

## Local Churches in Unity & Cooperation, p.2

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Matthew 9:37-38

**Preached on:** Monday, February 1, 2021

### **Anchored in Truth Ministries**

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

**Website:** [www.anchoredintruth.org](http://www.anchoredintruth.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth](http://www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth)

Well, grab your Bibles and let's go to Matthew again. This will be again a foundation stone and we're gonna come back to it, uh, probably next week when we finish this little series, and as I've said what I've decided is this, this series will be something that perspective students or those who want to partner with us, not everyone will go through the school that partners with Anchored in Truth missions, but those who want to partner with us will be asked to watch this and fill out an outline of some kind and then give a written statement that, "Yes, I embrace those truths. I'm committed to that. That's what me and my church or the elders in my church are looking for, and we would like to unite with you brothers and sisters." And so you might ask, "Well, why are you preaching it to us?" Well, two things. First of all, you need to grasp these things because it's not my ministry or Tim Seal's ministry, or the staff's ministry, it's our ministry. God gave this to us. Uh, we won't today but probably next Sunday we'll look at numerous passages where the Apostle Paul just assumed, he didn't ask, he didn't discuss it, there was not a vote or a committee meeting, he's assumed all the churches he was helping would welcome and support all the mission work and the other churches he was helping. He'd go like, uh. To Rome or wherever he went and he'd say things like, "I'm gonna stay there with you awhile, then I want you to send me on my way." What that meant was, "You're gonna put me up, you're gonna feed me and take care of me, and then when I go out, you're gonna give me funds to take care of me as I go help other churches and do other mission work." He just assumed the churches, the church body, not just the church leaders but the churches would help him in that work.

So one of the keys to Anchored in Truth missions is that it's, it's a product of us having to a good and decent degree walked out the truths we teach and we believe. Uh, sometimes people ask, "Well, why is it taking so long?" Because it takes a long time to get a Baptist church there. They don't just wake up in the morning honoring biblical truth. And so now that we're to that place where I think we have, uh, a sound theology and proven methodology, now we want to aggressively reproduce these things. And Brother Steve was telling me this week, there's more and more opportunities around the world and we're getting fabulous feedback from our sermons we're putting, uh, in places around the world, and usually what that does is certain pastors and church leaders will begin to hear that preaching and think, say, "Hey, that's what we want to be a part of. That's, that's what we believe and we need help. We're kind of by ourselves." And they'll contact us and

before long we'll have a, a what I might call a mother church in that region that we can work with and then begin to train pastors and support them out of there. And maybe, maybe, maybe if you don't go to sleep on me, maybe if you don't coast on me and I take enough vitamin B, we can have 4, 8, 10, 12 of these centers around the world – now listen to me – all centered out of proven, established, biblically, spiritually healthy local churches which is the only model we see in the New Testament. Nothing we do, nothing I do is unique or creative. It's old old Bible stuff. I don't know, for some reason folks just don't do it. Well, I think I know why, it's easier to do other stuff, but the other stuff isn't true and the other stuff doesn't last.

Matthew 9:35-38.

35 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

What a powerful little phrase verse 35 is, it's Matthew 9:36,

36 Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Now I've probably failed there, maybe you would say you've probably failed there to, but how much have we as a church family said, "Lord, thrust out laborers and we're willing to train them, equip them, mentor them, and then follow them where they go and continue to support and help them as they face the trials, the burdens, the difficulties, of planting or revitalizing churches to be biblically, spiritually, healthy churches." God, give us the men, raise them up, thrust them out. Maybe, maybe the Lord was waiting for us to get to this point where we can now say we have a, an adequate training, a, approach to these men, and a way to properly equip them and then follow up and mentor them as they get on the field. So Jesus says they're like sheep without a shepherd and we need to pray that the Lord of the harvest will thrust out laborers. So we'll get back to that as we, um, round things up here in a moment.

Now I've entitled this "Local Churches in Unity & Cooperation." First of all, every church that's a true, biblically, spiritually, healthy church has unity with every other biblically, spiritual, spiritually, healthy church. That's just natural. It's, it's amazing how I can go around the world and walk into fellowships like ?? there in Scotland and I just feel like I'm one of them. I've just feel like I've known them for years. We believe the same doctrines. We stand on the same truths. We're trying to function in the same methods within the church. But there is a, a, a place for those churches to formally, officially link together and say, "Now together we can do more." And again we won't look at it today but a week from today we'll show you how thoroughly the New Testament illustrates

churches holding hands and partnering together to continue to help one another and plant more churches.

So y'all know what I did with my glasses? Oh, here.

So we talked about, first of all, who is the Creator of our unity and our cooperation? Well, it's Jesus Christ. I'm not gonna go into all of this but he talked about that he has sheep, he has sheep of the Jewish fold, that he had sheep of the gentile fold, he said, "But, but they're all gonna be one sheep, one flock with one shepherd," emphasizing the unity we have with all true believers everywhere. Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer in John 17, "That they may be one even as We are One." He's praying to the Father. He prayed again in John 17, "I want those flock, My sheep to be perfected in unity." I think the idea there is, "I want them to mature spiritually and the fruit of spiritually mature, solid Christians is unity." Very often in churches we get that backwards, we try to push unity without maturity and we really have toleration of the flesh instead of spiritual unity. So as we grow and mature and as individual churches grow and mature, they find themselves able to unite together and serve the Lord.

Now the second thing, not only are we one shepherd of one flock, that was A, not only did Jesus pray for unity but now we come to, to, did I make that... What was my second point? Put it on the screen for me. I've used two different forms of outlines here. II. Alright. I., was Jesus who is the Creator of our unity and cooperation. II., is the essential pillars of local churches in unity and cooperation, and those are the three pillars there. If we're gonna unite with other churches and say, "Let's, let's hold hands together and let's train and let's send out these pastors. Let's support them and mentor them around, wherever they are around the world," we're doing that now quite a bit of it, "then we must know that we are united in doctrine, we're united in the essential matter of Spirit's work and the Spirit's empowerment, and we're united together on the basic discipleship that churches ought to be involved in." Now discipleship here is not like personal discipleship, though that must be there, of course. It's more the church's methodologies. We agree on the basic biblical principles that local churches should be embracing.

Now for us, that would include a lot of things but three of the foundational things would be that we hold to the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit as the centerpiece of congregational worship. We hold to every member ministry through small groups. If any church would say to us, "We have no desire to see the body care for, love, encourage, correct, rebuke, disciple one another through small groups," then we would say, "We love you but you don't need to be a part of our ministry because you are letting go of a very great, essential, biblical doctrine of what makes a church a church." So one of the methods preaching the word in the power of the Spirit, the other, uh, method is every member ministry through small groups, another method would be personalized strategic world missions. And I, I've been through this a million times with pastors and church leaders, when I'll give them those three things and show them exhaustively how biblical they are, they'll say, "Yeah, we grasp that. That's good stuff, but can we do this and this and this too?" And I'll usually say, "Well, that's not necessarily wrong but are you doing those three things well already?" I've been doing this 40 years and it's about killed me to

get those three things done right. Are you hearing me? And I think that's one of the things God's helped us with through the years is we decided there's a few foundational things we must do well and if we get those done well, then we'll do basketball for Jesus, or puppets for Jesus. Not that that's all wrong but my point is do what the Bible says we must do before you go to other stuff. And when I tell that to pastors, I've already set them up because they'll never get through with the three to get to the other stuff.

You see, we don't need to go to God and say, "God, we are so clever and, God, we are so creative, and we are so unique, we can get Your work done better than the way You prescribe to do it." I revolt at that. Let's prove to the world God's wisdom is best and God's wisdom is right. And so that's why we've come up with those three sometimes I call them the structures of grace. There are means of grace but the means of grace like preaching and praying and fellowship, whatever you want to call it, church discipline, etc., the means of grace needs structures to function through. Preaching the word, congregational worship, every member ministry through small groups, and personalized strategic world missions, you do those well, you will not have time to get to anything else, and secondly, your church will be blessed and encouraged because you're not running around like a dog chasing his tail about, "Well, what's the new emphasis this year? What's the new emphasis for the next five years?" No, we're, we're, our emphasis is 2,000 years old. It's been there all along.

Alright, so we're talking about the essential pillars of churches in unity and cooperation and we talked about and let's elaborate again a little bit and I'm gonna build on a little bit the, the pillar of sound doctrine. Now this is one that you would expect the majority of churches would already have this down. They should already have a solid doctrinal statement that they say they are committed to and hold to. Um, we've put a lot of work into ours. It means something to us. It's not a dusty piece of paper in a filing cabinet. We believe and hold to and strive to walk in that statement of doctrine that we believe, where doctrine just means teaching.

Now I think I said this when we ended last time but that is the, "the work of missions should be the object of cooperation among churches and doctrinal truth must be its base." We do not unite together to do missions, we unite around truth and then being anchored in truth, we do missions together. Are you with me, church? This whole, and you'll hear that, "Oh, we've gotta be unified." Well, unified around what? If you disagree with me on essential doctrine, we can't be unified and that, as I said earlier, is a reason why we have not for many many years been cooperating hardly at all with our, the denomination we were once a part of because so many in our denomination are all over the place in their doctrine. Yes, there's some good, godly, solid brothers out there and I praise God for them, some of my best friends are, are functioning in Southern Baptist life, but yet they agree with me that we have far too much under this big text, this denominational big tent of a variety of doctrines that actually contradict one another. How can you do missions together unless you be agreed on the basic doctrines of what, who Christ is, what the gospel is, what conversion is, what the church is? And by the way, what moral absolutes the Bible teaches. We, we're not, we're not, we are not, absolutely not gonna cooperate with anybody who is beginning to question if the moral standards of scripture apply

anymore concerning human sexuality particularly. We have leaders, leaders, no the leader, the president of the largest Protestant denomination in the world going soft on whether it's really as bad as the Bible says to be involved in sexual relations with someone of your own sex. How can I do missions with someone like that? Answer my question. You can't. You can't.

Doctrinal agreement. Now look, we're not talking about 1,001 sideline issues, okay? You can have a little disagreement on spiritual gifts here and there and 1,001 other things. We're talking about foundational things that matter. Now here's what you run into and we're talking about cooperating together, you run into and we have seen it, I mean, over and over and over again, folks that will tell you one thing, "Oh, yeah, now we agree with that. Yeah, we stand on that." Then you watch how they function in the church and they're not standing on it and they don't function like they believe it at all. So fidelity in true doctrine and then, of course, that gets to our third pillar. I'm getting ahead of myself.'

Well, just a, a, a few quick thoughts on how thoroughly the New Testament talks about we must unify around sound doctrine. For example, just listen to me right now. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul rebukes this young immature church because they begin to be open to "another Jesus," and begin to be open to "another gospel," which obviously there is no other, it's, it's a figure of speech, uh, as he's rebuking them for beginning to toy with other doctrines about Christ, and other doctrines other than the ones he gave them about what the gospel really is. Um, in Galatians 1, he says there are those who are preaching a "different gospel," and they are "distorting the gospel," and they are "disturbing you." That means they're upsetting the unity. What he's saying, if we can't agree on the doctrine that I gave you as a local church, if you've got guys standing up and they're beginning to put a new spin and a new twist on things and, "Well, it's Jesus but it's really this kind of Jesus, not quite like the Jesus Paul taught you. And it's the gospel but this is really what the gospel ought to be, a little different than what Paul taught you." Paul said, "Get rid of that stuff." He actually goes on to say, "Let anyone who does that be accursed of God, anathema, set aside as only worthy of destruction and wrath." Powerful stuff. He's pointing out the importance of unity around doctrine.

And then Galatians 5 he says a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. Leaven is yeast. You put a little yeast in a big old lump of dough, it will impact the whole lump eventually and that's why I'm telling you – are you listening, church – that's why when we hear these key denominational leaders in order to get along with the culture and avoid persecution begin to say these things that we might not want to stand where our forefathers and all the way back to the, the men of the Bible stood on moral principles and moral absolutes anymore, and here what they, what they do is they cloak all of this compromise and this leaning away from Bible truth into a culturally interpretive understanding of truth, they lean over into that because it, they, they would say it helps us reach more for Jesus. Oh, really? No, what you're doing is you're distorting the gospel. You're preaching another gospel. And so when people begin to lean that way – listen to me, church – it's that is the context, when people begin to lean away from sound doctrine, that's the context in which Paul said a little of that will, will poison the whole thing. And see, that's what makes it challenging, is that when it first starts, our natural inclination, I think, is to be kind and

understanding, give them some space and say, "Well, that's not that big a deal." That's the way it always starts. It's not that big a deal but they never stop there. Brother, you kick open a crack in the door and Satan will sling it wide open. We have to be united around doctrine.

Uh, these will be on your screen. 2 Thessalonians 3:14 and 15, "If anyone does not obey our instructions," that is, our teaching, our doctrine, "in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him." So notice there can be no unity with those who begin to embrace and teach false doctrine.

Titus 1:10 and 11, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced." Why? Aren't we supposed to hear everybody in the church? No, we're not to hear everybody in the church. We don't have the First Amendment here. We're to hear truth in the church. Because, he says, those people who begin to teach these things that are contrary to sound doctrine, they must be silenced "because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." He said really what they're trying to do is build their own club. They're trying to boost their own ego and gain them a following as, "Oh, we have insights your elders don't have. You ought to side with us against them." No unity. You can't unify if you're not agreed on sound doctrine.

2 John 1:9 through 11, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ," it means there's a definite doctrine of who Christ is and what salvation is, he says those people they do "not have God; and the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching," that means the doctrines I gave you about Christ and the gospel, "do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." Again, the whole concept is if there's no unity in doctrine, there's no unity at all. I don't care how aggressive they are, I don't care how many churches they claim they've planted, I don't care how many, how much they've grown in numbers, I don't care how enthusiastic they are, I don't care how much they sacrifice, if they do not agree on the doctrines of Christ and the gospel and the foundational doctrines of the faith in general, there can be no unity and cooperation and mission work done together. Thus again, why we many years ago and formally just a year or so ago said we don't see any future in cooperating with the machine called Southern Baptist to do missions. There's too many contrary points of doctrine.

Alright, pillar 2. The second pillar of our unity and cooperation is they must, there must be an empowerment of the true Spirit, empowered by the true Spirit. Now this is a little more difficult to discern and it takes some time. But here's one thing I want to point out as we're considering the second pillar essential for unity and cooperation and that is that these so connect together, and I find this in Bible truth over and over again, we want to organize things and we want to like an engineer just lay it out and structure it real nice and neat, and the Bible just don't quite let us do that because these so intermingle though you can discuss them for understanding separately but they always connect together. For example, note how spiritual power connects inseparably to true doctrine. The Spirit wrote

the Bible that gives us true doctrine. Then the Spirit interprets the Bible to us so we can understand true doctrine. And then the Spirit empowers us so we can live out true discipleship following true doctrine, and that's the third pillar, true discipleship. You see what we mean? You just, they're all together.

Now Ephesians 3:3 and 4 says that we are being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace for there is one body and one Spirit, this is also you are called in one hope of your calling. Now when he says there is the unity of the Spirit and there is one body and one Spirit, now the word "one Spirit" means this is a specific, special unity that's created by this one specific Spirit. Now there are other spirits, there's the worldly spirit and all that comes under the handy, heading of the antichrist spirit, but when a congregation comes together, or if individual congregations unite together, there must be evidence that it is the one Holy Spirit that has changed the people in that congregation and that we are seeking to live by his power to do God's work. Now listen to me, are you listening to me? You gotta listen to me because you gotta help me do this. These pastors are gonna come in and they're gonna talk to you and you, and they're gonna talk to you and you, and here's what they want to know, "Do you guys really believe this or do you just sit there on Sunday while Jeff Noblit yells at you for 45 minutes?" Don't say, "Hey, it's usually 50 minutes or an hour, it's not just 45." You've gotta be able to say as a layman, "No, we believe those things. We embrace those things and we joy in those things." And by the way, you have been doing that and that's part of the power of the growth of our ministry is that they see the reality in you. It's bigger than just me. It's not my ministry, it's our ministry.

So this Holy Spirit has to be doing a work in that church, that is, he's the one who's converting them, drawing them to Christ, and he's the one who's continuing to sanctify them and only churches that embrace the true work of the Spirit can be in unity and in cooperation. Tongue-in-cheek, one of my son-in-laws sent me a, an ad, and I guess churches can, can buy in or pay for or connect to this, this webcast, whatever it is, and you put it on the screens and you watch the Super Bowl and you share the gospel together. Now I'm not here to tell you that dyed-in-the-wool evil to watch the Super Bowl at church, though we are never gonna do that, but I tongue-in-cheek took that article, that ad, that promotion that my son-in-law sent to me and I sent it to Brother Jono Sims. I can't tell you from the pulpit my nickname for him but nonetheless, he's quite firm in his convictions on things. And then I put on there, "This would be real effective if the Holy Spirit does not empower the preaching of the gospel." Here's my point: if you believe that the Spirit works the way the Bible teaches it works, you don't have to do that stuff to draw crowds and build a church. And if you build a church on that stuff, what are you gonna do next? What carnival you gonna put on next week to make Jesus attractive enough for your loyalty and your devotion? God says, "My word will be accompanied by My Spirit to reveal in men them the glories of Jesus Christ and they will begin to love Him and treasure Him and serve Him, and upon that rock I will build My church." Not your bringing in of worldly, clever nonsense into God's church.

Well, we've been building off Ephesians 4:1-7 as we've talked about these pillars. Now we're talking about Spirit-empowerment must be there. Now we've got to be careful here.

Hold on for just a second. When we begin to work with a church, they may be just beginning to grasp a truly regenerate church membership, those regenerated by the Holy Spirit. You and I have been there, amen? It was decades ago but you and I were there. Do you remember when we had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, and that's not enough, it's more than that, on our membership roll that gave zero evidence of being born of the Spirit? You know how we know they gave zero evidence of being born in the Spirit? 1. We could never, they never came. They never came to church. 2. We knew enough about a lot of them that they were living like they didn't know Jesus out in the world. That's not a Spirit-wrought church. That's a worldly church and that's commonplace. It took us many years to get that in a, in a decent shape of health, if you will, concerning membership.

So we have to be careful because there is a false spirit that mimics the virtues of the true work of the Spirit – listen to me – time usually reveals the truth. As we've been in fellowship with pastors and church plants for many years now, unfortunately it's not unusual for us to have a church that we have to part ways with and usually we're very gracious, we're longsuffering, we talk to them, uh, extensively about what's going on and what they're doing because they begin to grab at this and grab at that, and run toward this and run toward that, and they're not trusting the Spirit to use the preaching of the word to build the church. They're trusting their own strengths and abilities and wisdom and pretty soon there's a parting of the ways. But it took time before it became evident that they were not one of us. Now the good thing is the majority of the time they themselves pull themselves away because they no longer want to be around us because they're contradicted by our convictions, if not convicted by our convictions.

1 John 4:1 reminds us, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits," there's a testing over time of, first of all, individual Christians but also of individual churches, "to see if they are really of God."

Um, one powerful example of how the Spirit can change things and I'll just read this because it's the illustration of Jews being saved and becoming Christians and Gentiles being saved and becoming Christians. Now the leftist of our day would like to convince us that there's a radical foaming at the mouth hatred and racism in our country. Well, as long as men are fallen, there's gonna be hatred for 1,001 different things, including skin color, every now and then and that's wicked and evil and wrong and we denounce it. Period. But there's all kinds of hatred and evil in men's hearts. It would be hard to find anymore venomous enmity between two groups than the ancient Jews and the ancient Gentiles. They hated each other. The Jews regularly, not tongue-in-cheek, regularly referred to the Gentiles as the Gentile dogs. Pretty strong stuff. Then some Gentiles started coming to Christ and some Jews starting coming to Christ. Yeah, there was some bumps in the road but here's what Paul said about that in Ephesians 2:14-18. Ephesians 2:14-18, "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh," that's Christ in his flesh, "the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.



And He came and preached peace to those who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access," here it is, "in one Spirit." Do you see that? It's the work of the Holy Spirit. Listen to me, only the Holy Spirit can so radically change and reform an ancient Jew's heart that he could put his arms around a Gentile and say, "You're my brother more than the descendants of Abraham." And an old, arrogant, secular, ungodly, immoral, perverted Gentile of this day could receive Jesus Christ and his heart be so radically transformed he turns his back on those worldly, ungodly, evil ways and he put his arm around a Jew that he just despised and say, "Today you are my brother more than my Greek and Roman heritage." Only the Spirit can do that, folks. Only the Spirit can do that, and so that's what builds a mature healthy church, when by and large the membership are those who have had a true, regenerating, born again work of the Spirit, and then those individual churches who are on that track together can unite together and cooperate to do missions together.

So just a practical challenge at this point. It has taken me so long to get through these notes. I'm just looking at where I am and looking at the time. Are you looking at the time? Raise your hand. I didn't think you would. Folks, this is in my bone marrow. I believe this stuff. What's in your bone marrow? Do you know the one thing that really matters from time and eternity is Jesus Christ and his church? The rest of the stuff's just filler. Are you hearing me? The rest of the stuff's just filler. You say, "Well, what about my family?" They're all gonna die one day and you're gonna be by yourself but the church will still be here. Are you hearing me? You get to heaven, you'll not be married like you are down here. I know we've got those sentimental songs about we'll all be together in heaven. I don't know if we will or not. Yeah, we'll all be there but I don't know if any one brother or sister in Christ is more important to you than any other brother or sister in Christ when you get perfected in heaven. I think what it'll really be is they're all like your babies and your uncles and your grandmother and your daddy. Everybody will be like that then. Isn't that cool? Have you, did you enjoy going to your grandmother's house as much as I enjoyed going to my grandmother's house? Well, every day in heaven you'll have 100 million grandmothers. I mean, isn't that, just think, it's hard to fathom the glories of heaven.

So coming down to local churches and this is a charge to this church, it's a charge to other local churches, what glues your congregation together? What forms your unity? Is it cold doctrine? There are those groups who have impeccable doctrinal statements. They've dotted every i, they've crossed every t of orthodoxy, but that's all they've got. They don't have the power of the Spirit. There's not the warmth, joy and love for the brethren. It's cold, rigid, old, doctrinal skeleton. The life's not there. That's not enough, folks. Is it, is it denominational loyalty? I'm gonna tell you, loyalty to a denomination that's going wrong is a great and vile idolatry. God did not establish the United Methodist Church. He did not establish the Southern Baptist Convention. Those things may be helpful but when they veer from sound doctrine, we are to reject them and go with God.

Is it denominational loyalty? Is it the fear of man? Some pastors are considered successful pastors because they can keep everybody together, but upon closer examination sometimes you find that they're just skilled at keeping all the power-brokers

happy. This lady over here, she's a power-broker, she wants to do these ministries so he keeps her happy. This man over here, he's in his pride and ego, he's got his own ministry going so he gives him blessing and keeps him happy. Then this one and this one and this one and this one, and the really great pastors are those that can, can manage all those different sects, factions, if you will, in the church and keep them happy while they're doing their own thing. Listen to me, brothers and sisters: I don't have my own thing in the church. Here's the thing. You don't have your hold on things. Here's the thing. Now you do have elders you're to honor and submit to but it's, we'd better make sure that we're following the book in what we call us to do together as a church.

Is it cold doctrine? Is it denominational loyalty that holds you together or holds a group of individual churches together? Is it the fear of man? Is it extrabiblical idolatries, legalisms? You know, there's some great groups who've been together for years and you know what they're centered around? We hold to these seven or eight don'ts and we hold to these seven or eight do's and, brother, that's what we hold to. It can be as ridiculous as women not wearing make-up or we don't go to the picture show and all points in between, and that, they unite together around some rules that have nothing to do with gospel change, Spirit-regenerated hearts and the life of the Spirit bringing them together. All of those things, cold doctrine, denominational loyalty, fear of man, extrabiblical idolatries, these are not Spirit-wrought unities.

So if we're gonna connect together with churches and do missions together for the glory of God, the churches involved, each individual church must be striving toward a Spirit-wrought membership and must be striving toward a Spirit-wrought unity and ministry in that church. It's hard to know sometimes but time usually tells. We're gonna close there, alright?

So we've come through this bumpy road of a, a presidential election that might be the most bizarre in American history, things seem to be in upheaval, some of you would say, "Yeah, and the antichrist has taken the throne in Washington." He might've just left it. I don't know who the antichrist is. We've had a pandemic that's really made things so strange and quite honestly I know some of you have suffered with anxiety and worry and maybe even depression, and I, I, I sympathize with that. I've tasted of those things. Every preacher I've ever studied and admired went through bouts of depression. I think it's because of the weightiness of what he has to handle. But listen to me, God's work, done God's way, for God's glory goes on anyway. God didn't save you and he didn't save me and call me to the ministry to fix America but to build his church. Now the best way to help America be better is to have godly churches everywhere. Can I say it again? I just say this because it's the denomination I know the most about, but if all 42,000 Southern Baptist church had pulpits that were aflame with righteousness, preaching the word of God without compromise, there'd be so much salt and so much light splashing over we'd never have to worry about who's running for office, nobody could be elected that denied God's truth. Are you hearing me, church? The church is the key but not to fix the culture. We want to have true churches and when they are true churches, that will help the culture more than anything and that's what I've spent my life doing and now many people can say that, "Pastor, that's what we've spent our lives doing with you." And I appreciate that.

So I believe God's brought Grace Life Church and Anchored in Truth Ministries to this last phase of getting the way we equip men, we've been doing this for years already, this isn't new but now we're doing it in a more structured, effective way, and now we must not grow weary in well-doing. I need to gird up, I need you to gird up your loins, go get you a vitamin B shot, whatever you gotta do and say, "Pastor, let's keep on going for the glory of God." Amen?