really late.

But we're not really late. We're okay. Anyway, detract from that completely. Henry and Owen ask this.

Beyond the programs, are you in love with Jesus? Beyond the church services, are you in love with Jesus? As a church, beyond all the fun lights and even the songs, are you becoming more like Jesus, and are you loving him more and more?

Is he the center of everything, your whole being? Let us be that people where he is in the center. Can I lead us in a prayer, and Florence is going to lead us in a final song. Amen. Maybe if I could just buy us one more moment.

If there is anything in your heart, if there is something that you're holding on to, that you're like, that's my idol, that's my Jesus, and it's not really Jesus.

[50 : 30] Let us spend a moment just to repent of that. The beauty of the gospel, of grace itself, is that it's something that we don't deserve, and yet we receive it anyway.

And that verse 24, he is faithful, he will surely do it. So can I invite you, if there is something in your heart that you're like, I must surrender, I must confess. Can I invite you just to open out your hands, just as a sign of surrender.

Lord, we bring the things that we're holding on to, to you.

There are times we have been idle. We have been faint-hearted. We have been weak. We surrender to you.

We surrender our work to you. We surrender our hobbies to you. We surrender our church to you.

[51 : 58] Be the center.