

Hillside Fellowship Church
August 29, 2021

The Law Keeps Us Far, His Love Draws Us Near
Hebrews 10:19-25

Pastor Dave: You are altogether good and you do good. And I'm so grateful for times like this morning where I get to be surrounded by one of your best gifts; the church. So I'm grateful that in a world of isolation and disconnection, you've purchased community for us through your Son's blood. That we don't have to be alone. And Father, I pray that you would open our eyes to the fact that Jesus was all alone on the cross so that we would never have to be alone. And I pray that this morning we wouldn't just show up to a building and activity, but we would literally open our hearts up to you and to one another so that we might be the kind of community that really does shine as a light in a lonely world. So I pray you'd use your word this morning. I've got nothing to add to it. And so as I read it, I pray that you would teach me this morning, teach us what it means to exist in connected transformative community. And Father, we look forward to being *that* kind of people in an isolated and disconnected world that lost people look at and say, I want to be part of the family of God. And so would you use us to shine as a light this morning? Would you fill me with your Spirit that I might serve, shepherd, strengthen and support your body, Jesus, for your glory. It's in Your name I pray. Amen.

Well, welcome. As you're grabbing a seat, these morning services are going to be filling up more and more as people feel more comfortable. And so I want to invite the extroverts to Saturday night.

[Chuckling]

And so if Saturday night from 5 to 6 works for ya, I'll buy the pizza. Come, we'll hang out. So the Saturday night service is growing. I just want you to know, as this service and the 11 services fill up, we've got a Saturday night service as well. A little bit more room.

Announcement number 2, we've got a Super Duper Mattering

Meeting tonight. We're going to put all the building information out in front of you. It's tonight at 5:30. So come. We'll give you all the information we have. We were hoping to have the annual report for you this morning, but it's all online. You can go online and find it. I looked through it last night. If you have that, you've got all the information that I have. So you can know everything I know. Grab the annual report.

I think those were the announcements.

[Chuckling.]

Member: Good job.

Pastor Dave: Okay. I got a good job from the team. Didn't mess that one up. We're off to a good start. If you're a newcomer, this is your first time, so glad you're here. I don't normally wear shorts. I'm getting over shingles so get over my shorts.

[Laughter]

We are walking -- we are so glad -- I forgot to say that last night and somebody was offended that I was so irreligious. So I think I'll be wearing pants next week, so you will miss my legs.

[Laughter]

I'm so sorry. Newcomers, so glad you're here. We believe Jesus changes everything and I want you to take 30 minutes with me this morning to just look at how Jesus changes everything. He does this by changing us from the inside out. He doesn't use the Law to change us from the outside in. That's called moralism. It can't change anybody. But Jesus, when we surrender to him, he comes to live within us and he begins to change us from the inside out.

My name's Dave. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic and Jesus came to take residence in my life and he has been changing me. August is a big month for me. It's when I celebrate another year of sobriety.

Congregation: Woo!

Pastor Dave: Yeah. This year's 18 for me.

[applause.]

And, honestly, I'm not yet who I long to be, but by God's grace, I'm not who I used to be. And so we celebrate Jesus, that he really does change everything. And we're going to look at how this morning, because when I argue against me and I get into discussions with me, I'm like, hold on. You're encouraging people to put their faith in a God they can't see, they can't hear, they can't touch, they can't feel, they can't experience. How do you expect them to put their faith in a God they can't see?

I'm going to show you this morning, you *can* see him. You can touch and be touched by him. He has given us this thing called the body of Christ. It's the visible, physical manifestation of the very person and presence of God on earth. I'm calling this sermon, *Letters to a Kid in Rehab*. People ask me, Dave, how did you get sober, how did you get clean after so long of using. The answer is very simple. Christ, through his body, loved me deeply. I was in isolation. That is what addiction is. And Jesus used you, Hillside, to draw me in. And so I'm just going to teach you lessons that you taught me and we'll enjoy it together.

Watch this. We're in Hebrews chapter 10. I'm going to read 19 down through 28. It's really just two sentences, but it's packed full and we could talk about it for years on end. But I'm going to break it down into gospel confidence and gospel community. Watch this.

Verse 19 of chapter 10, God says, the author of Hebrews writes this: "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He (Jesus) inaugurated (or opened up) for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and since we have a great (high) priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere (true) heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate (or spur) one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as it the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

So we're going to look at the indispensability of the church, the body of Christ, in a world that's given up hope on the church. And if you're watching the reports, the largest growing segment of our population in America is the non-religious, or the atheists. It's people who have given up hope on the church.

Let me give you a big theological picture on this passage so that, helpfully, each one of us can take a step closer to Jesus and reorient our life around that community that he created. So the big picture is this. If you read straight through the Bible, you would see the same thing we saw last week. God exists in community. The Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now within that community, there's perfect unity, connection. So much so that Jesus could say, "As I am in you, Father, and you are in me, I pray that they may be in Us so that the world might believe that you've sent me." There's perfect connection. God's a god of connection and in that connection, that's where transformation happens because there's perfect trust and love.

Now if you read through the Bible from Genesis 3 on, you would see because of sin's entrance into the world, sin always, always, always, always brings isolation. Have you experienced it? In your marriage,

if you sin against your partner, all of a sudden you're lying, you're insulting. Isolation removes you from connection and isolation always leads to deformation. It distorts the image of God.

You can never grow in isolation. Only bad stuff grows in Petri dishes.

[Laughter]

And that's just a picture of sin. It isolates and it grows funk. It's nasty. The gospel is about how Jesus lived, died, buried, bore the wrath of God, took our sin to reconcile. It's all about reconciliation. Reconnection so that in that, we can experience transformation. You'll never be transformed if you're not connected to God and you'll never experience transformation if you're not connected to his community or his body.

So what we're going to see today is the church is absolutely indispensable. Now, here's the picture I'm going to use. Many of us experience church more like an aggregation. Now if you take the word "aggregation" it just means a whole bunch of random facts, facets put together, but they're disconnected. It's like marbles in a jar. And I would -- my contention would be, most of us experience church like this. A whole bunch of people come. We're in a group together, but is there any connection in between these marbles? There's really not. Is there life flowing in between the marbles?

Congregation: No.

Pastor Dave: Now, in fact, if I take this bowl away, what will happen to all of the marbles? They'll scatter. My contention is, this is what happens most Sundays. We come, we gather up, it's a whole bunch of marbles in a bowl we call the building, but after church, what we call church, what happens is, we just scatter. There's no connection. We're not going to be, and we're not called to be, Jesus didn't come for us to die for us so that we might be a group of disconnected marbles.

He actually had something totally different in mind. You see, it's very similar. There's round things, grapes, in a bowl, but they're

connected. I take the bowl away and guess what? I take this building away, I take the property away, and there's still a connection. And each one of these grapes actually shares life together. They're all interconnected. This is called a CONgregation. That's called an aggregation.

I'm going to tell you, if we are an aggregation and you just come, you're never going to grow. I will never mature if I come and I'm just an isolated person saying, man, I don't know about all these other marbles, but I'm here. I'm going to judge the music. I'm going to judge the sermon. I'm going to judge the lighting. And it's all about me and what I can get. You'll never grow, bro. Never! You will stay an immature marble disconnected from everybody and you'll be lonely and you'll blame me.

[Laughter]

Nah, it's the most astounding thing. If you would do church right, I wouldn't be a marble. You're a marble 'cause you're a marble, bro. You have decided not to connect. I can't help you with that. I want to. You can show up all you want, but if you don't open up your heart and actually love people and serve people and bear one another's burdens, you'll never grow. I'm going to show you the indispensability of the church where we choose, by the grace of God, to connect with people in meaningful ways, join His mission. It's no longer about my mission. And we watch Jesus change everything.

Watch where it starts out. It starts out with gospel confidence. Now this is what you guys taught me, so I'm just going to teach it to you. 18 years ago, 2003, I was ready to bolt. I had just confessed to you, I can't stop drinking. I'd drink before I teach, I'd drink before I drive, I'd drink before I'd preach. I'm so anxious. I can't stop drinking. I expected you guys to reject me. I expected you to say, "Get out of here. You're dirty. You're disgusting. God's so disappointed in you."

It looked very different than that. And this is why we need each other. Watch. Start out verse 19. I'll show you gospel confidence. 24 minutes. We're going to enjoy this together.

I want you to see the plurals he uses. He shifts gears here. It's going to show you how much I need you and you need me and we need each other.

19 "Therefore, . . . "

And you can say it.

Congregation: Brethren.

Pastor Dave: Okay. That's plural. That's all y'all who are in Christ. It's Texan for all y'all.

[Chuckling]

" . . . since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, . . . "

Not our own. I can't enter the holy -- I can't draw near to God. This is what the first 10 chapters of Hebrews is about. The Law said you can't draw near to God. That's the whole point of the tabernacle. You can only go so far and thou shalt not pass. That was the whole point. You're far off.

But now, " . . . we have confidence to enter the holy place by (a new and living way. What way is that? Well, which Jesus " . . . inaugurated (or purchased or opened) for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, . . . "

He was rent. He was torn. He was flogged. He was crucified. And he opened up a new way for us.

21 " . . . and since we (all y'all) have a great (high) priest over the house of God, (he says)

22 let us draw near with a (true or) sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Left to myself, I go to very bad places in my mind. It's called a negativity bias. We all have it. We take negative input much more deeply and profoundly than any other. We have, in fact, the author here says, an evil conscience. Let me explain that to you. How many of you have done stuff you're totally ashamed of and you hope nobody ever knows? Oh, a lot of you.

[Chuckling]

Pastor Dave: Who wants to share first?

[Laughter]

See, those are the things we don't want to share, but left to myself, I tell me and I talk to me and it sounds like my voice. Dave, you're disgusting. You're dirty. You're horrible. God is so disappointed in you. You can't draw near to God. Without the body around me, when the worst about me is confessed and brought to the light, I immediately replay Genesis 3 and I run and I hide and I cover and I push everybody out. After I told you guys I had a drinking problem, I was so filled with shame. That took off. I went back to Oregon. I was like, you know what? Forget this. I'll just burn this bridge, forget these people, we'll just start over somewhere else.

But then I realized, I take me with me everywhere I go and if I had an issue with me here, guess what happens if I go back to Oregon? I still got me with me. I can't shake me no matter where I go. And what I needed was the body of Christ to remind me. Dave, we've got full confidence. I call it the full access pass. In Christ you have a full access pass to God. Full access. It's all open. He's opened the door. Full access passes are amazing. I had a family that found out my wife loved hockey. She's a Red Wings fan. Loves the Red Wings. Who's that famous player who played for -- Gretzky or something -- played for them.

She was a big fan. I don't watch hockey. I don't enjoy hockey. I don't even know if hockey comes in halves or quarters or thirds.

[Chuckling]

So I was ignorant. But a family from the church -- I don't see 'em here this morning -- but they invited us, so we went. And they had a surprise for us. We thought we were just going to watch the game. They said, we have got full access passes to the locker room. Yeah, it was astounding! Well, I didn't feel all that confident to go. The American Airlines Center has thousands of doors. I didn't even know where to go.

[Chuckling]

Where do you go to get to the locker room? They said, follow me. So I followed them, but I was the last, I'm like, I'm not sure how this is going to work out.

[Chuckling]

So I was the last. And first, we came up to a guard and the person said, hey, we're going down. We got full access passes. We're going down to the locker room. And we all went right past the guard. And then next we came to a door, but the door needed a card. But our leader had a card so we made it past the guard and we had the card and we went down, down, down, down. More doors, more guards, more cards. But then we got there. The locker room. I was uncomfortably close to pro hockey players. And they were stretching. They were doing weird stuff, you know?

[Chuckling]

And I was like, I don't feel like I should be here.

[Chuckling]

They never made eye contact with us. They were doing their thing like it was normal for them to have people watching them like goldfish.

[Chuckling]

Most of us -- see, there were probably 20,000 other people that were at the game. But there were only a handful of us that had the full access pass. I never, ever, ever would have known where to go, how to get there unless I had people around me that said "follow me."

You see, the body of Christ is absolutely essential. Because you, left to yourself as an aggregation, will never believe that you have full access to God. And that's why the author here says, we are going to draw near. We are going to encourage each other day after day. You have a full access pass. And you'll say to me, but Dave, I've sinned. I've done horrible things. I raised my hand and I said, I've done things I'm ashamed of. I know. And the blood of Jesus -- your sin *is* great. Nobody wanted to share your sh-- shameful

Congregation: Ahhh. [Laughter]

Pastor Dave: that's on tape. I flagged myself. Your *shameful* --

Congregation: Ahh. [Laughter]

Pastor Dave: You guys are bad.

[Laughter]

Pastor Dave: You all are bad. Encourageable. None of us wanted to share our *shameful* stuff.

[Chuckling]

Because it makes us feel like we're far from God. But we gather together as a congregation to share life, to share the gospel, to share the glory of salvation that Jesus has purified us. He's washed us and said, you've got a full access pass. Come in.

Now watch what comes next. After the full access pass, he says, not only do we draw near, but look at the next command for us. Here's what we're going to do. Verse 23. "Let *us* . . . "

Again, it's plural. Here's what we're going to do when we get

together. Not as an aggregation that says, ah, everything's good. I'm okay. You're okay. We're okay. I got nothing going on.

No! We all have stuff going on. Life is hard for all of . . . *us*. It literally is. We can gather together as an aggregation -- and this is why I don't like aggregations because we're like, no, every other marble looks like they're okay, so I need to be okay too. But the thing is, nobody has escaped the effects of sin. There's brokenness everywhere.

It says, "Let us . . ." Now watch this next one. ". . . hold fast . . ."

When do you need to hold fast? Yeah, when things are shaky. When things are scary. When life's going crazy. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; . . ."

Here's why we need to hold fast. And Jesus was very open and honest with us about this. He's been very open and honest with each one of us in his word. He's told us things like this. You see, the promises of God are actually kind of problematic. Unless you're going to just skip through the Bible and say, well, he'll supply all your needs so be happy today. He will. Paul was in jail when he wrote that, bro. Like he was literally incarcerated. The promises of God are actually very problematic for me. I have to stop and take a double take, and I'm like, wait, what?! Let me give you some of 'em.

In this world you will have trouble. And I'm like, amen, amen. Wait, what?!

[Chuckling]

That's not my expectation. I live in America. Things are suppose to get better and better. Every day, in every way, things are getting better and better. That's what my philosophy and sociology professor told me. I'm not supposed to have trouble. Everything's supposed to be terrific. But Jesus says, nah, in this world you're going to have trouble. Paul said it this way: "It's through many tribulations (plural) that we must enter the kingdom of God." And I'm like, yeah, yeah,

yeah. Amen. And wait, what?!

I thought I gave my life to Jesus and he just paved the road in front of me and it was great.

[Chuckling]

Now Peter would say it this way: Y'all don't be surpassed at the fiery ordeal among you as though some strange thing is happening. In fact, we must share in the sufferings of Christ if we're going to share in his glory. And I'm like, yeah, yeah, yeah. Amen. Ame-- wait, what?!

And James just throws it out there. Hey, y'all, consider it all joy when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith is going to produce endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Amen to that. Whoa, whoa. Wait, what?! Various. A multitudinous trial before you.

You see, life is a lot more like the Steel Eel than you realize. Anybody ever ride the Steel Eel? Okay. Only three of us. Let me switch gears. Anybody ever rode The Rattler?

Member: Yes.

Pastor Dave: Cause it's -- okay. It's even worse. I'm still recovering.

[Chuckling]

It's been about 14 years.

[Laughter]

I still want to send Eight Flags the chiropractic bill. Don't like it. Listen, we went. We went. My family went and my son, I think he was probably nine, he saw it and he said, I want to go on *that!* And I was like, really? He's like, yeah, yeah, yeah. That looks amazing! I was like, you sure? Yeah! He starts running for the gate. I'm like, all

right. Dad's gotta go with him. They're not going to let an eight year old on by himself. He realized something was wrong when he sat down and it went "CLICK." And he's like, I'm trapped. And I was like, yeah. Yeah. You're in this for the long run.

[Laughter.]

And then we started going, "click, click, click, click, click, click." And he's like, no, no, no. No, no, no. All done. All done. I was like, too late.

[Laughter]

Too late. You're on, bro. And then it just started going. It's like, "whoosh, whoosh." My son was trying to crawl out. Like he was literally -- I was so glad I was there because I just grabbed him. In fact, it takes one of those pictures and we were like this. [Screaming]

[Laughter]

Best memory ever.

[Laughter]

My son still says, dad, I'm never going on one of those rides again. I'm like, good! Good! They're not fun! Filled with trouble, trial, tribulation, suffering. No joy there.

[Chuckling]

Life is like The Rattler, the Steel Eel. It really is. It may not be like that today for you. But, man, for somebody they're swinging and going saying, "GET ME OFF! I'M DONE!" And what the body of Christ does is we hold onto each other and encourage each other. "You hold on tight to Jesus because he's holding on tight to you."

They say, "Hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, for He who promises is faithful; . . ."

You see, life is hard and we get together to say, it's going to be okay. I know it's hard. I know you're struggling. I know you're suffering. And it's going to be okay. Faithful is He who called you. He's going to bring it to pass. I don't know how. I don't know what it will look like. But he is totally faithful to get you through this crazy ride and actually mature you and strengthen you through the struggle, through the trial.

So we gather together. Not as an aggregation to kind of receive from Jesus alone. We can't, you can't, I can't, we cannot do the Christian life alone. So many of us -- I don't have time for this. I'm just going to give a minute to it. In America we value expressive individualism. I don't know if you know that. This is what sociologists call it. We live in a time of expressive individualism. That is; the individual is the most important thing. We love our individuality.

And so when we come to church, we love our individuality. It's all about me. Now this has gone so far in culture and we so worship individual expressivism that the individual now gets to identify themselves. And if you don't agree with the individual's identification of themselves, you're a bigot and you're hateful. So the individual in individual expressivism gets to say, I identify -- so I can get up and say, I identify as a black female. And you can be like, Dave, well that's not true. Well, you're a bigot and a hater, because this is how far individualism and expressivism has gone.

You will ne-- I will never grow if we come and gather as a body and we're individuals. The Christian life wasn't set up like that. Unless we gather together to connect one another, to serve one another, we'll never grow. And that's why many people will say, Dave, I've been coming to church for decades and I just haven't grown. In fact, this is why America has given up on the church. The church is no longer the hope of the world. It's no longer the hope of America, because every Sunday thousands of people get together and they say, I still feel lonely. I don't feel connected.

And so we'll begin to look for things to blame. Well, I think it's the church. I think it's how we're doing it. I don't think we should do church like this. Okay. That's why I tell you this: Sunday mornings

are a great place to start and a horrible place to finish. Because I can't relate to all of you like this. This is the worst form of communication. One dude's speaking. A whole bunch of people listening. Nobody connecting. But Jesus still tells us to gather, doesn't he?

So you ask, Dave, how then do we grow? Honestly. How do I grow? Some people would say, well, it's just read more. Intellectualism. Read the Bible more. Go get Swindoll's latest book. Go get a book and read. Reading, alone, isn't going to help you connect with others, is it? So other people would say, well, you've got to go to a seminar. It's about emotions. You have to have a feeling. So we go and we sing worship songs in our car alone. We have a feeling, but we're not connected. So we stay isolated and it leads to deformation.

Other people say, well, you just need to do more. The Bible's actually going to explain how we grow. Now, you may not want to grow. You may not want to mature. You may not want to change. Okay. But I'm going to show you, in the scriptures, how we do. Watch what comes next. It goes from gospel confidence to now gospel community. In eight minutes. Watch. Let's do this.

Verse 24 now. What are we going to do then? Dave, how do you form this when we get together? How is this going to happen? He's going to give you four or five verbs, and I'm going to show them to you. And I just want you to ask, when I come, when I gather, is it more like this [holding up marbles] where I'm just here to get what's good for *me*? I'm going to rate everything according to what *I* think, *I* feel, *I* want, *I* desire. Or am I moving more towards this? [Holding up grapes.] And he's going to give us verbs about how to move more towards *congregation* and less towards *aggregation*. Watch.

Verse 24. Here's the first one. Just write down "considering" or "consider." What are we going to do when we get together? ". . . and let us *consider* how to stim- . . ." And it's the one another word. So we're going to get together and actually consider one another. How many of you, when driving to church, considering, man, I wonder how I can love Joe today. I wonder how I can think about -- see this is an astounding statement. When you gather together, you're

actually going to put -- I would've translated it this way. You're going to put your mind to the hard work of thinking about other people. That's an astounding statement, isn't it?

Nothing in America teaches us that. In fact, we're here to tell other people to be quiet and consider me, because, largely, we're just a nation of narcissists.

Member: Hmm.

Pastor Dave: It's all about me and what I think and what I want and what I desire and everybody else, if they would just arrange their lives around . . . me, the world would be *okay!* But everybody's dumb and nobody will arrange their lives around me so everybody else is the problem. Who are we considering? Ourselves . . . perpetually . . . incessantly. This is why 9.80665 is a very important number to me. If you take the law of gravity, wherever you measure it around the world, generally, it pulls at a constant 9.80665 meters per second squared. There's this constant pull. This is why the older we get, the shorter we get. Gravity's just pulling us down.

Now, it takes a lot of energy to escape the pull of gravity. Did you know that? Like rocket full energy. Like, to get past max Q, the Space Shuttle -- I mean, it's massive amounts of energy. Do you know, you and I, when we gather together, we will naturally move towards aggregation? Because we're going to think about ourselves, what we want, and not others and what they want. Friends, it takes the Spirit of God in the life of a believer to help us escape the gravitational pull of sin and self. But if we don't do that, I guarantee you -- the world thinks about themselves all the time. Jesus says, have this mindset in yourself which also existed in Christ Jesus, who existed in the form of God. He didn't consider it robbery. He didn't hold onto that, but he humbled himself. He emptied himself. He took the form of a bondservant.

So if you want to move towards this (grapes) in your marriage, begin by waking up and saying, Jesus, would you help me to think like you think and consider others? Because that actually helps you begin to connect with others. And you see them through different eyes.

Watch what comes next. Not only consider -- oh, this is horrible!

[Chuckling]

Oh, I'm sorry. That came out. That wasn't just in my -- well, " . . . let us consider how to . . . "

Congregation: Stimulate.

Pastor Dave: Yeah. Who's got another word for that in your Bible?

Member: Spur.

Pastor Dave: Spur!?

[Chuckling]

Oh, that's awful! You know what a spur -- well, of course you do. San Antonio Spurs.

[Chuckling]

A spur is awful! If not, have a cowboy with boots, right? It's spur you. It's horrible. Most of us aren't horses so we don't get spurred. I would've translated this -- it's a very harsh verb. I would've translated this, "Let us consider how are *irritate* one another.

[Chuckling]

Or *incite* one another. Why would God say that?! We're going to get together to irritate one another? Now, some of you are very good at irritating others. I've talked to your spouse.

[Laughter]

Some of you, it's your spiritual gift.

[Laughter]

You just kind of nag and irritate. He's not talking about nagging. He says, we're going to consider how to stimulate, spur, irritate one another. Dave, I don't understand why God would -- this is why I don't like my community group. They all irritate me.

[Chuckling]

Quick question. Do you believe what the Bible says about your sin is true? You see, if you actually read through the Bible, you're going to realize what the Bible says about my sin is devastating. It says this: That sin, which will most likely shipwreck Dave Tooker's life, is the very sin that Dave Tooker is blind to. Because this is what sin does. It blinds you, hardens you, numbs you, deceives you, so that we begin to justify our own sin. You don't believe me? I can tell you, as a recovering methamphetamine addict, I literally believed it was best for me to use methamphetamines because I was a much better person. When I was high, I was super duper nice.

[Chuckling]

And so I would get high to be a better person. And when people would tell me, Dave, you shouldn't do that. I was like, you're dumb. I'm doing the best thing for myself, for you, for society. See, the sin that will most readily shipwreck your life is the sin that you can't see. And that's why God puts the body around us, because if one person is hurting, if one person is diseased, we all gather round and say, hey, bro, you gotta a little yellow on ya (holding grapes up) and you look like you might start rotting.

Now, in this system (marbles) we say, you know what? These people are jerks. They're irritating me. I'm going to go find a new fish bowl. There are no huge orange marbles. Clearly they're just little blue marbles and they don't get it. And you just pull the rip cord and you opt out. You can do that. You can do that. But when you have a body that's connected, the most loving thing that you guys have done for me is to call me out on my sin. Because if I drink, I die. And it's so good to have a group of people around me saying, Dave, it looks like you're running and you're redlining, which means you're about to crash. Man, what would it look like to pull back?

You see, this is where the scripture -- it is why our state puts up "High Water" crossings.

Member: Hmm.

Pastor Dave: I don't have time. I got 30 seconds. Anybody ever crossed a "High Water" crossing? Honestly? Travis? Seriously?!

[Laughter]

Dude. Dude. Anybody else? What's wrong with us?!

[Laughter]

I wish you could see at home how many hands went up. And listen. The state puts up "high water" crossings to irritate us.

[Chuckling]

That's literally what it means. Choose a different way! I get it. I was driving home with Brooke. All of a sudden there's water over the road. I was like, Babe, we can make it.

[Chuckling]

I'm convinced. Just the physics of it, I go fast enough, yeah, we may hydroplane, but the physics of it? We'll get across to the other side.

[Laughter]

Praise God, Brooke was there to irritate me and say, no, we're turning around, going through Boerne and back home. I was like, Baby, that'll take an hour and 20 minutes. She's like, but we'll be alive.

[Chuckling]

See? This is what we do for each other. We love each other, we irritate each other for the glory of God, because an object at rest will

remain at rest and an object in motion will remain in motion unless it's acted on by an outside force. And he puts outside forces around us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to say, pick another way. Pick another way! The way you're going, Dave, is going to lead to death. So we're going to spur each other on to what? Look at it here.

Love! This is just the proof you've been born again. Love doesn't mean you let everybody do whatever they want. Love is sacrificial compassionate action for the well-being of another. It is sacrificial compassionate action for the well-being of another, and we've gotta spur, stimulate, irritate each other on towards that. Allan does it for me every week. Praise God for Allan. I work with Allan.

[Chuckling]

He spurs and irritates. So does Pastor Matt because generally my first three ideas in any given circumstance and meeting are horrible and often illegal.

[Laughter]

Not intentionally. There's just so many laws in America. Huge amounts of laws. And so, they're like, Dave, here's the issue we're facing this week. And I'll be like, can we burn it? Can we literally burn it down? No, Dave. That's called arson.

[Chuckling]

I was like, well, it was called "fun" when I was growing up.

[Laughter]

Can we blow it up? No! No! Can we kill it? Nooo! Can we egg 'em? No! Dave! Okay, guys. What would it look like to love 'em? And they're like, good. Let's go with that, Dave. See, love is just the proof that we've been born again. If you say you love God and hate your brother -- if you say you love God whom you can't see and you hate your brother that you can see, you're a liar. This is why Jesus showed us the proof of what it meant to be born again. John 13:1-5.

Knowing, on that night, he was going to be betrayed. Knowing that Satan had put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, Jesus got up from supper. He girded himself and he began to wash the disciples feet. And having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. That means to the greatest extent you can love them.

You'll never grow if you don't go low and serve and love. Not only are we going to spur each other on to love, but good deeds. If love is the proof, good deeds are just the fruit out of the life of the believer. I know. Some people are like, listen, Dave. I don't need to go to church to be a Christian and I don't need to do good works to be a Christian. Kind of true. But, I will also tell you this. You'll never see anybody come to Jesus through your life because you're going to be a self-centered isolationist. You'll never see fruit. You'll never see other people drawn to Christ.

True, you're saved by grace through faith. It's not of good works, lest any man should boast. Please don't miss the next verse though. You're his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works that he's created beforehand that you would walk in them.

Now, let me just put it for you this way. We live in a world that's given up on God and they've given up on the church. We are going to be Anne Sullivan to a Hellen Keller world. Do you know who Anne Sullivan is? I don't have time to go through it if you don't. The teacher. Hellen Keller, deaf, blind, mute. Anne Sullivan comes along. Anne Sullivan spends 49 years helping Hellen Keller learn how to communicate so that she could come out of darkness into light and experience life.

We, through our good deeds, as we let the world see our good deeds, it's the fruit of being born again. We're going to make the gospel 3-D, Dolby Digital surround sound clear to a Hellen Keller world. That's why Jesus says, let your light so shine among men that they may see your . . . good . . . works, and glorify your Father. There's so much more to say there. But we're going to spur each other on. We're going to love each other towards love and good deeds.

And watch this. Verse 25. ". . . not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, . . . "

How many of you were told growing up, we're going to go to church. Put your best on. Anybody? You put on good clothes and you go to church. When it's like, mom, dad, I don't wanna go to church.

The Bible says, you go to church! Right? Don't forsake the assembling together, as is the habit of some. And those are the JV Christians. Right? They're not going to letter. They're not going to have a cross on their letterman jacket.

Member: That's great.

Pastor Dave: They would rather go to Eight Flags or SeaWorld rather than come to church. Shame on them. I'm the good Christian. I show up. Let me tell you this, there is a lot of ways to disobey this passage. Here's one. I show up and I'm disconnected with anybody. I roll in isolation. [Pointing to marbles.] That's just as much disobeying this command if we're not actually showing up and opening up and helping others up. If we're not connected, we *are* disobeying that and the world is right to say, I don't want any of that.

Listen. You can be in aggregation anywhere. I went to a Chargers game. Chargers were playing the Texans. Somebody knew I was a Chargers fan. They said, let's go. I said, well, it's on a Sunday. And I shouldn't forsake the assembling of our brethren. But I called in sick and I went anyway. Somebody else preached. It was an awesome Sunday.

[Laughter]

I went and it was 20,000 had aggregation. Whole bunch of fans. Guess how many people I connected with there. Zero. Well, kind of. Drunk Dan was sitting next to me and I learned a lot about Drunk Dan's grandma.

[Laughter]

He was pretty convinced his grandma could throw better than Carr. He's like, my grandma throws the ball better than you, Carr. And he was drinking. So I learned a little bit, but I did tell him that I think the physics of that is impossible. Because looking at your stature, grandma's probably 5'7", buck 20. Doubt she could even pick up the ball.

[Laughter]

Many of us show up to church and we don't connect with anybody. Listen, you'll never grow up if you don't show up and open up. And I know it's hard. It is. Community groups are hard, because we've learned that other people hurt us. Other people, I'm not sure they can be trusted. They'll wound me. And so we isolate, but isolation always leads to deformation.

Let me end with this. Man! " . . . not forsaking our assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Let me land the plane with this. The world is filled, it's brimming full with negativity, anger, hatred, bitterness, resentment. Because of sin's entrance into this world, since Genesis 3, this world has had a negativity bias. You can Google it. Look it up. We are much more readily available to say negative things and believe negative things. And when we say negative things, when we give rebukes or criticisms, do you know that impacts us upwards of 70%-90% more than any compliment.

In fact, if somebody gives you an encouragement, guess what we're prone to do with encouragement?

Member: ... [indistinct] ...

Pastor Dave: Yeah, they didn't mean that. They don't believe that. Ah, they're just buttering me up. They want something from me. We'll actually take a compliment, and because of our negativity bias, we'll use it against ourselves. Our minds are our own worst enemies. This is what sin has done. So we're going to show up, we're going to

step up, we're going to speak up and say, you know what? I see beautiful things that Jesus is doing in your life. Let me show you. And if you're a mom, a dad, a husband, a wife, know this. Your children need to hear 100 encouraging words to every rebuke. We *need* that!

If you think, you know what? She just doesn't measure up. I need to tell her. I need to tell her. Her negativity tank is full, bro! What you need to do is drill a hole in that through encouraging, loving and strengthening words. And sweetie, nagging him is not gonna help. I'll tell you what he faces all day. Gets on the computer. Dave, I don't like this. I don't like that. I don't like the sermon. I don't like your shorts. I don't like your legs. I don't like your hair. I don't like the music. I don't like the building. I don't like the parking. I don't like how far it is out there. All we deal with is negativity. That's called work. We're dealing with problems in the world.

You know what we're going to do? We're going to get together, not as an aggregate, but as a congregant, and we're going to consider one another how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. And we're going to encourage one another.

Hillside, I want to encourage you. I've seen the life of Christ in you. Every single week, I see people that you've invited, that you've loved, that you've brought in. I see people getting saved. I see marriages transforming. I see people who've invited people who've invited people and multi-generations have gotten saved. I love the work that Christ Jesus is doing in you and through you. I know it's a work of the decades, not the days. But he's growing you and I wanted to share with you what he has taught me through you.

You see, my name is Dave. I'm a recovering addict and alcoholic and I've recovered by the grace of God through the presence of God and the people of God who've spoken truth into my life. And you're one of the greatest gifts that God has given to me.

If you're here and your isolated and you're lonely, let me share this with you. The good news is that Jesus was isolated and lonely on the cross. He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

He was alone so that by God's grace, you would never have to be alone. He's left the body of Christ here. If you're here saying, I can't see God, I can't smell God, I can't touch God, yes you can. He exists in the body of Christ and he loves you deeply. And he's put you here to be part of a congregation, not aggregation. What's one step you can take today orienting your life around Jesus?

Let's pray. Father, would you help me learn? I'm so ready to run from other people. The story of my life is one of that other people have hurt me and wounded me and so I'm quick to isolate. Would you help me to learn what it means to find confidence in Christ Jesus and confidence in his community and become part of that congregation that *is* the light of the world? Father, we long to be used by you as a light in the community. Would you strengthen us, that we might be one in that community of the trinity? That your light and life might shine through us in a broken, dying world. Would you use us for your glory? In Jesus' name. Amen.

Member: Amen.

[End]