



## **Our Christian Fellowship**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, we talk at Compass about the Christian's relationship to his or her church with three words, three verbs that I trust you're familiar with by now, if you've been around the church very long. And those are the words attend, connect and serve. You've heard those. Attend, connect and serve. And of course, we're talking about there the relationship that we have to our church in three dimensions, in three ways. We've got to attend, of course, that's the assembling of ourselves together here in the church where our chairs are side-by-side, and we're engaging in the congregational meetings of worship and teaching. And then, of course, the Bible is very clear that we've got to then turn our chairs face-to-face, because there has to be that stirring one other on to love and good deeds. There has to be that interaction, there has to be a conversation. There has to be some kind of knowledge of those in my church, and they have to know me and all of that have to take place. We call that connecting.

And then, of course, there's a time to get out of the chair and get to a ministry post. We call that serving where everyone has a job to do and God has gifted us. And he says, we've got to utilize those gifts as good stewards. So attend, connect and serve. And you're familiar with those. We've taught on those, we've talked about those. Those are all really engendered and brought forth from the biblical responsibilities we see clearly in Scripture. Not as some kind of a hard burden that we're supposed to bear, some kind of onerous responsibility. But as Christians, things that we should desire to do, that we want to do, because these are God's commands for us, and his commands are not burdensome, to quote First John 5 and so we are Christians who should be eager to do those things.

But in real life there are problems in the sense that we can know what the Bible says and we should know what our responsibility is and we get into life and it gets hard and we struggle. We may be well-intentioned as it relates to attending, connecting and serving, but what we need, I believe, is this time of year when we think about a whole new church calendar and everything starting up next week and here we go again on our church schedule, I think we need three other verbs, three other words that kind of lie behind the three primary words of attend, connect and serve that help us to do those things. And I derived these three words that I'd like to add somewhere in the background of your minds to always be remembered as the things that keep us attending, connecting and serving until we meet Christ face-to-face.

Because we can want to do those things that we can say that we should do those things, but to do those things it takes these three verbs. And I derived these from the passage that we are going to look at this morning in Philippians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. And I do believe that these four verses give us the concepts that I want to distill into those three verbs that should always be in your thinking, the kinds of fuel, the kind of motivation, the prompting that we're going to have to keep doing this, I trust, as joyfully engaged Christians in the work that God has called us to do as it relates to our church. Being there, faithfully attending, connecting, having people know us, we know them, and engaging in that kind of spurring on to love and good deeds, and then having a ministry post where God's got a responsibility for me to carry out within my church congregation.



We need to establish that. There are all kinds of sermons on the back of the worksheet where we've established all of that, which I trust has been solidly biblically established in your thinking. But here, let's work with this passage today, which as you look at it, if you glance at Philippians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4, I hope it's a familiar passage to you. Certainly verses 5 through 11 should be familiar. We quote them all the time as it relates to the incarnation of Christ. It's a great, thick, theologically rich section of Scripture that teaches us about how Christ was willing, as the second person of the Godhead, to lay aside his divine prerogatives, to come and serve in the appearance and form of a man. Of course he was a man, also fully God. His divinity was in no way diminished. But he comes and refuses to independently exercise his divine attributes to be the mechanism for our redemption and it's a great section.

But all of that great Christological truth in verses 5 through 11 is really set in a pastoral concern that the Apostle Paul has for the church at Philippi. And there is a problem in Philippi. It's a problem that he starts to address right here and will continue to weave throughout his instruction until it comes to a culmination in Chapter 4. And it's important for us to make these kinds of connections. As a matter of fact, I'll read the text for you, but then I want to try and understand the main verb in this passage, which is found in verse 2, and then try and see how it ties to the whole context and then try to understand something which at first blush it seems like it's easy to understand, but I think it's a little more challenging to understand in context. So we'll do that and hopefully with all the confusion and fog of all that we'll come out of this message, I trust, with clarity as to exactly what God would have us do in response to these texts.

Let me read it for you. It's found in Philippians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. Follow along, please, if you would, with your eyeballs on the text of your Bibles. I'm reading from the English Standard Version and it reads like this. "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others as more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also the interests of others."

Now you've read that. You know that. You get it. I hope that's familiar to you. But there is some question about what verse 1 possibly could mean in terms of encouragement in Christ and comfort of love and participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy. We've got to understand that I think in light of the main concern here of the Apostle Paul, which is a command to complete his joy. Right? How do I complete your joy? Well, by the participles that follow: "being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." Do you see the word "mind" repeated twice? Smile at me if you see that. Repeated twice. One mind, same mind. That word really is the theme that starts here, continues into verse 5. You can see in verse 5, "have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." So this thinking, this mindset is what he wants them to have. And it relates to other people as we're going to see, as Jesus lays aside his privileges to put the interests of others before himself to accomplish their salvation.



And all of this is going to go in and out of all these important motivations to finally get to where he's going to go in enlisting the same word, the same verb that we see in Chapter 4. So let me speed ahead and get the full context of this argument, where it lands in Chapter 4 verse 2. So look at Chapter 4 verse 2, and we'll see where we're going with all of this. Paul is concerned about them being of the same mind. Well, he finally ramps up into two gals who I hope are very embarrassed when they hear their names being read from the letter that came from the apostle. "I entreat," I'm addressing now and begging and exhorting, "Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord."

Now, if you have an English Standard Version I just want to know when you read the words "agree in the Lord," you don't see the tie that I kind of built you up to expect. But if you were to look at the Greek New Testament or even in some other translations, you'll find that the word is the same exact word that we have over there that began the argument in Chapter 2 verse 2, which is to "complete his joy by being of the same mind." It's the same word "phoneo." It's, just translated here "to agree in the Lord." But the word is really to have the same mind. You Euodia and you Syntyche, you need to have the same mind. So Paul is addressing a problem in the church that of course goes beyond Euodia and Syntyche. These are just two examples, and they typified the problem of the factionalism within the church of two gals who probably crossed their arms when the other walks into the room and they go, "yeah, um, well." If they get assigned to the same small group, they would not go. Right? There's like no way. I'm not going to be a part of that. Because they're at odds with each other.

And so he's enlisting the person probably who is transporting this letter, he calls him a true companion. He says, "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side-by-side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life." Okay, he's saying, you guys are both Christians. You guys will have your names written in the Book of Life. You have labored with me when I was there as evangelistic helpers. You've been involved in ministry with me. Just you guys cannot be of two different minds. You guys need to get on the same page.

Now, are you doing our Daily Bible Reading? If you're doing our Daily Bible Reading, we hit the passage this morning in First Corinthians. It reminds us that this was going on in the church of Corinth as well. We had factionalism. "I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas." And Paul just goes after them on that and says, "Stop it." You could enlist the same word there as we have here and that is you need to be of the same mind. So pastorally, I just want you to think now, think with me. What is he wanting? Right? He wants these people who are kind of turning their cold shoulder at each other to stop doing that and they need to come together. And that's why it's not a bad translation to use the word phoneo and to translate it, you need to agree.

But it's more than just like you need to just agree. It's like you need to get along. You need to engage with them. You need to be connected like you should be. You're connected in the Book of Life. You are connected in ministry with me. You are partnering and teaming. And Paul loves that word, by the way, in this book, partnering together. You need to partner



together. You need to stop having this division and you need to move forward. Connect. Now, I'm not here preaching this passage because I have detected some problem in our church that I'm trying to address. Paul addresses it in Corinth, which I think is severe. He addresses here, which I think is certainly problematic. But all of it results in the same thing. If our church is healthy, if the church at Philippi is healthy, if the church at Corinth is healthy, well, then people are engaging with each other and they don't have their barriers up. They don't have their walls up. They're not crossing their arms. They're not refusing to go if so and so is there. They are functioning as the church body ought to function. Okay.

So with that in view, and I could spend much more time trying to build the argument that I think this is what's kind of driving what Paul is saying in this text. Now, there's an excursion here on the, you know, the great kenosis of Christ. He lays aside his divinity, and there's an excursus here about how great Timothy is. And we'll see plenty of excursuses, if that's a word, you can look it up, where even in Chapter 3 about justification by faith, they're great sections, but they're all weaved in a pastoral concern about the church being together. Get together, be of the same mind. Complete my joy, make me really happy, if you guys get together and function as a church in the way you should.

So with that in view, let's try and get our first point if we can. I'm going to have three verbs, three main verbs. That's what I want you to remember from this sermon. We'll get the first one from verse 1. But before we ever get there, this is a long lead-up into the first point, I need to understand what it's saying. What in the world is this list all about? Now, the "if" that's not hard for us to figure out, right? The "if" it's not like "if there is," "if there is any encouragement in Christ," which in Greek, by the way, it repeats the word "if," "if there is any comfort in love, if there is any participation in the Spirit, if any affection and sympathy." So it's not like "if like I don't know if there is." Of course there is. It's like you could translate it "since." He's saying since this is this way or, you know, if it's, you know, if you need food to survive, if you need to breathe to live. I mean, of course you do. Well, then you should do this.

So it's all leading to the main verb, which is you guys need to get together, get along, connect with one another. This church needs to be functioning as it ought to. But he starts with this list, and I would say if I didn't give you any of that background and I said, "Hey, you right there, you're going to teach this passage to our teenagers across the parking lot. So I just want you to teach on verse 1 and I'll give you 3 hours, get your sermon together and go over there." It should take you longer than that, but let's just say 3 hours, we're in a hurry. Three hours, get together, do your best Bible study you can, and then go over there and teach that group of teenagers verse 1.

Most of us would see words like encouragement in Christ, you'd think, "Mm hmm. What passages talk about encouragement in Christ?" How are we getting encouraged in Christ? What does it mean to be encouraged in Christ? And you look up the word "Paraklésis," you know that we have this sense of strengthening and being emboldened and being able to stand in Christ. I get that. You know, there's plenty theologically, our redemption. You could go on and on and on and go, okay, I can teach that. And then "comfort in love." Comfort in love. You know, yeah, to be loved by God, there's comfort in that and there's a sense in which



I'm unworthy, but then God loves me and how comforting it is that he accepts me in Christ. What a great thing.

And then you'd study "participation in the Spirit" and you'd learn, I hope, you would learn if you clicked on your software, you'd learn the word "Koinonia" is the word that translates "participation." But even as the English Standard Version translators chose the word participation, we're still thinking in that vertical sense of like, how great is it to be like participating in the Spirit, that the Spirit of God has indwelt my life, that I have a share in the Spirit of God, that I have camaraderie with God because I'm in the Spirit. The Spirit has now made residence in my life. And you would say things like, "Wow, that's just great. There's a lot I could teach on that."

And then you'd say, if "any affection and sympathy." And syntactically there are four movements in this, and the fourth one has got these two words. So it's not, if any affection and if any sympathy, but it's actually a singular, if any "affection and sympathy," which is done grammatically for a reason, just to get us to think in these two terms and it doesn't give us an object. But the point is, if you have any affection, which is the word "Splachna," which is the word like, if you have this sense of, it's literally the word "intestines."

I have a sense of me being heartened in my emotions. If I have any, even the word sympathy, if I have any sense of God's mercy or kindness toward me. It's a lot like Psalm 103 if "a father has compassion," or pity, "on his son," it's like that with God that "God has compassion" and pity on us. He knows our frame. He knows we're just dust. If you know that passage. It's like, isn't it great that we have this sympathy from God, this affection from God? It is heartwarming to us that he's like a shepherd who scoops up the sheep and carries them in his arms. You can think all of these phrases, encouragement in Christ, comfort in love, participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy, you can think vertically about them. Okay.

If I just divorced everything from the context and I said, talk about all of those, what does all of that mean? You might go over there and start talking to our teenagers about all these things in a vertical relationship, how your relationship with God gives you these things. Now, they're all positive obviously. They're all meant to be positive. But the value you might preach, I would think divorced from the context and therefore miss the point, I would say you would think about how great how great it is to be Christian. I mean, you get encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, from God's love, you get participation or fellowship and partaking in the Spirit that you have this sense of camaraderie and the Spirit standing with you and never leave you, never forsake you. I get affection and sympathy from God. He understands my frame. He's so kind and endearing. I get it.

But this is not a passage about you being on a remote island having a singular relationship with God, reading this text and thinking, "Isn't it great to be a Christian?" That's not what the context is about. And I told you what the context is about. Paul is concerned with them as a church connecting. That's why I don't mind even the word participation from koinonia being translated "fellowship" because really that gets us thinking about horizontal relationships and clearly that is in view. I'm not saying it's either or, but I'm saying it can't be just a vertical



sense of values that we have from being a Christian. It has to feed into where this is going in my relationship with each other.

And it does that in two ways. So I guess there are three ways we should look at this. All these things are true about me being a Christian. I get comforted, encouraged, I get fellowship with the Spirit, I get affection and sympathy in my relationship with God. But if I read the next verse and I say, "Complete my joy," Paul says, "being of the same mind, same love, full accord, and of one mind," you think, okay, maybe all that means is that the people that I sit next to at church have the same experience that I do. And that's a profoundly important connection that we both... it's kind of like he says in Philippians 4:3, you both have your "names written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Well, isn't that interesting? That's true. We have that in common. And what we have in common, I guess that should pull me together, because I've got more in common with a sister in Christ who has her name written in the Lamb's Book of Life than I do with a non-Christian colleague at work. Right?

So I think well that kind of has a horizontal application that there's a sense in which, wow, yeah, the people at church, no matter what their economic background is, no matter what their educational background is, no matter what their IQ is, no matter what their skill sets are, whatever their socioeconomic, you know, distinctions are, we're brothers and sisters in Christ. And you could say, I can see that. I can see that, okay, it has a horizontal connection.

Well, let me go further, because everything Paul talks about goes much further as it relates to the horizontal connection to the vertical benefits if you're following me. Is anyone still with me on this? Okay, two of you. Great. Thanks. So good to be back. Follow me on the third thing. And that is that all of these things I would argue, in light of where Paul is going really necessitate those people who are next to me in church to fully realize these things. God utilizes people to accomplish these vertical virtues of God encouraging me, comforting me, me having fellowship with the Triune God, me getting affection and sympathy. Those are effectuated and they're channeled through the people who I'm sitting next to in church.

In other words, to use an analogy that Paul does use constantly, Christ is the head and we are the body and the body, to quote Colossians 2, "is knit together even though the head nourishes us," it's the body that effectuates these things in very practical ways. I'll give you an example. In Second Corinthians Paul says, "God, who comforts the downcast," sometimes translated depressed, "God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us..." Who did the comforting? God did, "by the coming of Titus." Are you following this now? In other words, Titus becomes the channel through which God gets this done. And all I'm saying is if I look at those things he's saying if all of this is true then you ought to do this. And that we've tried to at least start to understand in verse 2, we're getting ahead of ourselves, but we're trying to understand verse 2, to understand verse 1 and verse 1 says, look at all these great things, "encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy." If all that's true, then do this and go all the way to "be of one mind, same mind, same love, full accord and of one mind."



So I'm saying that these things that we're going toward, which is you better get together, you better not have division, you better be fully engaged and participating with your church, I'm saying that's the means by which so much of this vertically takes place. Even the argument we read in the Daily Bible Reading this morning in First Corinthians Chapter 1, Paul is saying, When you say, "I'm of Paul, I'm of Cephas, and I'm of Apollos," you're missing the fact that all the growth is coming from God, even though Apollos is the one who is helping you get there, even though that Cephas is the one who is helping you get there. And while it's a negative statement about people who are making too much of their one guy who they like so much, it certainly makes the point that God is giving the growth through the, as Paul puts it, laborers. They will all be rewarded for their labor, but they become the conduit through which those things happen, the growth of the Christian.

In this case, the encouragement that comes from Christ comes through the body of Christ, the comfort from love, the love of God, the comfort that I get comes through the body of Christ, the participation, the fellowship of the Spirit, I sense that in a way that I can't sense by myself on a remote island. I get it because I'm embracing and connecting with and interfacing with, or to use our words, attending, connecting and serving with the body of Christ. And that makes sense. Christ's body, there's an organic connection between God and the people of God. And when the people of God are around me, I get that benefit, the benefit of God. It comes through the relationship with the people of God.

Let me drive this home with one passage if that just seemed to abstract or you think I'm stepping outside the bounds of what the Scripture teaches. Let me show this from Ephesians Chapter 2. Go to Ephesians Chapter 2 with me real quick. Ephesians Chapter 4. It's two times two. Ephesians Chapter 4. I was thinking Colossians 2, and I almost said Colossians. Anyway. A parallel passage in Colossians 2:19. But let's look at the expanded verbiage in Ephesians Chapter 4 verses 15 and 16. Please note this. Look at this. See if we can understand what I'm trying to say here, before we ever get to the first point, which we will eventually get to. I promise.

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." Okay, you get it again. Here's the person I'm going to grow up into him. I'm going to be like him. I'm going to have all this stuff happen because of him and through him and I'm going to grow up "into him who is the head, Christ, from whom," not just you as an individual, but "the whole body," notice this, "joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in," and here's one thing on our list, "love."

OK. So the love of God that I'm growing up and understanding and experiencing and having the effects of whether it's consolation or love or sympathy or mercy or whatever it is. And all those things are embodied in that list in verse 1 of Philippians 2, it says here, if you look at this passage, it says, that happens when the church is functioning. "Every joint, every ligament, every part of the body working, it builds itself up in love." Now, who's building it up? You might say, "You've just switched the subject. I thought Christ was the one doing this." Yeah, but now it says the body builds itself up. "Well, wait a minute. Who's doing the



building?" Well, God is, but also the people are. But it's the people as a utilized tool, a conduit through which God gets that done, just like God comforts the downcast. "But he comforted us through the coming of Titus." So God's people become the agency through which the good work of God gets accomplished. Are you following all that? Great.

Now let's make sense of verse 1. All of the things in verse 1 are going to lead to what's said in verse 2, which, if it's not clear, should be clear by the time we get to Chapter 4, which is this is about the church connecting, getting along, being harmonious, being interfaced as a body, every working part there together. We don't have Euodia and Syntyche turning their back on each other. This church is functioning as a body. Okay? These things are listed as benefits. They cannot be seen merely as vertical virtues or vertical benefits or vertical values. They've got to be seen as horizontal values, even though the credited source of it all is God, specifically the Son of God, Christ the head.

But I know this. Look at the list again. I cannot have encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, koinonia of fellowship, affection and sympathy if I try to live the Christian life by myself speaking to people who sit there and try to do Christianity without the church. They can't do it. Can't do it not because the church is the head. It's not the head. It's the body. But God, the head does what he wants to accomplish in individual lives when they're a part of the body. Therefore, we must attend, connect and serve. And here are the reasons why: you cannot have the encouragement in Christ you would have if you were sitting on an island or in some kind of corner in solitary confinement. You can't have the comfort of love that comes through this relationship with God. It won't happen in your life the way it ought to happen. It wouldn't even just happen as a fragment of what should happen unless you are connected with the body of Christ.

Participation and fellowship of the Spirit. Your sense of camaraderie with the third person of the Godhead is going to be effectuated in a genuine sense of experience when you are fellowshiping with the body of Christ. This is the body of Christ. And when you fellowship with them, you have that sense and experience and the benefit and the augmentation to your Christian life that you are hoping to have in fellowship with the Spirit, participation in the Spirit, sympathy, affection, those last two words. All of those things that happen, they happen because we are connecting with the body of Christ.

Now, does it include, to use the nomenclature we've been using at Compass from the beginning, attend, connect and serve? Yeah, it includes all of those, all of those, the real life, not online, the real life, physical connection with people sitting side-by-side. The real interaction and discussion that takes place with our chairs face-to-face. And the real kind of growth that takes place in all directions when I get out of my chair and I have a ministry post. Those three things we can put under the banner of this word: when we are congregating. And that's kind of a more specific word than using the analogy of like it functioning as every joint and ligament in the body of Christ.

So I'll put it this way, longest intro ever to the first point, because I've been preaching the first point. Number one, let me give you that at the end of the story. And here's the first verb. It



comes after the adverb and the adverbs are already written down for you on the worksheet, thoughtfully. This has to be done thoughtfully, but here's the verb. Ready? Value.

"Thoughtfully Value the Benefits of Congregating." That's what I think verse 1 is all about. It's all about people in Philippi saying, "Well, now wait a minute, what am I going to miss if I don't get along and connect and get with these people and interface with these people?" Well, you're not going to get all the benefits talked about there in verse 1. Can you get some fraction of that? Well, you could, I suppose, if you were stuck in solitary confinement in some prison somewhere, if you were a Christian. But it's fully realized in the church.

And so I want to hang the carrot out, just like Paul's doing in saying, hey, it works in Philippi and it works in Orange County. You want to see the things in that list. And I don't think there's anyone here who doesn't need more encouragement in Christ, more comfort from love, more sense of camaraderie with the Spirit, more affection and sympathy. Who doesn't need more of that? Well, we need more of that. And I know these are all vertical realities, but they're vertical realities that are only realized in a horizontal, relational connection with my church. Okay, there's the carrot. Verse 2.

In verse 2 now, Philippians Chapter 2 verse 2, he says, "Complete my joy," and there's the main verb. There is one imperative verb in all these four verses and here it is: "Complete my joy." Now it's got to unpack that. We need participles to unpack it. "Being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." Right? And if we didn't know that these were all like compounding parallelisms, we're trying to make that clear even by him starting with the word "mind" and ending with the word "mind." This is all about me connecting, agreeing, interfacing, being a part of the body life of the church. And this is where he's going. He's going to knock some things out here in verses 3 and 4 and illustrate from verses 5 to 11 and make this lesson powerful. But it's here about you got to do it. This is the "do" of the whole thing. Right? You've got to make it happen. You've got to now get together, I guess, to use the most vernacular that I can use. This is about us doing church. You've got to, in our words, attend, connect and serve.

But because it's the one imperative verb, it's the action. It's like now he's calling them to action. If there are benefits in this then do it. I put it this way. Number two, here comes the next verb, we need to "Decisively Commit to Involvement." We have to consciously and fully with my brain engaged, say, I am going to do this. I'm going to do what he says. And there are all kinds of motives in the context that drive this home. As a matter of fact, I think between here and Chapter 4, though there are a few circuitous paths through Chapters 3 and 4, I do think it's all about this. I think this is the driving application pastorally that Paul has. And I see it in part even with that right there when he says, "Complete my joy." Right? He's saying, this is what I want. This is going to make me happy.

Matter of fact, you can connect that to this. Look at verse 19 in Chapter 2. Do you got your Bible open? Verse 19. He says, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you." What news would that be? Euodia and Syntyche are fighting just like always. They won't even be in the same room together. No, no, no. The good news is you're doing it. You're of the same mind. One accord, full accord. You're



together. You're doing it. You're maximizing the benefits of what you get in your relationship with God because you're actively engaged in your church. You're involved. Okay? So there's a motive right there.

How about the motive that comes hard upon our passage, verse 5? "Have this mind," and again here's our theme. "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." And then it goes on to talk about his sacrifice. Let me say this: to decisively decide I am going to be an active part of my church, I'm going to attend faithfully, I'm going to connect and I'm going to serve in that church. Right? You are being Christlike. In other words, what would it be worth to say, "Nah, I am not going to do that." Well, you're basically saying I don't want to be like Christ. Christ in this passage is held up as the one who is willing to participate and not stay in some infinitely distant heaven while he gets worshiped by angels and says, "Well, those people, they have a need, but I'm not going to meet it. I'm going to stay home because I got shows to watch," you know. That's not what he does.

He with great sacrifice comes and serves. The most Christlike thing you can do is be involved. That's the point. The whole point of verses 5 through 11 is Jesus got involved. It's a pastoral enlistment of an illustration and he's trying to knock out every excuse Euodia and Syntyche and everyone like them in the church of Philippi and everyone since this was written might have for not being actively involved in their church. And he's saying that it needs to be done. Not only does it make your leaders happy, which I think should be a concern of yours, but it's also something that Christ was all about, the Christlike thing.

How about the next verse, verse 12? After he ends this illustration of Christ's incarnation, he says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you've always obeyed," not only now, but "not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." All I'm saying is this is all, when you talk about fear in the Christian life and you talk about obedience in the Christian life, it's like a kid knowing he's got a command and it's not a suggestion, it's not an idea. It's not like Dad saying, "Yeah, maybe you should read that old classic one day." It's like, "No, you've got to do this thing."

You want another reason you should not listen to this sermon and fail to decisively commit to be involved in your church, because it's an act of obedience. I mean, this is the context for him saying, "Hey, I want to hear good news about you guys that you're obeying." Well what's on the table? One mind, full accord, one mind, same mind. You guys stop with all of this, you know, I'm going to live my own Christian life. Get together, make this work. Euodia and Syntyche, get along. Right? Get plugged in. Be actively connected. It's an act of obedience. It's Christlike. It pleases your leaders.

By the way, if you don't think this is there in verse 14, see it. See it there. You know this is the problem. And I don't think Paul is writing these things without having this clearly in view, not just Euodia and Syntyche, but people like them who are grumbling and disputing. They're disputing with each other and they're complaining about each other. And some of you, by the way, are not decisively committing to be actively involved in your church. Attend, connect and



serve. Because you're irritated at someone, because you're disputing with someone. "Well, I used to be in that small group, but they kind of hacked me off. And I don't like them and I don't want to be a part of that anymore. I don't want to do... I used to go to that sub-congregation. I don't want to do it. I just, I don't want to do."

And when you go, you come home and you complain about it, "grumbling and disputing." We ripped this out of context all the time and talk about it. And it's not that it's not a good principle, and it certainly applies whether you're wandering in the wilderness in the Old Testament or whether your kid is grumbling and complaining about making his bed. I get all of that. But the immediate pastoral context is people who are not fully integrating into their church. They need to do it. There's so much value there and there's no excuse. You got to decisively choose to do this. It's Christlike, it's an act of obedience, it pleases your leaders. You've got to get past whatever thing that irritates you. Get over it. Yeah, you're going to grumble and dispute. No, stop grumbling and disputing.

It goes on to explain all that. It's a great passage there, all the way to verse 18. And then I already talked about verse 19. It's going to please the leaders. Which according to Hebrews 13, you should care about. Leadership directed and got involved in setting up all the tables out there on the patio, you should care about that. We have stuff like Pastor Doug gets up here and discusses the FixIt ministry and uses my, you know, as he blasts my work ethic apparently and complains about my... That's the last time I send him pictures of my home projects. (audience laughs) But he's trying to get you to the FixIt ministry. Think about it, if our leaders say, hey, you know, if you know how to work a power drill and you can paint something, then great. Show up here.

We got 100,000 square footage of building, you know, it gets rundown because we all live under Genesis 3. You need to come and help us keep this place up. We'll hire the professionals if we have to do something big. But we need our church family to care about the church meeting space. And if no one shows up for that, the leaders buy all their breakfast burritos, they get all the mapped out of all the things they have to do. Does that encourage leaders, does that make them happy? No, of course it doesn't. And all I'm saying is there's some aspect of that, according to Hebrews 13, that you should make their job a joy. It should take one announcement to get something done around here. That's it. Because the church is going to jump on it because like Christ we're going to care about putting the needs and interests of others before us. It's such a fundamental thing. And again, it's not a big argument, I think, for most people who care about themselves, but those who are caring about Timothy's and Paul's view of them, it's another thing piled on.

Godly examples? Drop down to verse 17. I mean, I'm speeding through this now. But Philippians Chapter 3 verse 17. "Brothers join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." I mean, and again, they didn't, they may not have. Maybe they did at this point. I know it came earlier. The letter of Thessalonian. Maybe some in Philippi already had that letter in hand. Paul speaks of the Thessalonians and he says, man, Satan is hindering me from coming to you. I care about you, my joy, my crown, he repeats that to the Philippians as well. But think about the fact that he's just going to do



everything to be with these people. He cares about them. He's willing to interface them. It's willing to travel hundreds of miles on a donkey or on foot to get to these people, to minister to them, to care for them. He says, though, I'm absent in person, I'm never absent in spirit. I care about you guys. I mean, there's a guy who is saying, just follow my example.

Euodia and Syntyche here again, "If she's going to be there, I'm not going." That's not how Paul functions. He's willing to go to Corinth and minister to them in person after writing a letter listing all the problems they have in their church. Why not just forget that church? Because he cares about them. Just another reason to commit to be involved, because you got godly people like Paul and Timothy and Silas and the rest doing the same. Good example.

Even how this chapter started, Philippians Chapter 3 verse 1. It reminds me that these kinds of things are a choice and that our emotions should follow after our decisions. "Finally, brothers rejoice in the Lord." Isn't that where he goes later in this fourth chapter? Chapter 4 verse 4. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." Well, he just talked about Euodia and Syntyche being at odds with each other, saying, "Well, stop complaining, stop disputing. Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice." You need to tell yourself this is what you're going to do regardless of how you feel. And then you need to tell your feelings what to feel. And that is, I'm going to be happy about this. I'm going to be involved in that small group. I'm going to be involved in that sub-congregation. I'm going to connect with my church. I know it. It could cause issues or it may make me irritated, but I'm going to do it. I'm not going to complain about it. I mean, that's just what's going on in this book.

Verse 1 of Chapter 4. "Therefore brothers, whom I love and longed for," talk about a good example, "my joy and my crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved." And then what's the point? What's on his mind? What's sandwiched in between these commands to rejoice and stand firm? Hey, Euodia and Syntyche, you need to be of the same mind. You need to have that mind that I talked about in Chapter 2 verse 5, that mind that was in Christ Jesus. You guys are companions. You labored side-by-side. Your names are in the Book of Life. You're acting like you're not. Get in it and do it. A decisive change in attitude. It couldn't be more clear Paul's call without excuse to be fully, decisively committed to be involved.

I don't have time for this, but there's my usual line. You've missed that, haven't you? Hebrews Chapter 10. You don't need to turn there. But you know the passage. "Don't neglect the assembly of yourselves together, as is the habit of some." And though there's so much there that parallels what we're talking about, it ends this way. Right? "But encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Follow that "and all the more." So the interaction, the interface in the verse in front of it is, "We're stirring one another on to love and good deeds." Right? That's not sitting in church side-by-side. Euodia and Syntyche might be able to do that on other sides of the auditorium, but now they're called to get face-to-face and to encourage each other, to build each other up, to stir one other on to love and good deeds. And he says we need that now more than ever before.

The whole point of this sermon at this particular time, we'll get back into Acts soon. But this particular sermon at this particular time is because all of us as pastors sat around, we talked



about it, we strategized about it, we prayed about this particular weekend being the beginning of our church year because for us, that's really how it works. The end of August starts a brand-new church calendar and goes all the way to May. And this is where we look at everything we're doing between now and December and January to May, it's basically the beginning, it's our new year. And we said what we really need to do is to make sure that everyone who calls this their church home is serious about attending, connecting and serving. We need that reminder. And so I was set off on the study to figure out how are we going to do that. I've said that to people for years. Well, I'm thinking what we need is to value it. We need to commit to it. And then one more thing.

Go back to our passage. Let's get the third verb. It's found in the last two verses. How are we going to do this "all the more as we see the Day drawing near?" Well, it takes what we find in verses 3 and 4. I'm going to read verses 3 and 4 and then I'm going to give you a word and you're going to think I don't see the connection and then I'm going to help you see the connection. OK? Verse 3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each one of you look not only to his own interests, but also the interest of others." Do you get the gist of those two verses? Put them together. Put all of that together in your mind. Not selfish ambition, not conceit, humility, others more significant. Right? I'm going to look at their interests. I'm going to look out for those and I'm going to focus on those.

So all of that, I'm going to give you this word. This is the third verb. Okay? It's "prioritize." Let's look at the adverb on a worksheet, selflessly prioritize. Right? And then I'll just give the objects. So you don't forget this when you read it two months from now, your church family. Number three, you need to "Selflessly Prioritize Your Church Family." So I got the three verbs now and you're going to say, where did you get the word "priority" from those two verses, verses 3 and 4? I'm glad you asked. Let's try and figure this out. I'm supposed to value, commit and prioritize. Because like a lot of things that I commit to, it's like the gym, you can easily get your machine mid-February because everyone who committed to it in January, they're not there anymore. Why? Because they didn't prioritize it. Because it got uncomfortable. Because my body got achy. Because I wanted to sleep in. And so it wasn't a priority and I didn't do it. That's why people don't carry on with things they committed to.

I use the word prioritize and I could quote the Latin and it comes through old English. But Latin is the key phrase here. But I don't need to use any foreign languages because what's at the beginning of the word prioritize? Prior. That's the word, prior. I mean, that's what the word means, prior. Something is made prior to the other thing. Something is put before the other thing. And instead of thinking on a flat line in some linear analogy, think of it in terms of the way the passage puts it. Put it on an elevation. I am going to consider others as higher, as more important than myself. I'm going to take myself when I'm filled with conceit and I think, well, what matters is me and selfish ambition, what matters is my agenda, I going to put that lower, I'm going to be humble.

Which, by the way, even in the original Koine Greek language that is a statement of being down low on the list. So I'm going to put myself down low on the list, and I'm going to now



look out for, I'm going to focus on the interests of others. Right? And then Paul is really going to slam it home by saying here, Christ, the ultimate one of humbling himself and putting the interests of others first. Okay, that's priority. He puts the interests of others before his own. So I'm saying the reason mid-October, whatever you commit to today, you are tempted not to do is because you will have yourself and your stuff, whether it's comfort, convenience or some other ambition you have, you put that above the commitment to the family of God attending, connecting and serving. And I'm saying priority means we don't. We don't ever let that happen. We make sure that God's people are the priority. And my focus is on their interests, not my selfish ambition.

See, that's why these words, they seem so out of place. Matter of fact, we quote this one out of context all the time. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit." And you think, well, what does that have to do with me going to church? What does that have to do with me being connected with my church, being of the same mind, full accord, being all in this thing and getting all those benefits from verse 1? Well, what it has to do with it is that when you fail to do that, you know that some of your own ambitions, your own agenda items have squeezed out the church, squeezed out its needs. Those of you who could, for instance, for our workday, and I'm just using it as an example, it wasn't in my notes, when I'm saying, okay, we said, hey, we got to FixIt ministry coming up. And the reason you don't do it or come and be a part of it, even though this is your church and you should care about the needs and you know, I am equipped to meet those needs, I could meet those needs. Because you got something else that gets in the way. And it's probably something you want to do more than you want to do this. And all I'm saying is that's the key problem. We don't prioritize the church.

Some may say, "Well, I guess I got to quit my job and leave my family and I'll just be here as the slave of the church for the rest of my existence." I know you got to pay your bills, and I know you got your family and I know you got your job. And I'm not saying you quantitatively spend more hours at the church than you will your job or your family. But I am saying the priority is clear. And when there's conflict, even though you may spend less hours doing ministry or connecting at your church, the point is, if push comes to shove, I know where my priorities are. "Well, not your family? Have you heard? Christianity's all about family first." It's not about family first, by the way, just so you know.

Okay, I'll have to really preach now. Are you ready? Think this through. In the beginning of Mark, Mark tells the story of Jesus being thought of by his family as being crazy. He's out of his mind. And you know why? Because he's too invested in all this teaching and preaching stuff. He's too much into it. All these people that flock to him and hear him..., he just needs to slow down. So about eight verses later, ten verses later, he's out preaching in a house and it's packed full of people. And word comes to him, do you remember this passage? Your mother and your brothers are outside. They want to see you. Well, we already know why they want to see him, because about ten verses early, it said they think he's crazy because he's running himself to the bone. He doesn't even have time to eat. And he sends word through the crowd. He says, Look, "Who are my mother and my brothers. And with his hand," you can see him gesture as a parallel passage says, "these are my mother and my brothers, those who do the will of God."



Here they are. They're not interested in the agenda of God, they're not seeking first the Kingdom of God. They're not interested in these things. And these people are... these people need to take priority. That's an amazing truth. I'm not talking about your little kid, right? I'm just talking about the fact that even in your little kids, you ought to prove to them that the church comes first. Because a lot of you, for their AP classes or their soccer team or their travel ball, you're going to say, "Well, Johnny, I understand this is more important. Church can wait. Awana can wait. Youth group can wait. You don't have to..." You are setting them up for what they will eventually live out in their lives by leaving your home and proving to you that the church isn't important to them. And a lot of people, as Paul puts it, "shipwreck their faith" because of that.

You've got to think this through. What am I teaching my kids? Right? You need to teach your kids the people of God, the organization of God, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ comes first. It may not come first in quantity of hours, but it certainly comes first in priority. I'm sorry you are not missing your ministry obligation. You're not missing your connecting time in small groups to go hit a baseball. You're just not. You just not going to do it. Some reply, "Oh, you're crazy." Okay, great. Okay. I'm just telling you, here are the realities of prioritizing the things that are important to God. And here's the most important thing to God. The people he died for, the body of Christ. Okay?

Conceit comes into it as well. What's the selfish ambition? I got my own ambitions and they get in the way of squeezing out church priority. I can't attend, connect and serve. Or maybe I'll attend. But I can't really connect. Can't really serve. I don't have time. I've got these other things going on. Well, you better find room in your agenda for the things of God. But secondly, you might see that conceit really has crept in to squeeze out church. How does that work? Well, just like teenagers. Good example. "I don't want to hang out with the dorks in the youth group. I got my cool friends here at school. They got stuff going on. I want to be here." Now, that's just an extreme caricature of how adults think when they think, "Well, you know what? I don't know, small group. It's got weirdos in this... I'm not sure I want to be taking another night out. I'd rather do something here with my friends at work or just watch TV."

We still have a sense of this, like, I'm better than these people, right? And all I'm telling you is that Christ warned you the church would be full of people that you'd feel better than. How many are wise according to the flesh? How many of noble birth? How many of these people are by the world applauded as great people? Not many. That's not what the church is about. The church is not about the coolest people in society. Right? The Orange County crowd, you're going to find a much more glamorous group of people than you will within your small group, within your sub-congregation, to serve on a weekend at the church. I understand that.

But the point is, the people who you do serve who are the body of Christ, according to First Corinthians 1:26 says "There are not many wise, not many noble," all that. He goes on to say in Chapter 6, You know what? They're going to rule the stinking world. You know that. They're going to judge angels as Jesus said in the book of Revelation. He's going to say, hey, now, ascend the throne, just like the Father gave me a throne, the throne over all things, he said,



"Come and be on my throne." I'm going to say you come and be on my throne. You're going to rule. Right? When Jesus is down, think about this, cleaning the dirt out between the toes of Peter, a fisherman with a Galilean accent who everyone in the upper crust of Jerusalem would think is a hick. Right? When he's washing his feet, he's washing the feet of someone he said, "You're going to sit on one of the 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel."

I'm not saying that's why he did it because he was impressed with Peter. But I am saying when you invest in God's people, you're investing in the people who are going to rule the world. You're investing in the people who God is going to say, "Enter into my kingdom from the foundation world," and the people who you want to hang out with and spend your time with, if it's just to hang out and spend time, they're going to hear "depart from me, I never knew you." I'm saying the investment in the church is the most important thing I can do. The church is THE priority and the people of God are the priority. Therefore, I'm going to attend, connect and serve. That's what's biblically required of me. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do without complaining and without excuse. I'm going to do it because that's what God asked me to do. And I'm going to do it because it's the most important investment I can make.

I have to prioritize it. It comes first. What do I need? Well, I need humility. I need to focus on other people's needs. So we're going to help you with that. And that's the whole point of this weekend. I want to do two things. Let's start from the third word, "serve." I'm going to focus on some needs. I did that by example in the illustration about the FixIt ministry. Obviously there's stuff to be done around here. But I got, I don't know how many tables, 40 tables out there lined up. They all have a ministry banner behind them. All of them have needs. But the sermon is not primarily about that, although if you're already checking the box and I'm faithfully attending and I'm connecting in a small group. Great. Then you look at those tables and say, am I able to contribute in some way? Is there something that my aptitude aligns with where I can help? I just want to go at least talk with the person behind the table.

Or you're saying, "Yeah, I'm feeling I'm not involved. I mean, I come to church, I attend, but I'm not connected." Well, then all those tables out there, even if it seems like this isn't a small group or you join the tech team for instance, you're going to have a small group. It becomes the connection where people know your name, you know theirs, you share prayer request that becomes a part of working out and spurring one other to love and good deeds, whether it's a sub-congregation, whether it's a home fellowship group or whatever it is.

So our kids' programs go to the bottom of the hour. We don't want to interrupt their Bible time. It's sacred. So we're going to send you out into the patio early. And we're going to give you a chance to go and look at all those tables out there. And I would say this, if you say, well, I'm just looking for the donuts and coffee because I'm already attending, connecting and serving. I would say this: before you go to get your coffee and donuts, go to the table where you already connect. And there will be people that are probably going up to look at that after you give knuckles to the guys that are working behind the table, I want you to talk to people about what it's like to connect in that ministry.



Or if you serve, great, you serve. You've got all three of these figured out. I want you to go to the table where you serve. You're not behind the table. But I want you to go up and I want you to be able to represent to the people who are looking at the material and what that ministry is all about and say, "Well, I do serve here. This is a good ministry and let me talk to you about it." I want everyone to spend time at the tables because the whole application of this sermon is to get us to those three verbs, to attend, connect and serve. I want you to commit to that. Hopefully we valued that in the sermon. Hopefully now you're committing to it in the prayer I'm about to lead you in. And then thirdly, I hope that you'll prioritize it once you commit yourself to it here out on the patio. Let me pray for you and then I'll let you go. We'll have at least ten extra minutes. I hope you stay a long time. But 10 minutes till your kids are even out of their classes if you got kids in classes.

Let me pray. God, we need to value. We need to commit. We need to prioritize so that we might attend, connect and serve until we see you face-to-face. Why? Because this God is your priority. You made it clear in your word. There are so many values to this. There's so much encouragement, so much sympathy, so much care, so much love, so much comfort to come from the things that we experience when we connect with our church. I know there are many people listening on the radio, probably people streaming this on a screen on a computer, and they need to be drawn to the church, whether it's this one or whether it's their home church in another town, to be able to do what the Bible asks us to do. Getting past the excuses and the irritants and the disputing and the complaining and the Syntyche who I don't get along with and just say, I'm going to do this, I'm going to rejoice in the Lord, I'm going to be committed because I value it and I'm going to prioritize it in months to come.

So God, as we start a new church year here at Compass, I pray that we'd have every need met. We'd have every sub-congregation filled, we'd have everybody engaged in this church, not just so that we can say, check, we've been obedient. But knowing that we'll derive so much of the richness of what it means to relate to you by being actively involved in the church, albeit imperfect, as imperfect as we are. God, please give us the joy of the spiritual growth and the camaraderie with your Spirit that we're going to have. I just pray you'd maximize that as we commit ourselves to something quite more valuable, I would say, than we would ever really imagine until we get to heaven and see it from your perspective. Help us to keep it a priority from this point on.

In Jesus name. Amen.