Just to give you a little glimpse into my heart and my mind of what I really hope God accomplishes among us today as we meet, I'd like to read to you a part of a prayer that I wrote in my journal as I prepared for today. This was dated August 19, so obviously I've been thinking about this for a while. Here's what I wrote to God that I wanted to share with you. I wrote, “As I attempt to study and pray today, Father, I ask for Your wisdom and for Your help. My desire is that our church family would walk in a deep, sacrificial love for one another, so deep in fact that we willing and joyfully serve one another in whatever ways are needed.” That’s kind of a little insight into my hope and my prayer.

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4 and encouraging couple of sentences. He starts in verse 9, “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.” I feel that way about you so often as I pray for us, as I think about you, that you’re so good at loving one another and that God has taught us to do this. He continues, “But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.” And so that’s my hope this morning, to urge us as a family to do the same.

So will you pray with me before we dive in? “Father, my hope and my desire have not changed for what I would like to see You do among us. And I know You’re God, and so I’m not telling You, but I’m asking You to continue to make us a group of people who love one another willingly, joyfully and sacrificially. I know that’s a work of Your Spirit and that’s not in our flesh to do. Without having our hearts regenerated, we by nature are selfish, self-seeking and we just don’t even think about other people very often without your help. So I know I’m asking a lot here, but I pray that You would use this time we have in Your Scriptures this morning to that end, to make us a people who love each other more than we currently do. I bless You. Thank You. It’s in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Since the inception of the church of Jesus Christ, one of the litmus tests for genuine faith has been that a community of believers love one another. In other words, one of the ways in which you can tangibly see whether or not a community of people are Christians has been that Christians love one another. Now to be fair, there are other tests for whether or not faith is genuine. What you believe about Jesus Christ, your orthodoxy will prove that. Also your obedience to the Scriptures, the commands of God, has also been a test. But one of the primary tests since the inception of the church whether or not a group of people or individuals are Christians has been that they love one another. And this of course is rooted in a statement that Jesus Christ made to His disciples on the night that He was betrayed, which I where we’ll look in John 13. I’d love to have the opportunity to set up the whole story, but I don’t feel like I have the time. He washes His disciples feet, and then He tells them a number of things. But then, right before He is about to be betrayed, He says something to them that’s astounding. For those of you who may have heard this before, I’m just praying that we’d be able to hear with new ears and see with new eyes, because it’s astounding what Jesus says and the weight that He puts behind us caring for one another and loving one another. He says to His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” It’s an astounding statement. Jesus Christ is creating this new humanity, this new community of people who are to be an alternate community from the world around them. So He’s developing, He’s creating, He’s gathering this new community of people that He’s going to call the church. And He says, “You’re going to be a city on a hill by being this community of people that everyone sees, and they’re going to see you good works and glorify your Father in heaven. One of the primary ways you’re going to shine brightly in this world, you’re
going to be this alternate society that shows people the way things are going to be when I return is the way that you love one another.” That’s amazing.

Now as Christians, we’re always looking for something to mark us, something to show the world and to show ourselves that we are Christians, something identifiable. And I was trying to think through the last ten years since I’ve been transformed and walking with God by His grace, we’ve seen all sorts of things. We’ve seen WWJD bracelets. People will look at that and go, “Oh, that person must be a believer. He has a WWJD bracelet.” Or there are FROG bracelets, which stands for, “Fully Rely On God.” We have these bracelets that mark us. We have jewelry that marks us. We wear the crucifix, which is a strange deal. We have rings that mark us. We have things on our car that mark us. Just as people put decals on their car to mark what school they went to, we have things as Christians that we put on the back of our car. I’m not dogging this either. In fact, just a confession, when I first became a believer, I had a Calvin and Hobbes little sticker that I put on my car where Calvin was kneeling before a cross. I just wanted people to know that I was a believer in Jesus Christ. So with all these things, we’re always looking for things to mark us. And here you have Jesus Christ looking at His disciples and saying, “What’s going to mark you is the way that you love one another, namely that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you.” That’s astounding to me.

Francis Schaeffer, a popular author and speaker, picked up on this. He wrote a large article about these verses of Scripture, and he picked up on the profundity of what Jesus was saying. He says that love is “the mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian not just in one era or in one locality but at all times and all places until Jesus returns.” This is one of the marks. This is what He gives us. Schaeffer continues and says it is as if “Jesus turns to the world and says, ‘I’ve something to say to you. On the basis of My authority, I give you a right: you may judge whether or not an individual is a Christian on the basis of love he shows to all Christians.” That’s amazing that Jesus Christ would do this. It’s amazing that He would turn to the world and say, “Hey listen, I’m giving you the right, I’m giving you the authority to judge whether or not somebody is really a Christian by the way they love one another.” That’s remarkable.

And the early church understood this. The early church believed this, they believed what Jesus said, which is why over and over again you hear the apostles in the New Testament writing to the people, preaching to the people, reminding the people how crucial and central their love for one another is. Let me just read you a few of them from four different people. We’ll start in Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome. Romans 12 is really the transition chapter in Romans where Paul spends chapters 1-11 talking about the gospel. And then in chapter 12, he begins to write about its implications for the community. Early on in Romans 12, he says, “Love one another with brotherly affection.” In 2 John, the apostle John says, “And now I ask you. . . not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning— that we love one another.” The pastor who wrote the letter of Hebrews says this to the people who are suffering and being persecuted. In the face of persecution, here’s what he tells them to do in Hebrews 13, “Let brotherly love continue.” And then Peter of course would say this in 1 Peter 4:8, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly.” So over and over again, you have these men in the Scriptures echoing this statement that Jesus Christ made. It’s all over the place. The Scriptures are saturated with this idea, this commandment of, “Love one another. The way that you’re going to mark yourself out is the way that you love one another. So don’t quit doing that. Continue to grow in love for one another. Love each other the way that Jesus Christ has loved us.”

In fact, the writers even go so far to say in the Scriptures where this is absent in the community or an individual’s life. These communities and individuals are actually proving that they’re not Christians or at least they’re not acting like Christians. So you don’t just have the commandment to love one another; you actually have the apostles and the pastors saying, “If you don’t do that, here’s what that means.” One example of this is in 1 Corinthians 13. I know that we read 1 Corinthians 13 a lot at weddings. I don’t think we’re mistaken to do that. I think that’s a great passage of Scripture
to read at weddings, but I think sometimes we've heard it so often at weddings that we forget the real context of what Paul is writing. He's writing to this church in Corinth that is divided. They're divided because the manifestations of the Spirit are becoming something that they're looking to in order to define them. So this church is divided, and there is not unity. So this chapter on love comes in the middle of this discussion Paul is having with these men and women to serve one another, to be unified. Right in the middle, he talks about how it doesn't matter what gifts you're operating in, it doesn't matter what the corporate gathering looks like and how many people are prophesying and how many people are speaking in tongues, none of that matters if you're not loving one another. And if you're not loving one another, not only is that a bad thing, but it does something to you. It transforms you from being someone who is able to edify the church into someone who is really valueless. That's what Paul says. It's unbelievable. He says in 1 Corinthians 13, "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." He says, "I am nothing." He's not saying, "It's just a bad thing." He's saying, "It does something to me. It transforms me into nothing if I'm not loving people." That's crazy that he says that. It changes your whole identity and who you are. "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." And then he goes into the description of love that we've all heard at weddings. He's saying, "If you do not love, you're nothing. It's that crucial and central to the community that you love one another, that you be loving, especially in terms of the way that you operate in your spiritual gifts.

In 1 John 4, John would say something similar, perhaps a little bit more harsh. He says this, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." And then he gives this explanation of what love is. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." And so, it's very clear in the Scriptures that loving one another is unmistakably central to the character of a church. It's really for this reason that it's a prayer of mine. That's why my heart is burdened for us that we would be a people who love one another genuinely, who care for one another to such a degree that it expresses itself like it did in the Lord Jesus Christ's life in sacrifice and in joyful obedience to laying down our lives for the good of those around us.

So you could ask the question, "That's great, but it's kind of this ambiguous idea. What does that really mean, that we're supposed to love one another, we're supposed to be brotherly in our affection for one another? How do you do that?" I think that's a great question, and frankly that's a whole series of sermons about what that looks like to love one another. But you get hints in the Scriptures. There are all these different expressions of love. Genuine love, the love that Jesus was talking about, the love that the apostles and the pastors were exhorting the people toward, that love expresses itself in a lot of different ways that we can see in the Scriptures. One of the primary ways that genuine love expresses itself, one of the primary ways that we can love one another and be obedient to these Scriptures is by serving each other. Again, this is all over the Bible. Paul and Peter really connect these two really beautifully in a couple of different Scriptures. In 1 Peter 4:7, he says, "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be selfcontrolled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." And then he begins to unpack some of the expression of what this love would look like. "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." I was so grateful for the way that you showed hospitality this past week and even this morning, that you were willing to change service times, that you were willing to take your family and move it out of a service that may have fit your schedule a little bit better, fit your comfort a little bit better. You were willing to do that for the good of the new comer among us, so that we could welcome friends into our midst. I was so encouraged by that because it's and expression of genuine love that you would do that. And we're exhorted and commanded to do that over and over. He continues, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,
as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” So he’s given us this hint that one of the expressions of love is serving.

In Galatians 5, Paul is writing to this church that is really struggling with what it means to be true Christians and whether or not they had to become Jews to that. And so he’s writing to them and telling them that they have freedom in Christ, that they’re free in Christ just to be found in Him and they don’t have to become Jews or follow the Law perfectly, which is something a whole different group of people were teaching. So he says this, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” So we see one of the primary expressions of genuine love is serving. In other words, if we love one another, if we’re loving one another in the way that the Scriptures teach us because of what Christ has done for us, if we’re loving one another, we will serve one another.

And let me just give you a definition of service. We deliberately look for needs around our church family of all sorts and find ways to meet them through loving deeds, seeking as little recognition as possible. We’re serving one another. In fact, we’ve said from day one here that we want serving, love expressing itself through us serving one another to be something that marks us in such a way that it would become a Core Value of ours. We have five banners hanging on the wall with our family traits on them. Do you see the one with that says, “Foot Washing”? It’s up there because we want to be a group of men of women, a community of faith who shines bright the glory of God and who makes ourselves distinct from the city and the world around us because of the way we sacrificially, willingly and joyfully serve one another.

And so I want to show you a quick video that explains our hope to be that kind of a people, a kind of people that washes each other’s feet.

[Video audio]

Matt Chandler: I think one of the funniest little wordings we’ve done on our Core Values is this idea of Foot Washing, especially because there are so many people who come to the church who don’t necessarily know the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. So I’ve had several people tell me that when they first came in, the first thing they noticed was a circle with a bowl and somebody’s foot going into it with the label ‘Foot Washing.’ In fact, one guy told me that if we tried to wash his feet, he was going to bail out of there. He couldn’t even concentrate on the sermon because he was waiting for us to ask him to take his shoes off. But I think this story in the Scriptures is by far one of the most profound stories where God in the flesh, Jesus the Christ takes off His outer garment and He takes a bowl and washes the feet of the disciples, which was really a role reserved for the lowliest of servants in the 1st century. And He washed their feet. There are two that really stick out for me. The first one is that He washed Peter’s feet, who was going to be really key to what the church was going to become, what was going to happen to the church and how it was going to be established. He was this high end leader who was going to do great things. And then He went around the room and also washed Judas’ feet. He washed the feet of this guy who was problematic, who was a pin and who was going to betray Him in just a few hours. Jesus washes his feet knowing he was going to betray Him. So this idea of foot washing for us is this idea of serving one another, of not seeing ourselves as better than anyone else. So here at the Village, foot washing works itself out in a myriad of ways, from leading a home group to being part of the parking team to working guest central or in the connections ministry to leading a table at membership class to being a part of the tech team that does sound to being a greeter. On and on I could go. These are just ways that we serve the body at large. We wash the feet of, we consider ourselves lower than, we don’t think we’re there to be served by everybody else, but we come in and say, “I’m going to serve this place. I’m going to serve people. I’m going to help them get connected. I’m going to help them feel welcome.” And this is that idea of foot washing, that we would lower ourselves and not consider ourselves better
than others. And from pastors whom we ask to park the farthest from the building to the guy who has been a member for a couple of days, we want to give back to, serve and consider ourselves not more highly than we ought to, the Scriptures say.

So that’s a little insight into who we want to become as a family. This is just a reminder of who we’ve said and covenanted together that we wanted to be. So let me just ask you if this is true. I think it is. I mean, we love one another and it expresses itself through serving. Are you following the way of Jesus Christ, the way that He marked out for us? Are you becoming more like Him by loving and serving the church? Please get out of your mind a building when I say “church.” The church is a people; it’s not a place. Are you becoming more like Jesus Christ by loving and serving the church, by deliberately looking for needs around our family and seeking to meet those needs in joy, with as little recognition as possible? Is your love for the church expressing itself in service? Are you serving our church or are you just letting the church serve you?

There are two groups in particular that I really want to this morning. Covenant members, I want to just remind you that we have covenanted together. And when I signed that covenant as a member and as an elder, it meant something to me. I want to be faithful to what I’ve signed. I’ll just read the language that’s in the covenant. You have agreed to “regularly participate in the life of the Village Church by serving those within and outside of this church.” Are you serving? Are you living faithfully to that covenant? And I know that there are a variety of reasons why you may not be. It may be because of circumstances in your life, maybe you just haven’t been able to find a place to serve or maybe you don’t know the needs here (which I’m going to clear up in a minute). I know that there are a number of reasons why you may not be, but I want to lovingly invite those of you who have signed this covenant back into faithfulness in becoming like Jesus, growing and being formed by His image by serving. Because if every one of the covenant members was actually serving and doing what we have said together we would do, there would be no needs around here. There are 605 covenant members at this campus, and so many of you are serving in such tangible, beautiful, God-glorifying, Christ-motivated ways. But for those of you who aren’t, I don’t want to beat you over the head. Instead, I want to invite you into joining us and doing what we have covenanted to do. That is the first group I wanted to talk to today, the covenant members.

The second group is those of you who are college students. I’m so glad that you’re here. We love having you here. I mean it. I get giddy when I see you coming back into town. I get giddy when I see you walking down the street. I get excited when you’re back. It is weird to me that our population increases by 35% in one day. It’s like, “This day we have this many people, and the next day we have 50,000 more people.” That’s weird to me. And we’re glad that you’re here. And listen, we don’t believe it’s any accident that God has led you to be a part of your family. We don’t believe that. Some of you are new here, you’re new in town, and so this might be an encouragement or something to think about as you transition in. I would exhort you and lovingly encourage you to not spend your time here in Denton, however long God has you here, just using our city and the church. So many college students do that. So many college students just blow into town and they’re thinking, “What is this town going to do for me? I’m going to get a degree, and then I can get out of here here and go do this.” The mindset is, “What can this city and church do for me? I’m going to go over to this service, I’m going to go to this church and I’m going to go to this college ministry.” It’s just this general mindset of using the city, using the church. So I want to encourage you to, while you’re here, do the opposite. Use your life to bless the city while you’re here, for however long He has you here. Use your life and the time God has given you here to bless this city and to bless His church. And I’m not necessarily talking about the Village Church. I’m talking about any of the churches here that preach the gospel.

I read a New York Times article this week about twenty-somethings, about this new stage of life that they’re calling “emerging adulthood.” Last year, our staff read a book about this stage of life and what their spiritual lives look like. Here was one of the quotes about people in this stage of life in general. “Working, studying for classes, chatting and texting with friends, keeping up with social networking sites, hanging out at parties and shows keep emerging adults too busy
to worry about public life and the common good.” That was just one of the summaries of life during these years. So my plea with you, my encouragement to you is to set down roots. Don't be blown to and fro by the winds of cultural savviness and hipness. Don't just drift from church body to church body, from this to that. Set down roots. And one of the ways that you can set down roots is by just making a choice in these first few weeks that you're here of which church family you're going to be a part of. It's not that hard; just choose. And then you express your love for the church by serving. That's one of the best ways I know to set your roots down deep so you don't just end up being a drifter these 2-6 years that you're here. So I just wanted to encourage those two groups of covenant members and college students.

There are some big needs here that I know are sometimes hard to see. So I wanted to make us aware of some of them. Just to function as a church family in the way that we feel like God has called us to function, we need help. One of my fears is that you are going to see this sermon as a desperate plea for volunteers. It's not that. I really believe God will take care of us because He is faithful. But I want you to see this more as an invitation to be a part of what God is doing here in our church family. These are some ways that you can do this. So if you're thinking, “Okay, I want to be obedient to those Scriptures that talk about loving and serving the church. How do I do that?”, we wanted to make it as easy as possible for you to be obedient even this morning. There are three areas that we have identified where we need help.

The first of which is home groups. Home groups are the primary avenue for community, for care, for connection here within our church. We really do believe that home groups are the best context for ministry to take place. So we have around fifty home groups that meet at various days throughout the week and at various times, but we need more. We have fifty home groups, but we will have around 1,400 people that will be here. We don't have enough homes that are being opened and men and women who are being encouraged and led by the Spirit to lead those groups. We need more home groups, we need more host homes and we need more home group leaders. So if that at all piques your interest, if you're a mature believer and you're looking for an area to serve the church, to get involved here, this may be one for you.

Another area in which we have glaring needs is our preschool ministry that we call Little Village. This is infants through Kindergarten. Courtney, our preschool ministry leader, told me that we need twenty-five people to help with Little Village. During this service last week, we didn't have enough volunteers and we had to call people who normally serve during the 11:00 service to come to this service to help out because we don't have enough preschool volunteers. So out of 1,400 people, we're looking for twenty-five people who would be willing to help serve the youngest generation here, to teach them the foundational truths about God, who He is and what He has done. And let me ask you not to sign up for these ministries if you're not really interested but you're just feeling guilty. We have people do this all the time. They'll sign up and then Courtney will send them an e-mail, and then she wastes a lot of her time tracking down people who signed up just to alleviate feelings of guilt but had no real desire to serve in the first place. So if that's the case, just don't sign up. But I'm just praying that the Holy Spirit would lead some of you to serve this young generation. We had over a 170 preschoolers here last weekend. It's an unbelievably weighty, beautiful responsibility that we have to help parents train their children. So if you would be willing to think about doing that, it's a weekly commitment that is one of the most fruitful, beautiful ministries for those who serve. The kids are obviously blessed, but people I talk to who serve in that ministry, they walk away so encouraged and so built up. That's a beautiful way you can encourage and serve our body.

Another way is by serving in our connections team. Our connection team really does lead the way in showing hospitality to the newcomer among us, which again is a Biblical command. The Bible commands us as a community to welcome the stranger, to invite them in, to lead them towards getting them involved and belonging to our church family. We need forty people to help with greeting and ushering. We need about fifteen people to help park cars. I'm glad that there is a women's home group that helps out there, but men, it would be great if you could go out there and let them show you how to do it. So our connection ministry is crucial. You know how we have the cards in the chair back for guests to fill out? When we send them e-mails and ask them what they thought about us, do you know what they say almost
every week? “I was greeted at the door by this person who said this, and it really encouraged me. . .As I was sitting in the pew by myself, one of the ushers came by and introduced himself to me and talked to me.” It goes so far in welcoming people into our gatherings. So that’s a way that you can serve.

So these are three areas of need, and my hope is that you wouldn’t have to pray about it for too hard or too long. Because I’m here as a pastor saying these are the needs of our body, and because we’re a people marked by loving one another in a love that expresses itself through service, we deliberately look for needs. We’ve taken away the hard work of you having to deliberately look for the needs. We’re just telling you the needs, and we’re asking you to join us in helping our church be who God has called us to be. The motivation to do this has to be the gospel. It can’t be guilt. It can be guilt, but it doesn’t work that well. Even worse yet, sometimes it works really well and you end up serving while never realizing you’re doing something not out of a heart that has been changed by the gospel but out of a heart that wants to appease and look well in front of people. So if you’re feeling guilt right now, that’s not God and that’s not what I’m trying to communicate to you. That is not the Holy Spirit. That’s guilt. That’s the flesh. The motivation has to be the gospel.

I think you see this so clearly if you read the Bible. Paul does this all the time. In fact, the prime example of it is in Philippians 2 where Paul is writing to this church in Philippi, a church where there is some disunity among them. So the way that he tries to encourage them through that is not by simply writing them and telling them, “Hey, quit being selfish. Quit being disunited. Be better.” That’s not how he does it. Let’s look at how he does it. In Philippians, Paul says, “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” So Paul says, “Do this. And the fuel to do this is going to be found in the eyes of your heart seeing Jesus Christ do it for you. Until we really see Jesus Christ loving the church and serving the church the way that He has, we’re never going to want to love and serve the church. But when we see with the eyes of our heart, when we believe it, when it registers in the deepest places of who we, when we realize, “Jesus has done this for me.” He descended from glory to the cross for us. He served us and loved us in this way. As the apostle John said, “Brothers and sisters, we can’t help but do it for one another.” And when that happens and the eyes of our heart grasp that and believe it to such a degree that it begins to express itself like it did in Jesus’ life, it’s beautiful.

My wife and I have a sister that lives in South Korea, who is from Thailand. She’s obviously a biological sister, but she came and lived with my wife’s family during high school. Her name is Kate. Kate and her family were Buddhist, and she came and lived with Kimberly’s family. And of course the whole year, Kimberly is explaining to her American culture and helping her learn English, but she was also teaching her about the Christian life. But what really pierced Kate in that year that she was here was that there was a suicide at Kimberly’s church. One of the young men in the youth group committed suicide. And Kate, this sweet little Buddhist girl from Thailand, was so moved by the way that she saw this little church in Lubbock, Texas rally around the family, serve the family, grieve with the family and walk with the family. She was so moved by that that it led her to the Christian faith. She had never seen anything like it in her life. And so Kimberly says that she remembers walking into her room, opening the closet and Kate was on her knees praying. Kimberly said, “What are you doing, Kate?” And she said, “I want to be a part of this community, and I’m helping in the only way that I know how, by giving my life to God and praying for this family.” The way that the church loved the members was so moving to her that she said, “Man, these people are disciples of Jesus, and I want to be a part of a community like this.” So that’s my prayer for us.
Let’s pray. “Father, You know that it’s been my prayer that You would start with me in these things. I want to confess to You and before my brothers and sisters here that I’m so selfish. And I realize You have so graciously gifted me and positioned me in a way that I could serve the church, and yet so often I just serve myself. And so I’m sorry. I just confess that I want to see people as people. I want to see this church as family, for whom I would gladly lay my life down. So Father, I pray that You would work in such a deep way in our hearts that we would be a community marked out and known by the way that our love for one another expresses itself in service. So in this moment, I pray against guilt, I pray against any of that that is not You motivating us and changing us by who Jesus is and what He has done. And at the same time, I do pray that You would change us greatly from the inside out because of who Jesus is and what He has done and that we would follow in His example all of our days. I pray that the world would know, the city would know that we’re His disciples. It’s in His name we pray. Amen.”

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