



Countercultural Christians-Part 6

Interdependence Instead of Independence

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Now it's Bible time. So get your Bibles out. That'd be a good place to start. Let's go to the middle of the Bible, the library. And you'll find the book of Psalms. Turn right two books and you'll find the book of Ecclesiastes. And while you're turning there, let me vent for just a minute. Would that be all right? Uh-oh. Sidebar, that's right.

Let me pick on our vocabulary. There are some phrases that creep into the Christian vocabulary that are unfortunate, in my humble opinion, and misleading. I think I could make the case. Take, for instance, the phrase in description of Christ as our personal Savior. There's one for you. Personal Savior. I hope all of us as Sunday school grads can recognize that there is no such phrase in the Bible. It doesn't mean it's bad necessarily, but let's start with that. You're not going to find the phrase personal Savior in the Old Testament. You're not going to find it in the New Testament. I don't care what kind of newfangled translation you're carrying around. You're not going to find it. There's no Hebrew or Greek combination of words that are ever going to lead any translator to the phrase personal Savior.

Now, the word personal is not that it's not known as an adjective. You'll find the word personal throughout the Bible, and usually, though, it has to do with a description about some kind of commodity. And it is sometimes used for people, but the way it's used in the Bible is for well-to-do people, princes, lords, kings, who have personal servants or personal advisors or personal attendants or personal assistants. It's never, though, going to be described in Scripture that someone has a personal Savior.

The phrases in the Scripture that are chosen to describe Christ, or deity in general, are never so personalized. They're not privatized. They're not so individual and small. They're much larger and broader and greater. As a matter of fact, as we get in a few minutes to Hebrews 13, you'll find words like *megas*, great, our great Savior, our great King, the great shepherd. And if ever there was going to be a term or an adjective personal applied to someone, it wouldn't be applied to the great one, the central one, the main one. It would maybe be applied to us. You might be his personal servant, but he is not your personal Savior, see.

I mean, he is individual and we are corporate. He is not a commodity that we utilize. He is the King and the hub and the center, and we are parts of that. We come to him as a group. Even the word shepherd that we'll encounter in our benediction passage today in Hebrews 13, he's the shepherd, and that makes us the sheep. We're a part of his flock, and it's a corporate thing. The concept of individuality, of individualism, of independence, of autonomy, it's just always frowned upon in Scripture.

And even in the most terse and simple phrases from the sage preacher in Ecclesiastes chapter 4, that's why I want to start here. I think it's a good reminder that even as Solomon looks back on his life, if there's ever been a guy who could write the been there, done that book, this is it. He looks back on having everything, trying everything, exploring everything. And he says, you know, when it comes down to it, individualism just doesn't make any sense.



And he makes several arguments in chapter 4. In verse number 9, he says, just think about it. I mean, individualism has a lot of drawbacks. Two, for instance, are better than one. I mean, and it's not that he's arguing for partnerships or pairing, as we'll see at the end of verse 12. This is just a principle and argument from lesser to greater. If you're going to be alone, that's not good. We need teams. We need groups. Even two are better than one because they'll have a good return. When they partner up for work, they have a lot more benefit. And if two are better than one, you can count on the fact that four are better than two, and certainly eight is better than four. And the teamwork is always better than individual work.

I know we like to work alone, and if you want it done right, do it yourself, and all that stuff that's infiltrated our culture. But the Bible says that doesn't make any sense. Oh, and if you have a need, I mean, if there's something that goes wrong in your life, you'll find out the folly of individualism. He says in the next verse, verse 10, if you fall down, and I know this sounds very dramatic, very literal, but you understand it's representative of all kinds of things in our lives. It's not just tripping physically. If you fall down, it's good to have someone there to pick you up. His friend can help him up. But look at this phrase: pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up. You're going to go it alone. You're going to live it alone. You're going to be individual, and you're not going to build those relationships. If you're not going to have a team around you, wow, I wouldn't want to have any problems because you're going to have a hard time if you've tried to live your life as an individual.

And if there's need, it's simple, and obviously this is representative of lots of things in our life. He says in verse 11, if the two lie down, they can keep warm, but how can someone keep warm alone? Symbolic of several things that we encounter in our lives. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. And again, this is not a point for pairing up or having partnerships. It's about groups. He says, and let's just expand on it now, a cord of three strands is not easily broken. And if a cord of three strands is strong, you can imagine what six strands will do, or 12 strands will do. There's strength in numbers. There's warmth in collective community. There's help in team.

And again, that's just obvious, simple stuff in the Bible, but in a culture that values the individual, in a culture that sees independence as a personal virtue and not a corporate virtue, it's hard for us to see that as clearly as the Bible does. As a matter of fact, we're even willing to describe Christ as our personal Savior, like a personal computer or a PDA or a personal groomer or something. He's not a personal anything to you. You may be a personal something to him, but he's the King of kings. He's the great shepherd. He's just a part of his body. And you are here corporately to recognize that as we address him, as we follow him, as we depend on him, we do that together. We depend together on him. We depend together on what he's revealed. We depend together on one another. There's an interdependence about the biblical perspective of the Christian life.

We've been a long time in Hebrews, and we've gone to a lot of places in the argumentation of the book of Hebrews. But we come to the end of it today in Hebrews chapter 13. So turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the end of the book. Or it's printed for you there in your worksheet if you found it in the worship packet. And as we try to make our way through this and not make it a 12-year study, and not just a two-year study, I mean, I understand we could spend weeks here, but I want to try to get the umbrella of the closing theme of Hebrews into these three different distinctive thoughts. They're here. And the commonality of the benediction in verses 20 and 21, and the personal note about the letter

itself in verse 22, and then the private kind of personal update, the postscript in 23 and 25, is something that I think might all fall under the banner of Ecclesiastes chapter 4. There is something about our corporate dependence on God and on each other that may come to the surface as we look at this a little closer.

Read it with me in verse 20. We'll read all the way to the end of the chapter. He says, "May the God of peace"—this is his benediction. You know what the word benediction means, right? Bene, benefit, bene in Latin, the good, and diction, that's a word we use in English to dictate, to speak. It's the good word. At the end of a book, they put the good word down. Here comes this Hallmark astounding statement, and here comes his good word, the benediction. It's a prayer.

"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant"—now the themes kind of rush to our minds as to where we've been in Hebrews. Yes, the blood of the eternal covenant, the new covenant. That's not the old covenant. That's the culmination of the old covenant, the eternal final covenant. "May this God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord"—our King Jesus—"that great shepherd of the sheep," of which we're all a part, of his flock, "may he equip you"—here's the verb now—"may he equip you with everything good for doing his will." And here's something else. "And may he work in us what is pleasing to him," and let him do that "through Jesus Christ." And we'll give him credit for it, "to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

And that's the end of the book, but there's more, okay? I mean, it sounds like the end, but he's done with the good word, the benediction. Now he says this, verse 22: "Brothers, hey, I just urge you, I'm pleading with you, I'm strongly exhorting you to bear with my word of exhortation." Now he's referring to the whole letter. He says, "For I've written you only a short letter." And you're saying, if that was short, I'd hate to see a long one, right? I mean, we've been working through this for a long time. But it is a short letter because if you think about the grand themes of this text, it certainly can't be developed in the 13 chapters that he spent on it. And it is shorter than Romans, and it's shorter than 1 Corinthians, word for word at least, it's shorter. And it's not all of God's revelation, but it's a part of it. And so he says, "I want you to bear with my word of exhortation."

And then he says some personal things, postscript, verse 23 through 25. "I want you to know that our brother Timothy"—which we assume is the Timothy that we know of in other letters in the New Testament—"he's been released." And we're saying, well, we didn't even know he was in prison. And we didn't. There's no other place in the Bible we know of that he was in prison. But apparently he was in prison. We assume that's what he's released from. He says, "Listen, he's out, okay? And we suppose from jail. And if he arrives soon"—from wherever the writer of Hebrews is, perhaps Italy—"I'll come with him to see you." Okay? Now, "greet all your leaders"—we've talked about them in the chapter twice, in chapter 13—"and all of God's people," you flock of God. And then he says this, "Those in Italy send you their greetings." Now they're not there face to face, but they know they share a common bond with you, the bond of loving God, focused on faith in Christ and receiving the grace of God. He says, "They send you their greetings. And by the way, speaking of grace, grace be to all of you." Okay, end of book.



This closing series of statements reminds us from verses 20 to 21 of our dependence upon God. In verse 22, as the early first-generation recipients, we have a sense of dependence on the revelation of God, the written Word of God. And then this kind of a hodgepodge of statements about personal pronouns and people and places and saints all over the... this reminder of our dependence on each other.

Let's look at those closely, each one of them. Number one, verses 20 and 21. If you found your worksheet, jot this down if you would. It will be important for us as he ends with this benediction, which after all these commands about how to live the Christian life, he now says, listen, it all comes down to God making sure it happens in your life. I mean, look at the main verb down there at the bottom of verse 21. "May he work in us what is pleasing to him." I mean, this is instruction about how to live the Christian life, and he says, may he get it done in you.

Okay, there is this sense that we are dependent upon God to do anything good for God. That sound like John 15? I am the vine, you're the branches, my Father's the vinedresser. You know, if you want to do anything, you're going to have to abide in me, remain in me, hold tightly to me.

Number one on your outline, let's just confess that reality. Number one, you and I, we need to confess our dependence on God's power. Everything we've learned in Hebrews cannot be done without God. From even the simple commands of assembling together, and he says, don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, even being faithful to attend your local church cannot be done, the Bible says—I mean, this is the underlying assumption—unless God helps you do it. He has to make this happen in you.

Now, that paradox is throughout the Scripture. Didn't we end last week with that reminder that we are to make every effort to add to our faith? I mean, it sounds a lot like Philippians 2, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Remember that passage? I mean, we're to work. This takes effort and work. But the reality—as a matter of fact, let's look at that. It's the last service of the day, I think. Let's go to Philippians chapter 2. We've got all kinds of time. We could stay until 3 or 4 if we wanted to.

Philippians chapter 2. Take a look at this text here, verse 12. This is the passage that I quoted. "Therefore, dear friends, as you've always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence"—this obviously isn't perfection, but they're consistently trying to follow the dictates of God's Word—he says, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." We've heard that. We've referred to it throughout the book of Hebrews. It is a work. It takes work and effort, okay?

Now, if that were all there was to the sentence, we'd say, okay, pull up yourself by your bootstraps, eat your power bar, drink your orange juice, and live for God. But here's the other part to it, the other side of the coin, verse number 13. "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." That's just a blatant parallel passage to what we just read. "May God work in you what is pleasing to him."

I want to please God. Don't you want to please God? As a Christian, we'd like to live a life that is pleasing to God. It would be good for you, and it would be glorifying to him. So let's live a life that



pleases God. You can't do it without him no matter how hard you try. So you need to confess the dependence that we are stated to have in Scripture. Just confess it to God all the time. Tell God that.

And you intuitively, sometimes in our failures, cry out to God that way, don't we? God, oh, just help me live the Christian life. God, help me do the right thing. Help me say no to sin. Help me say yes to righteousness. That's a great prayer. It may feel pathetic when you pray it, right? But it's the best prayer you can pray because it confesses the obvious assertion of Scripture. You can't do it without him. You are hopelessly dependent on God to do the right thing, to avoid the wrong thing, to stand up for him, to step out for him, to live the dictates of God's Word. You need God. Let's confess our dependence on God. You need God.

And if you want to get specific in your soteriology, if you will, in the process of sanctification, we're saved and now we're going to grow up in him, you've got to know that specifically the identified source of this power in your life is the third person of the Godhead. The Bible's super clear on this. The thing that is fueling you, the way that God works in you to will and to work for his good pleasure, is the person of the Holy Spirit. That's what the Bible says. He is in your life, which I know is a weird thing if you think about it long enough, a spatial analogy. What does that mean? It means there's a different kind of relationship from old covenant believers and how they're related to God and new covenant Christians. There's a different kind of relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Here's how it was described in the Gospels. The Holy Spirit, he says—Jesus says to his disciples—is with you, but then he's going to be in you. Now that just means there's a kind of influence that the Spirit is going to have on the way you think, the way you act, the temptations that you encounter, that you will have a new kind of capacity to do the right things, to live a life that is pleasing to him.

A lot of times people like to use Old Testament character studies as examples of the Christian life. And though there's some value in that, and I've done that, and it's good to hold them up and say, what can we learn from them? You've got to understand, you've got a capacity that they didn't have. You have, the Bible says, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And from the Old Testament, the prophets looked forward to that and said, wow, those new covenant believers are going to have an advantage that we never had. Turn, for instance, to the book of Ezekiel. Let me show it to you. They looked with a sense of anticipation that one day God would do something, not just to us, not just changing us, but giving us his own person that would change the way we live life.

And I just think if that's the way God has described it, it would be good for us to admit it, to confess it, to say it, to affirm it. What did I say? Ezekiel. I didn't tell you where, did I? It's a secret. No, I didn't mean to keep it back from you. Chapter 36.

Ezekiel 36. We've looked at this chapter, and again, a lot of this sounds like review because we've been here in the book of Hebrews, and we've looked back to Jeremiah 31, we've looked back to Ezekiel 36, but let's read it one more time. Here is the promised change between the old covenant and the eternal covenant, if you will. The old covenant and the resolved covenant, also called the new covenant. Here it comes. He says this. He says, verse 26, "I will give you a new heart." This is Ezekiel 36:26. "And I will put a new spirit in you." Now, the translators are right here. Is this a small s or a large s? Capital S or small s? Small s. Okay, Paul liked to describe it this way: we're a new person in



Christ. He talked about his old man and now the new man. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 5. He said, you are a new creation in Christ. There is something about you that is different when you put your trust in Jesus and repent of your sins.

But it's more than that. He's not just going to give you a new heart. It's like removing a rock-hard heart and giving you a heart of flesh. But look at verse 27. He says, "I'm also going to put my Spirit in you." Capital S or small s? Capital S. It's different now. I get a new heart. I have a new capacity because God has made me new. But now, he says, "I'm going to jam," if you will, "the third person of the Godhead into your life." And so your personality is going to be influenced by this person of the Godhead. And the Spirit is going to indwell you. "I'm going to put my Spirit in you," and I love this verb, "and move you." Do you see that? "To follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." That's an internal motivation, an internal empowerment, an internal influence, an internal propensity you never had. And if you were an Old Testament saint, you wouldn't have this experience. You might have, as Jesus said to the disciples, an external pressure to do right. But now there's an internal drive to do right. "I'm going to move them because my Spirit's going to live in them."

Let me just get specific here. We need to depend on that Spirit. Not my spirit, not my knowledge, not my background, not my track record, not my insight. I need to depend on the Spirit to have his way in my life. I mean, if I look at my Christian life and look at the Bible and say, I'd like to be more like what the Bible tells me to be, I've got to defer to the Spirit. And it'd be good for us to talk to him and say, Holy Spirit, help me. Spirit, drive me. Spirit, change my desire here. Spirit, make me strong against this temptation in my life. I need to depend on the Holy Spirit. There's nothing that the *paraklētos* would want more, the helper, right, the one who is here to drive us to do the right thing, than for us to acknowledge our need for his help.

If we're going to do anything in response to the book of Hebrews, let us admit, confess our need for the Spirit to do his work in our lives. "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal kingdom, brought back from the dead Christ, this Lord Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, may he equip you," and then he says, "may he work in you what is pleasing to him." That's what we want. Is that your prayer? It needs to be. Why don't we pray it more often? Why don't we make that a daily part of our lives? Holy Spirit, help me. I need it. Drive me forward to live the truths of the Scripture.

But it's not just that. There's an intermediate step, and I know we're taking this backwards, but let's work backwards through verse 21. I want him to work in me what's pleasing to him, but it's going to be through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory, the credit, forever and ever. But look up at the first verb in verse 21. The prayer starts with this. Once we get past the appellations and the descriptions of Christ and God, he says, "May he equip you with everything good for doing his will." There is a preparation for living a life that's more pleasing to him. The book of Hebrews, much of it, especially the second half, has been about sanctification. And it's not just we say, God, I want your Spirit just to do it, live that. I'll make every effort, but you do that in me. You're not going to live an effective Christian life to the level that God would want you to without him putting you through the equipping process to do it.

The Bible says that the prayer should be of our heart, not only would you let my life be pleasing to you as you move me to do the right things, but would you prepare me, equip me with everything good for doing his will? And I know that we look at passages like that. We usually have one kind of focused



prayer. We know, God, it'd be really good if I had more money, for instance. That would be good. I could be better. So if I had better health, maybe I could serve you better. But that's probably not the preferred and most frequent method of God's equipping that he does in your life.

God's equipping, unfortunately, though it's described as everything good, we don't get to the good without going through the bad and the difficult. Think about it that way. You see all the weight loss programs, right? These people that are telling you, wouldn't it be great if you were healthy and toned and fit, right? They're pitching that to me every day, right? Obviously, I'm not buying it. But they're saying, hey, would you like to be fit and healthy? And they're giving you all the good stuff, and they're showing guys, and they're ripped. Be like that guy. Wouldn't it be great to be healthy and fit? And then some of these guys really get into your brain and, you know, your cholesterol and all this stuff. It would be so healthy. You'd live longer. Your health, ah, it'd be great. See, they don't usually, though, underscore the means by which it's going to have to be applied in my life to get there. They make it sound so easy, don't they? But it's not. Those of you that have actually taken them up on the offer, it's hard.

The equipping, if you will, the means to an end, the end is great, it's good. But the means to an end is tough, isn't it? I mean, unless they're selling you snake oil, they're telling you to deprive yourself of stuff that, frankly, is better than the stuff that they're feeding you, right? I mean, let's just say it, okay? I'd much rather eat a big, gigantic, seven-layer fudge chocolate cake with full-blown ice cream. No low-fat, no Dreyer's light, the real stuff. That's better. But I've got to say no to that and eat your little wafer thing in the green box or whatever it is, okay? I've got to say no to what I want. I have to deprive. That's painful. And then if they're not selling the snake oil, they're going to say, get off your fat butt and do something active and burn the calories. See? If I'm going to get fit and healthy and have the good come out of my life, the good process, it feels really bad, right? That's why we don't go. We buy the membership. We never go because going to the gym is hard, and it hurts, and it's a struggle, and I'd rather watch TV or do something else.

Here's the deal. So it is in the Christian life. I'd rather have a lot of fun and hang out, everything go well, and I pray for that. But then God sends us through the equipping process, and the equipping process usually hurts. And the Bible says, "May he equip you with everything good so that you can be ready to do his will." Now, there's no way around it. We need to depend on him to prepare us. And be careful because his methods, as the great trainer, it's going to be painful.

I'll give you one example, okay, because we got time. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. You just need to know that God is probably going to take you through the difficulties to prepare you. What you're asking for, what the writer of Hebrews is asking for, what he's praying for, for his first-generation initial recipients of the letter, is something that probably is going to continue to be tough, a life of spiritual and probably practical and real deprivation, and a life of difficulty. Because in the difficulty, God does the real training.

A lot of people say, I want to be trained to serve God, and they think Bible school or seminary or whatever. But a lot of the training takes place in the pain, difficulty, crisis of our lives. Example, 2 Corinthians chapter 1. He praises God, verse number 3. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He's the "Father of compassion and the God of all comfort," verse 4, "who comforts us



in all of our troubles,” purpose clause, here it comes, “so that,” here’s the reason, “we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” Did you catch that? God comforts us in our troubles, verse 4 says, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

So, verse 5, “just as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives, so through Christ, our comfort overflows.” We get to dispense comfort to others. “For if we are distressed”—now note this, this is very clear—“it is for your comfort and even your salvation.” Now think that through. He’s talking to the Corinthian people here. If he says, I’ve been through hard times, it’s so that I can minister to you and even lead more of you people to Christ. That’s a big deal. You want to, at the end of your life, say, I did what the Bible said on a benediction like this. You say, I’ve really put Hebrews to work in my life. Here’s the thing: he will probably equip you through some painful circumstances of life—health crisis, relational crisis, financial crisis, you know all the tough stuff we go through—so that you can actually be useful even to the extent of saying, hey, these people came to Christ because of what I learned in the seminary of pain and crisis. That’s how it works.

As a matter of fact, go back in your minds to John 15. I didn’t turn you there because you’re so familiar with the passage. But you’re not going to bear any fruit unless you’re abiding in the vine. But do you remember how the passage goes? I mean, you look it up and study it some other time. This is John 15, verses 1 through 5, and it says this: that if the vinedresser, that’s the Father, right, finds a branch that is bearing fruit, here’s what it says. It says, he leaves the branch alone and says, go for it, man, bear fruit. Is that what he says? Do you know the passage? If he finds a branch that bears fruit, here’s what the Bible says. Jesus said, my Father, the vinedresser, he prunes it so it’ll be even more fruitful. Wow, that doesn’t sound good. No, pruning, I’m sure, the inference in this is pain.

As a matter of fact, the disciples were going to go through more pain than the average Christians because God was planning on using them even greater in the world than probably most of us. And as Spurgeon used to say, God rarely uses anyone greatly until he hurts them deeply. And it’s the reality of the Christian life. The prayer of the writer of Hebrews is, I hope God works out great things in your life. Oh, and by the way, I hope he prepares you with everything good to do his will. And the process, unfortunately, needs a better, more accepting, open, biblical perspective, even on the tough things in our lives. God is using the difficulties of your life to prepare you to live out his Word.

Let’s confess our dependence on God’s power. We need him for the equipping process. Obviously, it’s painful. We need him to work in us what is pleasing. We’re going to depend on his Spirit to do that. We need him, if you want to keep going backwards in this passage, in verse number 20, to remember that our peace with God is established upon the work of God.

Look at the passage again, verse 20. “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep,” and then he goes on to the verbs, “equip you” and “work in you.” But look at that, the God of peace. The whole point of the book of Hebrews is you’re never going to get peace with God. You’ll never get forgiveness from God with the ceremonial system of the old covenant. The Levitical system, the sacrificial system, the temple and tabernacle worship will not cut it. You need real peace with God. And the only way to do that is not through the blood of bulls and goats. It’s through the blood of Christ.



The bottom line is just no matter how bad you want to be right with God, you can never be right with God without God's saving work in Christ, the blood of the eternal covenant. You can't do it. Shedding your own blood doesn't count. Walking on your knees at the steps of a cathedral does not count. Doing good deeds, giving money to the church does not count. There's no way for you to be right with God, for him to say, I'm your friend. I'm in with you now. You're my servant. I'm your king. You can't have a relationship with God without the work of God in Christ. Can't.

We are dependent on God just to cry out to God. You can't even talk to God without God. Get it? Not just that he's there, but that he has allowed you the privilege to talk to him. How dependent on God are you? Well, you're not only dependent on God for your sanctification, you're not only dependent on God for your equipment to be sanctified, you're dependent on God even to have a relationship with God. I mean, the most fundamental confession is, God, I can't even speak with you without the intermediary mediation and intercession of Christ, the blood of the eternal covenant. How dependent are we on Christ? A whole lot more than we admit in our prayer life.

A lot of times we see him as some commodity in your life. He is everything to us, at least he should be. It's the reality. You and I just need to confess it and agree with God that that's a reality.

And as long as we're using the word God, let's dwell on that for a second. God, it says, "May the God of peace." Now he is the God who for us has brought us peace, but he is—let's just deal with that word for a second—God, which I know in our life doesn't mean a whole lot in our culture, but it means everything in the pages of the Bible. To say that there is a God is a confession by definition that he is the source of everything. That is how the Bible starts, isn't it? "In the beginning, God" did what? "Created the heavens and the earth." Without God, you don't even exist. Without God, I can't be sanctified. Without God, I can't be prepared to do anything good. Without God, I can't be saved. And without God, I can't be. Right? Did he finish his sentence? Do you get what I'm saying here? Ontologically, my very being is impossible. Without God, I don't exist.

Turn with me, if you would, real quickly to Acts chapter 17. Acts chapter 17. When Paul gets a chance to talk to people that don't know anything about good theology, look at where he goes. He goes back to Genesis 1:1. Take a look at this, Acts 17. If you know the context of the book of Acts, Paul is there, dragged before a court called the Areopagus. The Areopagus traditionally used to meet at Mars Hill. They weren't meeting there in the first century, but back in ancient times in Greece, that's where they met. But now they're just convening the court of the Areopagus, the philosophers, the professors of the local university in Athens. They were there to hear this babbler, to hear what he had to say about God and some new thing about the resurrection of some Messiah. And so they bring him there, and he doesn't go into some apologetic about the resurrection. He starts here.

Look at this, Acts chapter 17. Take a look at verse number 24. He says, listen, here's what I need to tell you. "The God"—look at this—"who made the world and everything in it." If you want to talk about the place to start, even in our evangelism, it starts with the bottom-line definition of God. And the bottom-line definition of God is, you're not here without him. You don't exist without him. God is everything. And you are dependent on him just for your very being.



“The God who made the world and everything in it is the boss.” That’s what Lord means. He’s the King, the ruler, the one in charge of heaven and earth. “And he doesn’t live in your cute little temples built with hands. And he’s not served by human hands as if he needed anything because he himself”—underline this—“he gives all men, everybody, life and breath and everything else.” Let that one resonate for a minute. When I’m talking about the good word at the end of the book of Hebrews, it’s good for us to recognize all these statements about dependence upon God. Let’s just start by letting this statement resonate, okay? He gives me life and breath and everything else.

And if we’re talking about confessing our dependence on God, wouldn’t it be good to start there? If God turns his back on you for a second, you evaporate. You implode, right? I know people don’t believe that anymore, but that’s the assertion of the Bible, that without God, you don’t exist. We’re not deists. You know what a deist is, right? They believe that God created the world. He’s a great watchmaker. He wound it up, and he let it go, and he’s on vacation in the Bahamas somewhere or something, right? He’s not around. He’s not checking in very often. Occasionally he looks to see how it’s going. That’s not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible says that everything was made through Christ, and that in him all things—here’s the word translated in English—all things hold together or consist. They are sustained in him. God not only made everything, according to this passage, he sustains everything. And I’m snorting now. And he sustains everything. God’s just showing me, I can take your breath away at any time. He gives us life and breath and everything else.

Now think that one through. You can’t oxygenate your blood by breathing in his air, in his world, in the lungs that he designed, unless he gives you another breath. How intimately involved—let’s put it this way—how dependent on him are you? Well, the Bible says you’re desperately dependent on him. Not just for your sanctification, not just for the equipment to do right, not just for your salvation. You’re dependent on him for your very existence. It’d be good for us to confess that.

You know, think about that. If that’s the reality, if you were somehow—and I’m not trying to talk Mormon talk here, but if you—well, sorry about that, forget it. Just a million thoughts, right? If you could see what’s going on in my mind at any given time. That’s why I’m pausing on the illustration here. If you were the god of your own universe, that’s what I’m saying. I’m not trying to push Mormon theology here. But if you were the god of your own universe—this is a bad illustration. I can see we’re going nowhere with this—and you were sustaining everything in your little universe there, and there was a person on your little planet that you created that wasn’t fully dependent on you for everything, including the next breath they took, wouldn’t it be great just to have a few of those creatures every now and then acknowledge that? Wouldn’t it be great for them to say, thank you? That’d be great to hear that every now and then. It’d be good to see a sense of dependence and say, God, thank you even for sustaining my life. That would be nice.

Okay, now let’s ratchet out of that really quick and realize that’s the reality. I just want to empathize with God for a second. It’d be good for us to confess our dependence on God for life and breath and everything else.



Paul's not done. Let's read a little bit more in this passage. It says, "From one man," verse 26, this story that's so maligned that is, according to Scripture, the truth, "from one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth. And he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." You want to talk about dismantling the deistic theology? Here it is, okay? Every single thing about when you were born and where you now live was determined by the predetermined decree and sovereign plan of God. That's a big statement. Do you ever acknowledge that? Do you ever think about it? You are sitting here in the 21st century in Orange County, California, because God has determined that to be. You are dependent on him for that. You are a creature that he created, that he sustains, that he has directed. And he did all that, verse 27 says, "so that," verse 27, "men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him." But it's really not this hard thing to find him because "he's not far from each one of us." He is drawing and pulling his people to himself.

And the bottom line is verse 28, as he quotes the Athenian poets, "For in him we live and move and have our being." "As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'" That is not a soteriological statement. That's an ontological statement. We are his offspring. Every person that he has created on the planet is a dependent offspring of God. That's not a statement about their salvation. That's a statement about their being, their existence. And no one is here without him.

When Jesus was tempted to make hamburgers from rocks, think about that passage, Matthew 4. He said, listen, I don't care if I have a pantry full of fresh food, it doesn't matter. He says, God has made it so, right, that "man does not live by bread alone." He lives "by every word that proceeds from his mouth." Man is dependent upon God. And you can have every support system, every life support. You can be in the best care facility. If God doesn't give your next breath, you're done.

Confess your dependence on God's power. You need it to live. You need it to be saved, the blood of the eternal covenant. He did that work. You didn't. You need it for the equipment of the Christian life, to live life the way God wants you. You need it for the execution of the Christian life, the actual carrying out of the Christian life, that he may work in you what is pleasing to him.

That's the end of the book. You can see it right there with amen. But there's more. Here's the postscript. Here's the personal word about the letter itself. "Brothers," the writer of Hebrews says, verse 22—are you with me? Hebrews 13:22—he says, "I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for I've written you only a short letter." 303 verses seems long, but it's really just an admission that there's more to this story than I've just told you. This is not the whole thing. And so it's true. In God's plan, there are 27 installments of new covenant revelation, traditionally inscribed and incripturated for us. This is one installment. That's it, just one installment.

And here's the deal. He says, "Would you bear with this?" And if that sounds like some modern self-effacing, you know, I just, have you got time to be cool for you, kind of read the letter, that is not what this is all about. As a matter of fact, circle the two words that translate the one Greek word, bear with. That's an important New Testament word, to bear with. And though it sounds like, you know, I just hope you can kind of fit it in and kind of hang in there with my long letter, but it's not that long. It's kind of brief. I hope you can handle it. That's not what this means.



As a matter of fact, right in the margin, if you would, 2 Timothy 4:3. 2 Timothy 4, verse 3. 2 Timothy 4, verse 3. And this is familiar. Don't need to turn there. I can quote it for you because you remember it from last week because we quoted it like three times last week, okay? Here's what it said, okay? 2 Timothy 4:3. "A time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine, but instead, to suit their own desires, they'll gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." Here's the phrase. "A time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine." Same exact Greek word.

The point is that the opposite of what the writer of Hebrews is looking for is described for us in 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy chapter 4 says, there's a time when people will look at this stuff and go, I don't know, grow a goatee and wear a sweater and tell me what you think, because I'm not into this. Still on the goatee thing. I almost came out this morning with a glue-on goatee just to show you I wasn't against goatees. Boy, I got a lot of grief for that statement last week. You goatee-wearing cool people.

What was I trying to say? If the world says, I ain't putting up with this, I'm not interested in focusing on this, I don't want to depend on this book, I want to kind of reason my way through this and not really see this as the arbiter of truth in my life, if they won't put up with this, that's the opposite. Here's the same exact Greek word stated in a positive. "I urge you"—that's strong—"to bear with it." To bear with this word of exhortation. And it's just one installment. It's just a brief letter that touches on these topics. But I need you to bear with it. That's not a self-effacing false humility, well, I hope you can find some time. That is a statement of put up with it. Put up with it. I'm urging you to put up with this.

And while that's stated, it's a very hard Greek word to translate because we don't know how to translate it and make it sound positive. I put it this way, number two on your outline. We need to demonstrate a dependence on God's Word. That would be a positive way to state this word, to bear with. I don't just want to say, well, I'll put up with it. You know, I guess I can handle it. No, you need to embrace it. That's the opposite of people that won't embrace it. They won't build their lives on it. They won't defer to it. They won't make decisions, whether in ministry or life, based on what it says.

And the Bible says you should. You should depend on it. You should defer to it. It should be the thing that people can see in your life. You're looking to this book, not just Oprah's latest wisdom or your own intuitive sense or something that you read in some psychology textbook in college. This book should be the guide for my life. That's what this word put up with means. And so let us demonstrate that this is going to be our constitution and guide. Everything else is going to fall short. You want to relate to the King of the universe, and you should, because everything else is going to be outer darkness. I want to deal rightly with God. And to deal rightly with God, the only way I'll know how to do that is by finding out what he expects, what he wants, and what he's revealed. And that means I've got to get to know this thing. And more than that, the word to bear with is that my life will be governed by sound doctrine. I want to let this book make decisions in my life. That's the concept.

Let me give you a great expression of this in Psalm 25. David wanted to live his life in accordance with God's words. And often he didn't. Now he didn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit. But when he recognized his desire to live for God, it always brought him back to a quest to understand the covenant of God. Take a look at this, Psalm 25. Why don't you jot that down? Join me there in Psalm 25. Psalm



of David. Take the first part of this Psalm and see his heart. His heart is to depend and give deference to the path of God in his everyday life. That's what I mean by demonstrating a dependence on his Word. I want to be able to, on Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon and Saturday at noon, to be able to say my life is going to show a deference to this book. Not my intuitive sense, not the latest trends or fads. I want this book to govern my thinking.

Psalm 25. David says, "To you, Yahweh, I lift up my soul. In you, verse 2 says, I trust, O my God. Don't let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, ultimately, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without reason or without excuse." Verse 4. Now, if I want to trust in God, I want to live different than the rest of the world, I want to follow his path, I'm going to need this to be answered. Verse number 4. "Show me your ways, O Yahweh. Teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me." See, that's going to have to be the cry of your heart. I need to be governed by the mind of God.

Good news, he's given us 66 installments of his mind. And it is there for our taking. It is on the table for us to ingest. And not only should we ingest it, we've got to get to the place where it makes a difference in my decisions about my work, about my clients, about my neighbors, about my life, about my money, about my health. It comes from here. I need to say, what does the Scripture say? How does that govern my values? How does that help set priorities in my life?

Keep reading. It gets better. He says, "For you are my God." You're the King. You're the boss. You're the one in charge. You're my Savior. You're the one that—you get me right with you. You bring atonement in my relationship. My sin is expunged because of you. Then he says this, "My hope is in you," this is an important phrase, "all day long." Now if his hope is in God all day long and he knows the necessary means to an end is his Word, his revealed propositional statements, he's got to be thinking of that all day long. He's got to be deferring to the Bible all day long. He's got to be reminded of God's values, principles, dictates, and precepts. He's got to go there with his mind. And that's a challenge for us.

Do you depend on your experience, your résumé, your education, your sense, your mentors? Or do you go back to this in your brain and say today's decisions need to be governed by the principles of the book? "Show me your ways, teach me your paths, guide me in your truth. You're my God and Savior. My hope is in you all day long."

"Remember, O Yahweh, your great mercy and love, for they are of old." How would he know that? The only way he'd know that is the revealed Word of God, the historic redemptive purpose of God spelled out in Scripture. Then he says this. He says, verse 7, "Remember not the sins of my youth or my rebellious ways. According to your love, remember me, for you are good, O Lord. Good and upright is Yahweh. Therefore," here it is again, "he instructs sinners in his ways." Got to give us direction. "He guides the humble in what is right and he teaches them his way. All the ways of Yahweh are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant." I've got to go back to the book. "For your name's sake, O Yahweh, forgive my iniquity, though it is great. Who then is the man who fears Yahweh? He will instruct that man, that person, in the way chosen for him." Isn't that what we want? That's what sanctification is all about. And you can't depend on God unless you're focusing on a dependence, a daily deference to his Word. "He will instruct him in the way chosen for him."



Verse 13, “He will spend his days in prosperity.” Ultimately, it’s a good thing, though there are times of training and difficulty, “and his descendants will inherit the land.” “Yahweh,” verse 14, “confides in those who fear him. He makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on Yahweh, for only he will release my feet from the snare.”

And this isn’t a self-help seminar, but you do understand that if we walk in the path laid out for us in the book of Hebrews, it will be a good thing for us, and it’ll be glorifying to God. And the only way you’re going to do that is to keep this book and the other 65 in our brains ever before us, which leads us to a real practical discussion as we face the new year. And that is, you can never defer to this in your mind unless you get it into your life. You have to ingest the Word of God. You have to. And one hour a week by the blabbing, you know, caffeine-laced preacher isn’t going to cut it. You understand that, right? You’re going to need more than me. It isn’t just one time a week you get your fill. Your gas tank is far too small for my little throwing the religious octane at you every Sunday. You need a daily filling of the direction and revelation of God, which means you have got to be a student of the book. You have got to get this into your life.

And you’re going, oh, I hear all the time, he’s always preaching the Bible. That’s the point. There’s no new way, right? This is the old way. This is the way to do it. You have to bear with the word of exhortation.

So let’s get practical. Are you in it? Really, are you in it? Are you? You’ve got to get in it. And I don’t mean are you into this. I’m saying, are you into this? I mean Wednesday, Tuesday, Friday. What would your relationship to this book be? If you’re going to think about it at 2 in the afternoon, you’ve got to get it in your life probably at 6:30 in the morning. You’ve got to spend time in the book.

We do all kinds of things to try and encourage that. I mean, we put the reading schedule—have you noticed that? It’s become a fixture in a lot of our stuff. We handed out the reading guide. And the great thing about this message now is we’re not in the middle of July. It’s June—it’s, what is it, January 13th, okay? You could catch up with our annual reading-through-the-Bible stuff this afternoon, okay? Just skip an episode of America’s Funniest Videos or whatever you’re going to watch tonight and say, I’m going to my room for a minute. I need to catch up on my Bible reading. And go sit there with an open Bible. And all you need to get to is the 13th chapter of Matthew and the 26th chapter of Genesis, and you’ll be up to date. And then take that guide, and every week get it into your brain. All it takes is three chapters a day, basically. Three chapters a day, and you will ingest the Scripture at least at the 35,000-foot level.

Now, a lot of people say they’re Christians and they’ve never even read the whole book. I’ve got a bit of a problem with that. Read the book. And if you said, oh, I did that last year, do it again. It’d be good to read it a couple more times, wouldn’t it? Let’s read the whole book over and over again. My wife and I finished in December with a day or two to spare. That was probably eight years in a row reading this from cover to cover, 30,000 feet, just a few chapters a day, making sure that we read this book. And you know what? Every time we read it, we keep getting an establishment of our minds in the book.



And if you say, great, I'm doing that already, I hate to lay another layer on you, but here it comes. You need to read a few chapters a day. Here it comes. And you need to study a few verses a day. We need the 35,000-foot view. We've got to have it. But then you've got to take a few verses and grapple with it up close. You have to do that. Just to fly around up here, you'll never really know the landscape of God's mind unless you get into it. You need to take some consecutive verses and study them every single day. Got to do it. You have to do it. If you want to take one day off a week, okay, but that'll be the worst day of your week. You've got to spend time in the book. Do it.

I don't know where to start. You're a new covenant Christian, right? Start in the new covenant, okay? And, well, I don't know, just start at the beginning, go to the end. Some suggestions. Say your life is peachy and great. Study 1 Thessalonians. That'd be a good one. Start there and just take one or two verses a day, three if you're feeling ambitious. Get a notebook out and sit there and ingest as much of that as you can. Then fly at the 35,000-foot level and read your three chapters a day. And then the next day, take the next two or three consecutive verses and ingest those as best you can. Study those. Okay, if your life is going really bad, go to 1 Peter. There's a good one. Go to 1 Peter and study that. Just a few verses a day. If your life is really confused, go to the book of James and start there and work through it. You should be working through about a book a year as you work through the whole entire Bible every year. And you should be taking just a verse or two a day.

If you don't know where to start, and, well, I'm not confused, and I'm not happy, and I'm not sad, great. How about the Gospels? Pick a Gospel, any name you like. Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Which one did you name one of your kids? Just pick that and just start moving through it, a couple verses a day. And if you will get that up-close picture and roll your sleeves up, get a notebook out, do the then always now, the TAN method, if it's for nothing else, do that. Just get a notebook out and say, what's going on then? What are the eternal principles that are always true? And then what difference does it make now? If you did that with three verses a day and you read three chapters a day, you'd get the big view, the up-close view, and you would give God, now, the opportunity to bring your mind in sync with his Word at 2 o'clock on Thursday afternoons. But that means you've got to get into this every day. Ingest more of the Bible. Once a week, yuck, yuck, yuck from Pastor Man will not cut it. Guarantee you. You've got to get in it yourself. Do not let dust collect on your Bibles in the new year. Demonstrate a dependence on God's Word. We've got to have it.

Thirdly, he ends with this, verses 23 through 25. He says, "I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released." He was in jail apparently, but we assume it's the same Timothy. He's now out. "If he arrives soon," apparently he's going to come to wherever the writer is—we assume Italy, maybe not—he says, "I'm going to come with him to see you." He's going to go on the trip and minister to the people he wrote this letter to. "Hey, greet all the leaders. Greet them all and all of God's people. Those from Italy, they send greetings to you. They send their greetings. And hey, grace be with all of you."

We move from a focus on God to a focus on his Word. And now we get a focus on his people. And the great thing about this description and list of proper nouns and pronouns is that there's always, and it seems to be the pattern in the Scripture, always this focus at the end of these epistles on the fact that there's an interdependence in God's people. They're always sitting there teeming together. There's no



independence. They are corporately dependent on their shepherd. They are corporately dependent on the written Word. And they're corporately dependent on one another.

Number three on your outline, let's just state it that way. You and I, like the writers of the books of the Bible, we need to demonstrate or—how did I put it?—seek a greater dependence on God's people. And you and I need that in a culture that's moving the opposite way.

I'm always reluctant to give you, you know, secular non-Christian books on the back of the reading list. But sometimes I'll put on a couple, and I try to note that, you know, these guys are pagans writing about, you know, just observations about society. But one of them, for instance, *Bowling Alone* on the back, that one book on reference about... If you just take a book like that that's full of charts and surveys, you'll see the decline in modern American culture in people wanting to group and team together to do anything. We are increasingly individualistic. We are increasingly putting ourselves in isolated positions. And the biblical norm is that the walls come down, vulnerability is expressed by letting people into our lives. I know that that's hard for you. I know that that's hard for me. But you're going to have to take a risk. I know people can disappoint you. I know when you let them in, you feel vulnerable. I know that sometimes they burn you. I know sometimes it's inconvenient. But you've got to do this the way the Bible says, and that is the action and description and example of letting people in and doing this together. We've got to connect.

Let's just use the writer of Hebrews as an example. Build a few quick subpoints here, real quick. Number one, he would prefer, obviously, to team up with Timothy to do ministry. Is that not clear there? He wants Timothy to go with him to minister to them. Let's put this down as letter A. You need to be thinking about that. You want to serve God? We talked a lot about sanctification, growing in our faith. Think about doing this good work, doing the good things, his will. Think about doing that together. And I know your default, unless you've got a really bad family, is some biological related person. Go beyond that. Who are you going to partner with? The writer of Hebrews was not the biological brother of Timothy, right? This was some other person who shared a commitment to the same kind of ministry he did. And you need to think about that. You want to live for God in this world? Can you lock arms with a couple of other Christians and say, I'm going to partner up for ministry? That's so important. We often want to do this alone.

Partner with people. What do you want to do for God in 2008? I hope you thought that through. I want to do things for God this year. But often it's I and me and my. How about we and our and us? How about putting in our goals for the new year this perspective of, I want to pull a couple people into my circle and move forward into making a difference for God in this world with other people? At least follow the example here of trying to partner for ministry with people.

Secondly, let's think of the book itself. The writer of Hebrews is writing a lengthy, thought-out, cogent, logical letter. Number two, let's think of it. And it was all for the good of the people. Number two, or letter B, let us communicate more with the people of God, and let us communicate more with their well-being in mind. The letter of Hebrews, from a human perspective, was written for the edification and the building up of these people. What have you done to communicate to your brothers and sisters in Christ to build them up lately? I mean, we call people when we need some. We write people when there's some issue that needs to be dealt with, some logistical thing that needs to be scheduled. How



often do you sit down and communicate with the people in the body of Christ for no other reason than to encourage them and help their spiritual well-being? Make that something that you say, I've got to do that more. Seek a greater dependence on the people of God, and they will depend on you. And guess what? It'll be reciprocal, and you will start to depend on them for the kind of mutual encouragement that should be taking place in the body of Christ. How often do we communicate with concern for the sake of the good and well-being of those around us? Let's just start doing that.

Partnering up for ministry, communicating with concern, okay? How about the next verse, verse number 24? "Greet all your leaders," and we can supply the verb again, "greet all God's people." And speaking of greetings, all those from here are sending their greetings to you. Greet, greet, greet, greet, greet. How many of the New Testament epistles end this way? A lot of them. Some of them take it a step further. I mean, greeting is obviously a positive word. It's a word of affirming. It's a word of endearment. It's a word of brotherly affection and connectedness. But five of the New Testament letters end with this, "Greet one another," and then it tells us how, "with a holy kiss," right? Now that's a little much. It's a little over the top. But see what the Bible's doing. I know you could say, well, that's their cultural expression and all of that. I realize that, but in the Scripture, and God knew this would be recorded for all time, I've got to believe he's pressing the paradigm of our expression of endearment. Let's put it that way for you taking notes.

Okay, we want to partner for ministry. We want to communicate with concern. Thirdly, or letter C, let's have more expressions of endearment. And I'm not saying kiss everybody in your aisle this morning, but maybe there are people that you need to express a little bit more of the brotherly affection that the Bible is calling for. Even the word Philadelphia, where we started the chapter in chapter 13, brings with it that sense of a brotherly affection, brotherly touch, brotherly connectedness, brotherly expressions of we're in this together. Express it. Do the best you can to let it get out.

People assume a lot, right? I just know that he knows I'm there for him. Let's do less assuming and more expressing. Expressions of endearment.

Lastly, verse number 25, the connectedness that we're all in this together ends with this phrase: "and grace be with you all." Grace be with you all. The great thing about how this phrase plays out in context is we've already kind of established the dependence on God, the dependence on his Word. Now we're talking about interdependence, and he brings us back to the focal point, the cohesion of our fellowship. "Grace be," he says, "with you all."

The thing that's different about the church is that we're not just a club trying to get to—it's not a social network where we're just trying to get together and see, you know, how we can kind of like each other and accept each other. Our focus is singular as a church, right? I know that the secondary focus is on people, but it's all related to the first and primary focus. The primary focus is we're in this for God. It's all about God. It's all about relating to him. It's all about his grace. It's all about the connection we have with God.

And that is, as you've kind of maybe seen it illustrated, it's like a triangle. Our goal is to draw near to God. It's to experience the grace of God. It's to know the grace of God. It's to express the grace of



God. And that tends to bring people together, people that wouldn't normally go together. And that's kind of helpful, too. You ever think about that?

There are times—I've had times just recently—where I'm sitting around with people having fantastic times of fellowship, and I'm looking at them going, if it weren't for Christ, I would have nothing in common with you, right? Really. I'm just thinking, I would never be sitting here talking with you. But because we share a common love for the God of the universe, and we're seeking with all of our heart to experience the grace of God, to love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we have good fellowship. It connects us together.

We're not just trying to say, well, let's just see if we can hang out and kind of like each other. The goal is for us to get passionate about God and making him the center of all of this. And as it does, it's the one primary unifying focus, and it draws his people together.

We need to, I don't know how to put it, focus on our spiritual bond. If you're taking notes, that wasn't partnering for ministry, communicating with concern, more expressions of endearment, and lastly, more focus on our spiritual bond.

You should be able to pick anybody out of this auditorium—unless they're visiting or new or, you know, not a Christian or they're just coming here from, you know, the Buddhist temple down the street or whatever—you should be able to pick any Christian in here and go to lunch with that Christian and have something in common that you both can talk about for hours on end, because you're all trying to develop a walk with Christ. You're all seeking to grow in your faith.

And that's the great thing about it. You could just throw a dart—that's not a good analogy. You could point a finger and say, I'm going to lunch with them. And you don't even know who they are. And you could go there and have good fellowship because you're all participants. If you're regenerate people in the grace of God and you all have that to discuss, it is the glue that binds us together.

The world's full of a focus on individualism. Our world is getting worse, not better, as it relates to autonomy and people trying to go it alone. Don't go it alone. We are, as God's people, just forever dependent on God himself. We are also practically dependent on this book, and we ought to make it the passion of our life. And lastly, and it's comforting to know, together we are dependent on one another, interdependent on each other to do the first two points, to depend more on God and depend more on his Word. We're in this thing together.

This week I went to my bookshelf, and I have kind of the grab list of books above my computer: Hebrews, Hebrews, Hebrews, Hebrews, Hebrews. And I took those off the shelf—not today, but this week. And as I finished my prep this week, I'm putting them back on the little cart I have for books. I know, it's sad. But my little library cart. And it was kind of nostalgic. There goes all my Hebrews commentator friends, kind of going back to the bookshelf.

And as I thought about that, I thought, but this has been a good season. It's been a great season. It's been a great season of us kind of feasting week after week after week. And I know there's interruptions



with Christmas and other sermons and Easter and stuff. But it's been a great couple of years of this Hebrews feast.

And I thought to myself, you know, I hope, as I thought about the closing theme here, that there's a sense of unity that has been kind of congealed, that has come together in our church as we kind of leave this book behind and look ahead to the next study and the next thing that God has for us as a church.

I mean, I hope that as we look back on the Hebrews days—I mean, that's usually how, what book were we in when you came, you know? And now everybody forgot, Hebrews, because that's all we've been preaching through since the beginning of the church. But, you know, the Hebrews days—that there's this feeling of, you know, really, we're together. We're rallied around a common goal to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. We have a common loyalty to Christ. There's an increasing clarity about our commonality in doctrine. There's a commitment and an articulation of our common commitment to the values of Compass Bible Church and what we are.

And, you know, we're walking into the future. We're leaving Hebrews behind, and we're moving into a new phase. But we're doing it together, and we're doing it more unified than we've ever been. And we're looking forward to the good days that God has ahead for our church.

These have been good days for me, good Hebrews days. And Romans is just around the corner, and that's going to take like 20 years to get through, I've got to think. But that'll be a long one, too. We're going to take a few breaks in between, and we've advertised some of that for you. But I trust that Hebrews will linger and resonate in your mind as a profitable, profitable book.

Let's pray together.

God, as we stand here before you, we thank you for the last 72 installments of this study of Hebrews. It's been good for us, I think, in many ways. And I pray as we linger on this theme of togetherness, commitment to one another, dependence upon you, that we would sense that our church has come together, that as we've tried to ingest the book of Hebrews, that we are better for it, we're more in tune with your Spirit, we're more in step with him, we are reflecting, I trust and hope, more accurately the values and priorities of Christ.

God, we need each other in this, and though there's lots of risk involved in opening up, in seeing ourselves as part of a team, part of a family, and not just an individual person with a personal savior in our lives, but as we see ourselves as part of a flock with the great shepherd leading us, dependent on one another and dependent on you, it's vulnerable, it's hard. I pray, God, we'd work through all that. Let us take a risk for you in expressing and living and valuing and confessing our dependence on one another.

God, I pray for our church to be strengthened, particularly in this interim as we move from several different themes and passages to finally settle into the book of Romans. I pray, God, that we would have an increasing sense of unity, commitment, commonality in Christ. Purify our hearts and our doctrine. Purify our minds and our thinking. Purify our values and our priorities, God, as we step into the future.



Use this congregation. Use the residual application of this book to do great things in and through us for your glory, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.