

Right after Highland Village First Baptist hired me to be the pastor, we had this handing off ceremony. What I mean by that is, on a Wednesday night I came up to the old HV campus and the elders from Beltway Park Baptist Church where I had been on staff came in and handed me off through prayer to the deacons and leaders of Highland Village First Baptist Church. That night, I told a story about my hopes for us, how I thought it would play out and what I thought it would look like. So I want to tell that story again because I think it's important for us to get it in our minds and in our hearts what we're up to and what we're after, especially as we land the plane on this series that we started in August.

Right after I began to date Lauren, I had gone to see her at her parents' house. She lived in Longview and I was living in Abilene. If you fold a map of Texas vertically at Dallas, Abilene and Longview touch. So they're east Texas and I'm west Texas. So I went out to spend the weekend at Lauren's parents' house with Lauren. My mother-in-law is a brilliant woman. She is a very gifted woman in regards to being able to see things that no one else can see. She had this project lined up for the weekend.

Their house had this wall that had giant windows in their living area. Beyond the windows there was this small patch of grass followed by a security fence. She thought it would be a phenomenal idea to build a little seating area out there. But my mother-in-law always goes big. It's not just going to be a seating area out there; there was going to be a pond, a fountain and waterfall made out of stones.

So I don't remember being asked to participate, but it was one of those things of, "I dig your daughter. I had probably help." So Linda had picked out what she wanted, and she spray painted on grass the area where the pond was going to go. So my brother-in-law had been racing dirt bikes and thought he broke his arm earlier that day. But the rule was, "If you can ride that motorcycle, you can dig this hole." So my brother-in-law and I get out there and begin to dig just into grass this little bedpan shaped pond thing. We're digging and digging. I don't know if you have spent a lot of time on a shovel, but I'm a reader. I haven't. So we dug that thing out, and by the end of the day, that's what we had done.

So there was this romantic picture of what it was going to be. There was going to be this pond, this fountain, these stones and flowers that would smell so good. We could sit out there and read our Bibles. You had to bring the Bible into it if the preacher was going to go out there and work. So there was this really beautiful picture of what could be.

After the two days that we worked, there was a hole in the ground, and I was all blistered, bloodied and hurt. My hands were doing that thing where, if you opened them too wide, they would bleed. So you just have to keep your hands in fists until they heal. My back and legs were hurting. So I got in the car and went back to Abilene. After all that work, there was just a hole in the ground.

Now I'm in love with this little blonde girl, so I'm coming back. I'm not fully healed, but I'm coming back anyhow. I can open my hands somewhat at this time without bleeding. Now my father-in-law, Johnny, is just a beast and constantly shames me. Sometimes I think he makes up tools and stuff just to taunt me. "Hand me the magneto." I'm like, "Come on, man. That's an X-Man." He's like, "No, literally it's part of the boat." It really is. So when I get there, they had already gone past the brute strength part and now they were on to the skilled work.

Maybe you couldn't guess this, but I'm not really allowed to play in the skill area. If it needs to be destroyed, I get recruited; if it needs to be put together intricately, they let me go do something else. So Johnny had laid down this mesh wire and he's putting mortar down on it. One of the wires had poked him, and he's bleeding all over the place. And then he's laying down stone and finished that by the time I left.

And then I came back another time, and there's the fountain and Johnny's bleeding again. If I told enough of the story, that would be the common theme – my father-in-law bleeding out over this little seating area. And then finally it was done. It really was spectacular. It lived up to the romantic idea that was set before us that first day, but it took a lot longer to get there and it was a lot more painful than it looked when we were just looking at pictures of what it could look like.

The reason I told that story that day and the reason I want to tell it today is because, when you start talking about what the church of Jesus Christ could be, when you start to dream about how spectacular it might work itself out to be, there has to be a pretty consistent awareness that it's going to be blistering and bloody to get there. But it's worth it. Because later on, we'd sit out there on that patio and they'd drink their coffee. You could go out there and read next to the waterfall trickling down water next to some flowers in a pond. It was spectacular, but it hurt a little bit to get there.

Since mid-August, what I've been unpacking for you from the Word of God is really what the church can be, specifically if the gospel is the fuel by which it's functioning. So we talked about our affections being stirred up to worship God so that we would understand that we are fallen and broken, but in that Christ has died for us and paid the bill in full. So we are then free to approach Him, free to enjoy Him and free to walk with Him, and that might lead to worship, that might lead to an outpouring of joy unhindered by the constraints of a fallen world.

And then we talked about what community might look like if the gospel is the central tenet, what it might look like if we had an understanding that I know you're a sinner and you know I'm a sinner, but we're all under grace. So we engage and speak the truth in love when we need to, but we're there for one another and giving each other the benefit of the doubt. We talked about what Christian community looks like when the gospel is at the center of it, how it frees us up to serve one another, how it frees me up to not be just about me, but I get to be about you and serve you.

And then we talked about what happens when you love God so radically and completely that others are drawn to that and it begins to multiply. Then we moved into salvation and talked last week about baptism.

What I want us to do today is show you once again how all of this gets held together, but I think today is when we'll get into a little bit of the blood and blisters. So let's read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Now skip down to verse 14. Just in regards to use of language, this is a spectacular text. "For the body does not consist of one member but of many." Now that's an interesting statement, because He just said that you are unique, and yet that uniqueness plays into something greater than you that is one. So yes you are unique, but you have not been made unique for uniqueness' sake. Rather, in your uniqueness, you contribute to something that is a singular thing.

The illustration He uses is perfect, hence why it's in the Bible. "If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God

arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”

Verse 21, “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”

So let me do just a little bit of work to catch you up here, and then I want to finish out the text. One of the ways I believe Christians get caricatured in our culture is that there is a type of person, a type of background or a type of individual who puts their faith in Jesus Christ. You’ll hear it in arguments with agnostics and atheists that, “If you were born somewhere else, you wouldn’t be a Christian. Rather, you would be something else.” That’s a pretty simple person to play intellectual tennis with. Because if they were born in Jordan or Oman, they wouldn’t be an agnostic or atheist either. So if that’s true for us, it is most certainly true for them, but how about we just celebrate the grace of God that He has put us in a place where they have the freedom to do that and we have the freedom to profess Christ as Lord? But that’s not even this sermon.

In our little church here of the Village Church, we have PhD’s, we have people who don’t have high school diplomas. We have people who are incredibly wealthy, and we have people who are broke. We have representatives from almost every major ethnic group in the United States. We are not as well represented there as I would like, but we have been steadily growing over the years. It will help when the white people have nowhere else to go. We have those who were saved as young children, those who don’t ever remember not loving, trusting and following Jesus Christ.

Now the weird thing for me is that people don’t like that testimony. You should love that testimony. I’m begging God that my kid’s testimony isn’t that he was shooting heroin into his eyeballs and ended up in prison before he got saved. But rather it’s that he has a testimony that says, “I don’t remember a day I didn’t love, trust and follow Him.” So you shouldn’t be ashamed of your testimony. You should love and delight in it if that’s your testimony. But then we have people who got saved in high school. Some came to know and love Jesus in college. We have even baptized and have seen people come to faith who are in their 50’s and 60’s in this place, which are the ones I think are just the most spectacular.

And then we have Republicans here. There even Democrats here. I know some of you are like, “What?!?” Yeah, they’re here, and they love the Lord. I could keep going here, but I think you get my point. I think the idea that there is a certain class of people, that there is a certain kind of people that trust in Christ is just a completely ignorant statement. It’s not true. We have different preferences, different styles, different backgrounds and different upbringings.

In that, this text says God is taking that uniqueness and bringing it together to form a singular body – His bride the church. Which means your uniqueness is spectacular, but it has not been given to you simply so that you might be unique. Rather in that uniqueness, you bring a distinctively you piece to the body. So you are a foot, you are hand, you are an eye or you are a head. And I know some of us want to pick our parts, but the text that you have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed by God for the manifestation of the good among a covenant community.

I think there are some dangers that you can also see in this text. Let me go through just two of those. I think the predominant dangers you see in this text is it seems that, both in Corinth and in today, people don’t always like their gifts. They want other gifts and other abilities. So they will take their ability and say, “If I’m not that, then I’m not part of

the body." The funny thing about God's lists of gifts in the Scriptures is they look a lot like God's lists of what it looks like to be disobedient. They're always just a little weird. He lists witchcraft and disobedience to parents right next to each other. You'll find here in a minute that He'll say things like, "Tongues, prophecy and helps." How do you go from words of knowledge and prophecy to someone who just likes to help a brother out? But that's how He builds out the list. Each one of us has been gifted, but we tend to say, "This is the gift I want." So we begin to sulk and be dissatisfied with how He has wired us, and we begin to be jealous about what other people have been given and what God has asked of them.

So in that moment when jealousy begins to occur and you want a different gifting than the one you've been given, you will do one of two things. You will attack the body or you'll just do what He says in this text and just decide that you have some sort of JV gift that isn't important to the covenant community. Both are wrong. If we stay with Paul's parallel here, both are diseases in the body. If part of your body stops working, that's a problem, correct? If all of a sudden you can't move your right arm, that's a problem. If you all of a sudden lose your left leg, that's an issue. If part of your body just decides it doesn't want to work, that's a serious thing.

And if your body turns on itself and begins to attack itself like lupus or something like that, it's only a matter of time before the body loses its strength and vitality and dies. So when we become either frustrated by our level of gifting and want more than we have or decide that our gifts don't matter in the body, the covenant community itself, the gathering of the saints itself is wounded by that kind of thinking. And as the text says, we become unable to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

He's right on here when he says, "When a part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Is this true? If you break your toe, it's not just your toe that hurts. It's your foot, it's walking, it's sleeping and it's rolling over. If you hurt yourself, your whole body agrees, "I'm hurt!" In the moment of that injury, you don't even know how far the injury went. "Is all of me hurt? Did I just die?" You have to wait a second for it to settle. So this text is saying that we should walk with one another in an understanding that you're gifted, I'm gifted and we both have been gifted, according to the grace of God, in how God wanted to use us in this covenant community of faith for the glory of God.

If the glory of God is made most manifest in His covenant community, how serious is this? If God's not going to display His infinite perfections primarily in the church, then this isn't that big of a deal. But if God's plan is to create and form a people who shine His glory most brightly, then this is of infinite importance, which is why I'll press on you here. That's why I have said on more than one occasion that if you want to plug in here and walk with us, let's do work. But if all you want to do is sit there, then my hope would be that you would not come back here but rather find a church where you could plug in and serve. The reason I have historically, more than annually, invited some of you not to come back is not because I'm a jerk although I think I can be. It's not because I'm trying to flex some sort of pulpit muscle, although it's my right to. But rather it's because this has implications for both you and for us.

To not get and understand that you have been uniquely gifted and wired by God and placed in a covenant community to make much of Christ with your gifts, regardless of how small or how large, for the glory of His name and for your great joy robs you and stifles the church, stifles what the church could be, stifles what the Village could be. So that's why I can, with a great deal of contentment, say, "Man, if you don't want to plug in and be used and pour yourself out, then just go do that somewhere, for your sake, for the kingdom of God's sake and even for the Village's sake." Because if you're here and God has sent you here with a certain unique gift set but you're not using that to build up the body, then you're robbing yourself of being sanctified and you're robbing us of what's unique that God has brought us in you.

And we have a tendency to forget a couple of things in all of this, "I don't like my gifts. I like other people's gifts. I think my gifts are too junior varsity" that we read about in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same

Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." So again, God has gifted you, wired you, loves you, has decided who you would be, how you would be and how He wanted to use you in the lives of the saints, and then He placed you in a particular place in a particular time for the glory of His name and for the building up of His body.

We have a tendency to forget that gifts aren't always about what we want but rather what we've been given. So I've met people before who have told me that their gift is teaching and they're not teachers. And that's not because they don't work hard. They work their tails off, and it's just bad. I'm not talking about delivery. I'm talking about content. Some people have the gift of teaching; some people don't have that gift. It's not always a switch that can be flipped on through hard work and determination. Sometimes God just gives the gift.

Let me use an illustration that you'll be able to resonate with. Who here watches the first few episodes of American Idol? How painful is that. Don't you always feel like people have been deceived and no one loves them? Do you see someone screeching out a song and go, "His momma doesn't love him." Because if momma loved him, she would have been like, "Nuh uh, baby. You're going to be on those first couple of shows. You're not going to Hollywood. Don't do it. For our sake, for the family's name, please don't go." Have you seen this? This is someone who goes, "This is my gift. This is my dream." Yeah, but you don't have any vocal folds. You can't find pitch. "I can do it!" No, you can't. "I can work really hard. I have a karaoke machine." You can sing Shania till the cows come home, but it's not happening. It's over. Go to law school. Make that your dream.

So ultimately you're being gifted by God. Now let me be real clear. I'm not saying you don't grow in your gifts. I'm not saying that you don't work on your gifts. But I am saying that God has gifted you, and there are times to sit in that, rest in that, figure out what you are gifted and then allow yourself to grow in those gifts. Very few of us are going to excel at everything. In fact, I don't know that I've met anyone who excels at everything. No matter how talented the man or woman, everybody has an area where they are well below average. We might have some unbelievable strengths, but all of us have unbelievable weaknesses also. Just get you in the right domain and you'll look silly as could be.

Now, let me read this because he's going to say some other things about the gifts that I need you to see. What I want you to see in this next part of the text is that, when God gives gifts and when those gifts work themselves out, it's not always in a way that we understand or that we can ultimately control. So I'm just going to read the Bible to you. Some of you are going to like some of this and not going to like other parts of it. I'll just let the Spirit be the Spirit here. Verse 27, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts." Let me answer his rhetorical question. No. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. Are all apostles? No. Do all speak in tongues? No. Do all get words of knowledge? No. The answer is no for every one. No one gets all the gifts.

Now here's the second thing I want to talk about, because this is an interesting gift mix here. One of my goals tonight with you is to flatten out your understanding of the gifts. Because when people start talking about the gifts of the Spirit, they tend to mention only four of the sign gifts. And that's great, but it's not biblical. So let me say a couple of things. First, I believe in all the sign gifts. I believe in the gift of tongues, I believe in the gift of prophecy and I believe that all of those things still happen.

For some of you, that terrifies you. Your Trinity is Father, Son and Holy Bible. Here's the problem with that. You can't say you love the Bible and then rebel against what the Bible teaches. You can't say, "I love my Bible, and I don't need any of that stuff" when your Bible says, "You need some of this stuff." And what I have found is a lot of people go, "That stuff is too weird for me, man. It's a little bit crazy." Everybody knows that following Jesus is weird, except Westerners. If God is Spirit, knows all things and is in all places at once, things should get a little odd at times, huh? It's not math. Now we also know He's a God of order, but some of you are so petrified of things, so you use the Bible to get behind those things and say, "You don't have to worry about them. They don't exist or they're not what's primary." But the Bible still says they're there. I just read it to you. I don't know that I always understand it, I don't always know that I excel at it but I know my Bible well enough to say they're there. So for those of you who land over here and those kind of charismatic things wig you out, I just want to press you into your Bible to hear what it says.

But now let's go over here, because there are some of you who don't have a problem with that at all. In fact, your whole agenda is the sign gifts. You will judge the maturity of a place or how well a place hears God by what kind of words they get and what kind of signs are seen. You are just as much of a fool as the guy who just reads his Bible and doesn't do what it says. Have you ever wondered why Jesus comes into town on a donkey, everybody says, "Hosanna, You're the King" and they lay down palm branches for Him, only to have them a few days later cry out, "Crucify Him"? Go read the text. They were praising Him for the miracles He had done, not for who He was. They didn't want Jesus; they wanted what Jesus could do. My problem nine times out of ten with a lot of the Charismatic movement is there is hardly any room for Jesus. It's all about the next revelation or the next sign.

Both of these polar sides lead to ridiculous amounts of pride. I have known guys who know a ton of Bible who are immature and arrogant, and I have known a ton of people who excel at hearing from the Lord and seeing it confirmed in Scripture who become insufferably arrogant. A posture of humility is required for both.

So if somebody comes to me and says to me, "God told me to tell you. . ." I almost immediately shut off. I have to tell myself not to shut off. But if someone comes to me and says, "I just really feel like the Lord has put something on my heart and I want to share that with you. Will you pray about it and see whether it's true or not?," that's a whole different ballgame right there. One says, "If you don't listen to this, you're not listening to God." And one is a posture of humility that says, "I think the Lord wants to say something to you with something He has given to me."

Here's what I know about the sign gifts. The sign gifts are in glad submission to the Word of God, which means they will never run contrary to the Scriptures. So if you come tell me that God told you something that the Bible says differently, then you're the liar. The sign gifts are in glad submission to the Word of God. They never run contrary to what the Bible teaches.

So how it works here at the Village is this. On multiple occasions, people have approached us and said, "I really feel like the Lord has given me a word for either Matt or the church in general." So we've had them write that out in detail, give that to us and the elders will look at it, pray over it, consider it, weigh it next to the Scriptures and then more often than not, we will dispatch a group of elders to follow up on that word. So a group of our elders will sit down with the person who feels like they have heard from the Lord for us, and we'll just say, "Hey, we believe this is legitimate, and here's what we're going to do with that" or "We don't think this is legitimate and here's why." So ultimately, the elders become the authority on what is spoken in regards to a word and what is not, because that's how the Bible says the church should be protected.

So I don't want to use my time here today to defend gifts or to build out arguments. I know there are a lot of people who would say that the gifts ceased with the canonization of the Scriptures. Again, I want to press you. That's great if

it weren't for what the Scriptures actually teach. Because the very next chapter will say, "Where there are tongues and words of knowledge, they will cease." When will they cease? "When the perfect comes." So people have taken that and said, "Well the perfect is the canonization of the Scriptures." The problem with that is the next verse that says, when the Perfect comes, we will be fully known as we fully know. Now I have a Bible, actually several, but I do not fully know as I'm fully known by God. I still see dimly. Would any of you confess that you don't see dimly right now? Would anyone dare say, "I don't see dimly. I know exactly"? No, you don't. You're at a level of faith and trust.

There will be a day where you don't need prophecy anymore, there will be a day we don't need words of knowledge anymore, there will be a day when we don't need tongues anymore and there will be a day when we don't need dreams anymore. And that day is at the return of Christ. When the Perfect One comes, that's when we'll no longer need those things. Until that time, they're alive and well.

But I want to flatten out the gifts, and let me tell you what I mean by that. I mean the gifts are a lot more than just those four signs. No one has ever complained that I don't talk about the gift of giving. "When are you going to preach on the gift of giving?" No one, never. I'm almost at 20 years of teaching, and no one has ever said, "You have to preach more about the gift of giving, because according to the Bible, some of us have the gift of giving." Some of us have the gift of giving. You just excel at giving away what God has given to you. It's a gift. But no one has ever complained that I don't do that. No one has ever complained about how I don't talk about hospitality.

No one judges the maturity of the church by how well we serve, what we do over her or how we evangelize, but there will be people who judge the health of the church based on what we've seen or heard in regards to how emotional worship gets, whether or not some prophetic word was spoken and brought into fruition. Do you see how very quickly you can leave what's beautiful and biblical and go off on a crazy train? It happens all the time. And it's a shame, because the miraculous gifts and the sign gifts end up getting categorized out there with crazy people, and it's not true. There are plenty of crazy people who use just their Bible to be crazy. Look at the motivation of our heart in the pursuit of all gifts.

Look at verse 31. "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." Continuing on to 1 Corinthians 13:1, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." So the pursuit of our gifts and the pursuit of our maturity in our gifts doesn't have anything to do with us but has everything to do with both a love for Jesus and a love for the body that works itself out in an outpouring of the gifts that Christ has poured into us for the building up of the body in love.

Now let me show you love and this colliding in this really spectacular way. Flip over to Ephesians 4, starting in verse 15. He's got a little piece here about immaturity and what it looks like not to be doctrinally sound and get tossed about. He's saying, "Instead of doing that, we should do something else." Here's what he's going to say. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." So when you are operating in your gifts and you are maturing in your gifts, the Bible says that the congregation, the fellowship, the covenant community in a local area begins to be built up into maturity. Why? Because you've got your administrators, your helpers, your prophets, your teachers and your healers who begin to work together.

Now some of you might say, "Man, I don't know what my gifts are, Matt. I have no idea where I'm gifted. I think I might have this or that. I think I might be the American Idol kid. Help me." Here's how you figure out your gifts. Figuring out your gifts is a community project. We find out our gifts by doing life together. Because when we're doing life together, we

can spot and say, "Hey, do you realize you're really good at this?" As you interact with people, you'll find yourself going, "Oh yeah, well the Bible says this about that," and you begin to see that you might be a teacher. You may go, "Hey man, I'm getting this strong impression that the Lord is wanting me to pray for you this way." And then all of a sudden you see something go that way and you're going, "Maybe the Lord is building in me a little bit of the gift of prophecy." You pray and somebody gets well. "Maybe I have the gifts of healing."

We don't have a ton of time, but having the gifts of healing doesn't mean that you could empty out a hospital. Because that's one of those silly arguments from cessationists. They go, "Well, if there are gifts of healing, why don't you just go and clean out the hospital?" Well, it's because that's not what the text says. It says gifts of healing, plural.

So maybe you begin to see God work in other ways. Maybe somebody say, "Hey man, you're a great worship leader. You ought to grow in that. . . Hey, you're really gifted in this area." But to not be known is to proclaim your gifts based on nothing but your own intuition. And there's a way that seems right to man that in the end ends him up on the first night of American Idol. But in doing life together and walking with one another, we can encourage one another and figure out our gifts more readily. So the more isolated you are and the more you simply attend but don't belong, the more difficult if not impossible it is for you to see where you're gifted and begin to pour that gifting out on the body of Christ.

And I want to say this for those of you who aren't believers in Christ. Outside of Jesus Christ, the fullness of your gifting will never be realized. Let me draw it up like this for you. Let's say you're an administrator in a company and you pour into that company 30-40 years. You help build this company up until it's time for you to retire. They'll have a party and probably buy you a cheap cake from the local supermarket. Maybe they give you a watch or a card, and then you're gone. You're replaced within a matter of time. You might have even trained your own replacement. And within three months, nobody either knows or cares about who you are. Selah. You think they're naming the building after you? They're not even naming your cubicle after you. This is the plight of almost every man or woman on earth. You'll work and pour your guts out into something, and then you'll leave. And then it's plug and play. They'll just put the next cat in there.

But if the gifts and abilities given to us by God are sewn into the kingdom, then that's eternal. I'm not saying to quit your job. Because I think you can sew into the kingdom at your job. But I also think you're called to the church in greater ways than simple attendance, but rather service to the church. There is a thing called the priesthood of believers, which means the expectation on you is the expectation on me – to faithfully build up the bride of Christ for the glory of God with the days, talents, resources and energies God has given us. So my question for you is this. Are you doing that? My encouragement to you is, if you're not doing it here and don't desire to do it here, that you find somewhere where you can do it. Because you simply rob you and the bride of what is good and right in God by doing that.

Let's pray. "Father thank You for our time together. I pray that where we need to repent of being slothful about your bride, we would. Where maybe we have erred on the side of being all Bible and no application of the Word or maybe where we're on the other side and are biblically ignorant and just trust that still small voice to be the ultimate authority, I pray that You would bring about a great deal of humility in all. I pray that You would help us identify where we are gifted and where we might encourage and strengthen the church with those gifts that You put in us for Your glory. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."