

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

CHURCH DISCIPLINE | CHURCH IN THE WILD

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Traders Point, how are we doing? So good to be with you today. I'm excited to jump in and continue in our series.

But I just want to take a moment here at the top and give honor where honor is due. If you've been around the past few weeks you know that our lead Pastor, Aaron, called an audible and did a mini-series Jesus, The Election, And You. And I want to celebrate him on two fronts.

One, on the pastoral side. To be a man of integrity and to look out and to see the landscape of where we are as a people and as a culture to see how divisive that is and to step into that gap and to bring God's word and to pastor us well is incredible. To know he'd put himself on the line, he did that.

But also, on the preaching side of just how thankful I am for him. I do this. I try to anyway. And to see someone come up and take things like politics and God's word, these giant buckets and then boil them down with such clarity and passion and practicality—it was a thing of beauty.

So, can we just celebrate our Pastor, my Pastor, Pastor Aaron. Unbelievable.

And then today we are continuing in this series that we've been in Church In The Wild. We've been going verse by verse through the book of 1 Corinthians. So, if you haven't been with us, here's the big idea. We want to be a church in the wild. We want to be a church in our city that is this outpost where people who don't know God can find refuge, that people who don't know God can come to know who He is and all that He has for them.

That was the same plan that that church had in Corinth too, but some things got in the way. Some of the outside, some of the ways of the city and the culture had infiltrated the integrity of the church. The boundaries between the city and the church had completely dissolved.

So, Paul writes them and is telling them, "Hey, we need to get this back together." And the first four chapters were really all about how they are thinking about things the wrong way. They needed to start thinking about things differently.

Now, in chapter 5 he's going to move to, "Hey, this is how wrong thinking leads to wrong living." And we're going to have a case study that we're going to work through.



But really this whole chapter is under one banner. And here's what it is for today:

Church discipline.

Who's pumped? You guys excited? Hey, next week we're going to talk about root canals, I want to go ahead and invite you back for that one too. But, no. Church discipline is a real part of church life. As long as the church is filled with people like me and you, there are going to be problems, there is going to be sin, and they need to be addressed. Alright?

So, what is church discipline? Let's just start with a very basic definition:

Church discipline is the process of correcting sin in the life of a Christian

Now, all of us, as we grew up experienced and are still experiencing some kind of discipline. Some of you are like, "Actually, I never experienced any kind of discipline." We know.

But a lot of us. Right? We have people in our lives who loved us enough to discipline us. I got disciplined growing up. I also got disciplined at school. In high school I got in trouble for the same thing most of the time, especially the older I got. I had a hard time getting there on time. I would either be a little bit late or a lot late.

And the school didn't love this for a lot of reasons. So, the way they disciplined me, the punishment for not showing up on time, was that I had detention, which meant that I had to stay later. And this wasn't good for me because after a long day at school, staying late, the only way I could make up for it was to sleep in the next day and get my rest. So, we were back in a vicious cycle.

But what I want us to get to—all on the same page—is discipline is not a bad thing. Discipline is not just mean punishment. The Scriptures actually say the Lord disciplines those He loves. Think about that. And then, I want us to look at this verse in Hebrews, which talks about discipline because I think it helps us by giving a purpose to discipline. So look at this. Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 10. It says:

"For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always," say it with me, "good for us, so that we might share in his holiness."

And that's just this idea that God has set us apart, His church, for His very specific purpose. And that's what discipline is about.

"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." Hebrews 12:10-11 (NLT)

Right? So, discipline, not bad. Discipline can be good. Discipline can have a purpose. But I also know in a room like this and at our campuses, maybe you've experienced some unbiblical church discipline. And I would say it's probably two extremes. One on one side is that you were disciplined for things that weren't in the Bible and that God did not call people to be disciplined for. And that was wrong.

And then others of you, maybe you were in a setting where you were calling for church discipline. You tried to speak up but it felt like everything was swept under the rug and it created so many problems.

What I want us to do is just band together here at the beginning, what if God has a better way? What if God's discipline can lead us to holiness? What if a part of it is that if He loves those who He disciplines then maybe I want to step into the conversation? Maybe I'm missing out on something.

But here's the banner I want to put over this. Remember that:

Love is the motivation for church discipline

And restoration is the hope. So, when we step into these difficult conversations love is the motivation and the hope is restoration, not just punishment for punishment's sake. Okay?

So, if you have your Bibles, we're going to be in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5. And what we're going to see today is that Paul is going to give us a case study of when church discipline is needed and how we walk through this process. So, that's where we are going to be. Case study 5678, chapter 5, verse 1. Paul says:

"I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. "

Living in sin—that's Christian ease for he's sleeping with his stepmom. Alright? I just want to make sure that we are on the same page.

"You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship." 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NLT)

Now, this is big. Paul starts chapter 5 by saying, "Hey, I just want to make sure we're all on the same page. I got word that there is someone in your church, a Christian, a Jesus confessing believer, who is sleeping with his stepmother."

And the way that he tries to make them see how big of a deal this is, he says, "Hey, I want you to look around at your city. You live in Corinth. There are no rules for sex. You can sleep with whoever you want. No one has anything to say. There are no consequences. And even in that city, they don't do that. They have no rules, but even

they don't do that." Paul says, "Does that not get you thinking a little bit that maybe this isn't God's best for your life?"

The thing here is not just that there is sin in the church. It's not just that this guy is doing this, there are some problems at the root of what is going on here that Paul is really trying to address on the church discipline side. So, it's not just the act itself. I think the first thing that we see is:

Pride is the problem

He says, "You are puffed up. You are arrogant. You are proud that this is happening in your church." It's probably under the banner of tolerance, like, "We are so tolerant, so loving, we even have people who come and do this and we're cool with it. Look at how great we are. Look at how much like Jesus we are."

And Paul is like, "You could not be more wrong. This situation that you are proud and arrogant about, you should be brokenhearted, you should be on your knees praying, you should be grieving and mourning this situation but you're so far off, that you're celebrating the thing that breaks God's heart."

So, it's pride that is the problem and then:

Unrepentant sin is the problem

The tense that is used here isn't that this is something that he did once or he used to do, it's something that he is continuing to do, something that has been normalized by him and the church.

Because we're followers of Jesus, we still sin from time to time, but when we sin usually there is almost this immediate reaction where we feel conviction, where we did that, we said that but then it's like almost in a moment we feel this deep sense of feeling the weight of our sin and we don't want to do it anymore.

Not to say that you'll never do it again, but you have this moment and you know, "I shouldn't go this way." And it makes you repent. And repent just means, "I'm turning from this, from my sin, and I'm turning toward Jesus. And I'm following back after Him."

That was no longer there. Sin had been normalized. And the question that I wrote in the margins as I was studying this week was:

Do I have sin that I've become comfortable with?

"Do I have sin that used to bring conviction to me? Used to bother me, but then I got tired." It was so hard, and you felt so much guilt that you were like, "You know what? Maybe it's not that big of a deal. Maybe this is just who I am. I mean, look. It's happening in the world. The culture is doing it. Maybe it's just a different time. Does God really care? It doesn't feel like I'm hurting anyone."

And we begin to get comfortable with sin, which is a dangerous place to be, because sin is just crouching behind the door. That's the way that the Bible talks about sin. It is ready to pounce. Ready for us to open that door. Ready for us to step into that temptation. And we will be overwhelmed by it.

So, I just want to bring that to the surface. If there is any sin in your life, in my life, that we've normalized or that we've gotten comfortable with, we've got to bring that to the surface. And we need discipline for that.

That's what is going on here. That's the big problem. It's not just what he's doing, it's how he's responded and it's how the church has responded to this sin. And because of this, Paul has already made up his mind and what he has already done because of this situation. Look at the way he responds in verse 3. He says;

"Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus." 1 Corinthians 5:3-4 (NLT)

Now, there is a phrase here and maybe it stuck out to you a little bit too because you're like, "I don't think we're supposed to do that, Paul. 'I have already passed judgment.' Isn't that like one of our things like we don't judge people? Isn't that part of our religion, what separates us. We're not supposed to judge. And didn't God tell us not to judge people?" So, who is Paul to say that he passed judgment?

This is one of the big things that comes up anytime any form of correction happens or we speak truth into someone's life. Even people who don't believe in Jesus will quote Jesus. and they'd be like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa," and then they'd kind of jump into that old English out of nowhere, "Wasn't it your God who said, 'Thou shalt not judge lest ye be judged?'" Like, "Easy Shakespeare. I know what He said, but was there more to it?"

I think it's that spot, the worrying about judgment, of casting judgment on someone that has stopped so many of us from stepping into church discipline. Because you come to this question like:

Who am I to judge?

Like, you see something, something in your life, someone you love, someone you're in group with, someone you serve with and you're like, "Oh, I should say something." And you're about to say something, then you're like, "It's not like I'm perfect. Who am I to judge? I have my own things." And then we don't say anything.

But what did Jesus really say about judgment and what it means for church discipline, specifically? Let's take a look at this, Matthew, chapter 7, verse 1, Jesus says:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." (NLT)



Okay. Now, we can rip that from its context and we can make it say anything we want it to say. But, let's look at this. In context, what does the word judge mean? The word judge can mean anything from condemn, to like place a death sentence on someone, and it could mean anything all the way on the other side to evaluate something, to judge something.

So, would we say that Jesus is saying that there is never a time for us to judge in the sense of evaluate? To test? To say something is good or not? It's evil or it's good? No, I think we see it over and over again in Scripture that Jesus calls us to evaluate things and to judge things.

Maybe you're still not convinced. Maybe you're like, "It just doesn't sound like the Jesus that I know. He doesn't seem like a God of judgment. He doesn't seem like a God of discipline. I know Him to be a God of love and a God of grace."

Okay. I hear you. But let's look at Jesus' word because He actually gave us a whole framework, not just for judgment but for church discipline itself. It's not just that we're going to cast judgment on someone, but He wants us to be a part of the whole restorative process and to walk with them through it. So, look at what He says in Matthew 18. Jesus says:

"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

"If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector."
Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT)

Guys, this is Jesus. He's saying that there is a space within the church, among believers... How else would you get to a spot of discipline if you didn't make a judgment that there was a need to discipline?

But He says, "I want you to be a part of the whole process." And I just want to walk us through that. He gives us three steps for the process of church discipline.

And maybe you're in a situation right now where this applies this week. If not, just give it time. I've been around here a long time. There are a lot of problems that are going to come up and we need to know how to address those problems when they do.

THE PROCESS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

So, the first thing Jesus gives in Matthew, chapter 18 is to:

- Go privately

Not to catch them in the hallway after this sermon, not in group this week around the table when everyone is there like, “Hey, before we begin, I’ve got something for you, Eric.” This is a private moment when you are going to go to him because of the relationship you have with him, and to speak to him about this specific sin. And you’re going to share your heart, you’re going to share what you see from God’s word of why this is not okay, why it’s not God’s best for him.

And the hope is that this will be enough. The hope is that this one conversation—he had some blinders that he couldn’t see, he needed this encouragement, he agrees, he repents, and everyone continues to move forward. But Jesus knows us. And He knows that’s not always the case

- Take one or two other people with you

So, He says, “Hey, go privately, but if it doesn’t work then go back and get one or two other people. And go talk to him one more time.” Now, this time you’re making it clear, “This isn’t a me versus you thing. This is a church thing. We are all seeing the same thing about what you are doing and how it’s affecting you and how God want’s something more for you.”

And, once again the hope is that during this interaction he finally sees it, the blinders fall, and he agrees and he repents from his sin and he can continue moving forward in community. But Jesus says that sometimes even that doesn’t work and people are still prideful and still can’t see what is going on.

- Take it to church leadership

At that point involve church leadership. And for us, at all of our campuses, this would look like if none of those other steps work, take it to church leadership. This would be a campus pastor, or a ministry leader.

But you don’t just circumvent the process. This is after you’ve done those first two things. Then you go to the campus pastor or the ministry leader and say, “Hey, these are the conversations we’ve had, this is the situation. We need to involve you now at this time.” And once again, he becomes a part of the process to help restore him.

But Jesus says, “If that doesn’t work, if he still can’t see it. If he still is unrepentant,” then He says, “I want you to treat him like a corrupt tax collector or a pagan.”

What does that mean? Well, I want to read chapter 5, verse 5 in 1 Corinthians because Paul is going to say exactly the same thing, it’s just in three different ways. Paul says if this happens:

“Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.” 1 Corinthians 5:5 (NLT)



So, what Paul is saying here is that if he won't repent, if he won't see the error in his way, then you need to release him from the church. You need to treat him like a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. You need to hand him over to the devil.

What he is saying is, "You need to remove the protective covering from him and let him feel and experience the full weight of his sin." That's what you and I are called to do.

And what we see in Scripture is we really don't feel that weight until it's taken. We don't see or understand all that God is doing until we're removed. The church, that's God's domain, the rest of the world belongs to Satan.

So, what he's saying is, "You are going to be dropped off into enemy territory and you'll no longer get to be privileged to experience all of God's goodness."

Some of us are just unaware of this happening and it's normal for us. It made me think of growing up when you're a kid and you remember you just had a full day, like your best day. You'd been running and playing all day.

Maybe you got to go to Discovery Zone. Alright? Some of you know what that is and how great it was because you experienced it. Some of you parents know because you hated it. But I want you to know, parents, if you sat in Discovery Zone for your kid, they love you and it was a gift. For those who don't know what Discovery Zone is because you're too young, it will be in heaven, so you'll get to experience it there. Just wait.

But just imagine, you had a full day. You were ripping and running all day. Now it's dark out, you're getting to the car, you're on your way home, you get in and you completely crash. You just fall asleep in the seat. You're not worried about how you're going to get home or do you need to stop and get gas? You're in one place, you fall asleep and you wake up and your parents have already gotten you back home.

That's what God is doing behind the scenes. Things that we don't even notice. The way that He's just taking us from place to place keeping us safe.

One of the greatest examples is when Jesus comes to Peter and says, "Hey, Satan asked me to sift you like wheat but I prayed for you." There was this whole situation that Peter had no idea what was happening but Jesus was praying for him.

Job is another great example in the Old Testament where all of this is happening behind the scenes. But what he didn't know was that God was protecting him. God was keeping Satan on a leash the whole time.

But what happens when you are handed over to Satan is you feel the full weight of your sin. And this is not something that is done lightly. I want you to think about that. Remember this only happens if all of those other steps do not work. This is a last ditch effort. And this isn't some cold law. This is between family. This is between brothers and sisters.

I love the way Warren Wiersbe talks about church discipline. He says, "Church discipline is not a group of 'pious policemen' out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of brokenhearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family." That's what this process should look like and feel like.

The picture that came to my mind, and some of you have experienced this or have known people and family who have, when there is a day where you've tried everything with one of your kids and he is not responding, not repenting and you have to ask him to leave the covering of your house. It's not what you want to do, you find no joy in doing it, but you are at the end. You have tried everything and the only thing left is to remove the protection, the umbrella of protection from your house over him.

And the hope is that he will go out and he will experience the full weight of it, he will repent, he will return, he will change and then everything will be restored.

Paul says that is the hope of this process. It's not that he would experience more and more pain for pain's sake. It's so that he would be restored, so that he will be safe. That's the heart of church discipline.

And for Paul, this was the biggest consequence he could give. This is the ultimate thing that he knew would hurt so bad. It was the last ditch effort that they could make to save this person, to ask him to leave the church.

But the thing that I would put before you is:

What would change about your life if you were asked to leave the church?

Some of you are like, "Nothing. I'd probably just watch online. I don't know if my life would really change if someone came to me today and said, 'Hey, you can't come back.'"

That should be a signal in our mind that we have gotten something wrong. The first century church could not picture a church that you just went and attended once a week or once a month. They were this tight-knit community, this family, their lives were bound up together. They relied on one another for everything.

What I want to say is that there is something off if the biggest consequence God could give doesn't affect us. Because chances are if the consequences don't affect us, His goodness probably isn't affecting us either.

It's like if you came to me and said that I did something and I needed to be disciplined. And you came to me today and said, "Hey, because of what you did, that's it. This Friday you're not going to be able to go wrestle pigs." I didn't plan on wrestling pigs anyway this Friday. That's not a punishment that hurts me.

But I would really take a look at this: what is the church to you? Is it just something you go to, is it something that you consume? Or, is it something you are completely engaged

in? Is your life completely bound up in it? Do you even have people in your life that if there was something wrong could encourage you and speak truth into your life?

And maybe there are others of you in this room and at all of our campuses where this is the thing that is keeping you back from taking a step and getting involved, being known, being in community, because you know that you have things in your life that if they get brought into the center of a room, or with a leader, it's going to be uncomfortable. He's going to ask you to stop doing something or start doing something.

And I just want to speak to that for a moment. If you are a Christian and you're worried about getting in community because you're worried someone is potentially going to ask you to change or to call you to more, I just want to assure you, yes, for sure that is definitely going to happen. If you place yourself in that situation, that is definitely going to happen. But what I can tell you is that anything that you give up for God, you will get more in return. You will never be on the losing end of that exchange.

You may have to give up some sin that you have become really, really comfortable with, but in return you will get things like: love, and joy, and peace, and holiness, and purpose, and family. And you, eventually, will see that it was worth it.

And if you're here today and you are wanting that step, "What does that look like? How do I step into that space? How do I become known? How do I get into community? How do I live the version of church that God actually designed for me to live? Rooted.

Rooted is how we do it here. It's the best first step that you can take to finding that kind of community. The link is right behind me. You can go to it. Get registered today. Spots are limited. Our next session is going to start here soon.

tpcc.org/rooted

But that is what it's all about. What it looks like to be in that type of community and to be the church God designed us to be.

So, that's where Paul is. And then he's going to basically shift here in the next few verses to say, "Hey, the problem is with the person. We need to handle it because we love him, but it's also, at the same time, bigger than the person. It's a problem for the whole church. So go ahead and take a look at this in verse 6. He says;

"Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NLT)



So, what he does here is he uses this illustration of bread and yeast to show that the sin problem of this one person cannot just be contained in just one person. Yeast, just a pinch of yeast into a batch of dough spreads through the whole thing. He says that the same thing is true of sin.

A lot of times in Scripture that word yeast is synonymous with sin or evil. And he says, "Hey, you need to have this conversation, you need to deal with it because it's not just here, it's going to spread through the whole church. And maybe that actually gives you more courage to do what is needed because it's not just about him, which is enough itself, but church discipline not only benefits one person, it benefits the whole church.

But the line that I really want us to focus on, and I think it changes the way we receive discipline within a Christian context is when he says:

"Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast," without evil, without sin, "which is what you really are."

So much of discipline that we face in our lives is we experience discipline, we experience training because then, one day, we will become the thing that the discipline is training us to be. It's aspirational in nature. Stop doing these things, start doing these things, and then one day you will be this type of person.

Christianity says something completely different. Over and over again the message is: Be who you are. It's not aspirational. Jesus died for you to be these things. You are made in His image. You are His son or daughter. You have an identity. You are chosen. You have been made holy.

God has a purpose and a plan for your life, even when you mess up, even when you sin, even when you lie, cheat, steal, get drunk—you did those things but that is not who you are. That is outside of your character. That is outside of who you are.

All he's doing is he's calling them back and reminding them of who they are. And we all need that reminder today. That is who you are. That is who you are. And then he's going to close out here in these last few verses. I'm just going to get to it. He says:

"When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.

"I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people. It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, 'You must remove the evil person from among you.'" 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NLT)

That's our tendency though, isn't it? We get all of this passion, we get so burdened by the weight of sin and bothered by how it's affecting us, but we don't look into the church to deal with it, we look out into the world. And we're like, "Man, this place is a mess. Man, this place is going to hell in a handbasket." Whatever that means. But it's happening in front of us. And we get frustrated and angry. We get so mad at the world.

Paul says, "That's not our responsibility." We try to hold the world accountable to things that they never agreed to and they seem confused and we just get more and more bothered. He says, "That's not your responsibility." God will judge those outside the church."

But then did you see what he says? And this is for all of us who are following Jesus, all of us who are a part of this church. It is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. If there are people in your life who you love right now and you know you need to have a difficult conversation, I just want to plead with you to have that conversation for the sake of their soul and for the health of our church.

God has made you responsible for that process and that conversation. Will you step into it? Will you be able to be vulnerable and, knowing what it's going to take in the relationship, say, "I'm willing to lay that down for the good of this person. It is the most loving thing that I can do that I can think of. I'm willing to step into the gap. I'm willing to have the difficult conversation." That's our responsibility.

And then when it comes to the world, our responsibility is not to judge the world but it is to tell the world about the Judge. It's to tell the world about this Judge who they will face one day.

And it's our job, our responsibility to go to the ends of the earth to make sure everyone, everywhere knows about who He is and how good He is and all that He has done, even for those who don't believe in Him, those who hate Him, those who have rejected Him—He loves them.

Even though we were His enemy He sent His one and only Son to be sacrificed for me and you. This is the message we bring to the world, not judgment, but the gospel. Telling them about the Judge. Telling them that He came to earth, that He lived a perfect life, that He went to a cross for me and you. He defeated sin and death, resurrecting three days later.

And now, He is the One who has an answer to the aches that they are experiencing, the fulfillment that they are lacking. It is in His name and only in His name that they will find it. And we get to tell the world about how good our God is. That is our responsibility.

So, church, as we close here I want to ask you to stand to your feet. And I know that this is a heavy day. I know that there is a lot right there at the surface and you're feeling it. But what a responsibility we have been given, trusted by God to do the work of His



Kingdom. And it's not one we take lightly. And I know that it's one that cannot be accomplished without the power of God and His Holy Spirit.

What I want to do right now is for all of us at all of our campuses to join in prayer. And we're going to pray for those things. We're going to pray that we would have the courage to step into and be a part of the church discipline process, motivated by love. That that's the church that we would be.

And we would be the church that goes into the world and tells them about our loving Father. That we would be evangelistic but we would not sacrifice discipline or discipleship. We're going to live in the tension of both of them.

And then, what that's going to form is the church that the world needs. A church on the inside that is being purified, that is being made holy, that is being shaped into the image of Jesus, that has a love that is other-worldly, that will catch the eye of this world and will be what draws Him to all people.

So, right where you are, just close your eyes, bow your heads, and join us in prayer.

Father, we come to You today with a heavy topic. But, God, it's one that needs to be redeemed. It's a process that needs to be reestablished because too much is at stake. So, God, I pray that we follow Your steps. We trust Your process.

God, I pray first for us that if there is any sin that is in our lives that we are aware of, secret sin in our lives, God, I pray Your Spirit would convict us of that even if it is sin that we have been unrepentant of. God, we believe that You can redeem that. We believe that You can free us from that. We believe those chains can fall. I pray in the name of Jesus that that happens.

God, for sin that is going on in this church, in our ministries, God, in our groups, God, the conversations that need to happen, God, by Your Spirit and by Your love and by Your truth and by Your grace, I pray those conversations are had this week. I pray hearts are open and softened and people receive it and repent and to turn toward You.

And then, God, I pray through that process You shape us. God, I pray that You form us into Your image. God, that we would live in a way and a manner that is worthy of Your gospel. God, that the church would be really what it's supposed to be. God, a group of brothers and sisters with their lives bound up and dependent upon one another, serving one another, loving one another, being there for one another.

God, I pray that that is our vision. And, God, I pray out of that overflow, out of that unity, out of that love, Lord, that that is what this watching world gets to see, a love like they have never seen. God, I pray it sparks a curiosity that over and over again we get to tell your gospel and point people to You, Jesus.



God, this is what we ask for. God, awaken our souls. Awaken our minds. God, lead us to You. God, use us as You see fit. It is in Your perfect and holy name we pray. And the church says: Amen.

