Exploring and Proclaiming the Depths of Scripture
FOCAL POINT MINISTRIES

When Christ Corrects-Part 5
Enjoying a Correctable Church
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I know most Christians would like to go to a good church. They'd like to go to a great church and that's why Christians are good at making lists asking is this the kind of church that I'd like to go to? They create criteria. They create a list of things that they want to see in a church. And if that church meets their standards then they might consider testing that church out and going there. And there's nothing wrong with that in a sense. You have to figure out whether the church is solid in these areas or that area, and I get that, and that's fine. And you have to ask is this church going to measure up? I get it. But the book of Second Corinthians ends with the last four verses asking a better question. And that is are YOU the kind of Christian that would make up the kind of church that you would want to go to? Are you meeting the criteria that God would have you meet to be a participant in the kind of church that would be the kind of church you'd want to go to?

And that is a great question because the way he describes the church that he'd like the church of Corinth to be is a church where the God of love and peace is evident among them. I mean, matter of fact, if I could say hey, there's a church down the street and what is clear is that the God of love and peace is there, active. And you can go there and you obviously are going to encounter the God of love and peace. You'd say well that sounds like the church I'd like to go to. I'd like my family to be a part of that church. And that's a good way to describe it. And it's a church after thirteen chapters in Second Corinthians studying, you think, well, they seem to be a long way from that. And yet that's the great part about the end of the book of Second Corinthians. Paul says you're not a long way from it. As a matter of fact, there are just a few things that need to happen and you can be the kind of church that God is actively involved, and his love and peace are dominating in that church.

We've seen some instructions that he's going to summarize with five quick commands in verse 11 of Second Corinthians Chapter 13, that if we can just get these under our belt and say yeah, this summarizes a lot of the instruction that we've had throughout this book. And if we can just think about these all the time when we're coming to church or a part of the church, and then end with the great prayer that the Apostle Paul is offering for this church, we can realize it's not as hard as we might think to create the church that we want to be a part of by looking to ourselves to be the kind of Christian that God would have us be.

So let's close out our study of Second Corinthians by looking at these last four verses in Second Corinthians Chapter 13 verses 11 through 14 and see if we can be encouraged as Paul was trying to encourage these Corinthians. Let me read it for you first from the English Standard Version. Follow along as I read it for you starting in verse 11, as a lot of Paul's letters end with this word "finally." And here it comes, he says, "Finally, brothers," Second Corinthians Chapter 13 verse 11, "rejoice." There's the first command. "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace." Now here's the promise he holds out, "and the God of love and peace will be with you." Be with you all. That's a plural "you,"

y'all. He'll be there. He'll be in your church. He'll be actively evident among you all. Well, that'd be great.

And then he says get to greeting one another. "Greet one another with a holy kiss," which shows up many times in the New Testament. We'll figure that one out. Verse 13, "All the saints greet you." Remember, he's writing about those saints from Macedonia, sending their greetings. And then he ends with this prayer. Notice this. This is coming in the middle of the first century as the Apostle Paul shows this Trinitarian breakdown of this prayer. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." This is a great close to a book that's been about a lot of correction, but ends on this very positive note about grace and love and fellowship and how the God of love and peace can dominate this church. But it starts with a summation of five simple commands that aren't as far away from us as you might think. And so let's give a heading to this and then we'll jump into these five in verse 11.

This is about a fellowship that we would like to be a part of. So let's name it this way. Number one, "Do What Good Fellowship Requires." Jot that down and then let's just get to these sub-points. Do what good fellowship requires. He wants this to be a great fellowship. A fellowship where the God of love and peace is evident and active among these people and I'd like that here for our church, wouldn't you? Well, here are five things we need to do which summarizes a lot of what he's been teaching in this book. And the first one should be familiar to you as you've studied the New Testament, I hope, and seeing the Apostle Paul say this kind of thing often. "Finally, brothers," here's the first command, he says, "rejoice." And it is a command, it's an imperative and it's given to the church. And he says, rejoice. And I know many of you have studied the book of Philippians and you know Philippians Chapter 4 verse 4 when he says, "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Okay, well, if you know when that was written, it's one of the prison epistles. And if you say to Paul, Paul, I don't feel like rejoicing, do you know what he's going to say? I don't either, I'm in prison and yet he's going to say, rejoice always. And again I say, rejoice.

So let's give this a heading, Sub-topic 1.a under this first command here to do what good fellowship requires. I'm going to call it this. I'm going to say we need to "Be joyful on purpose." This is a command that regardless of how we feel, Sub-topic 1.a we're going to be joyful on purpose. We're going to decide to be joyful. That sounds hard to do, but it doesn't matter if we feel it or not. And you might want to go back in your mind if you've been around Compass Bible Church for a while when we were baking on the patio in the parking lot, if you might remember those days, and I preached a series called the Summer Fruit Series when we were going through the Fruit of the Spirit. Does anyone remember that? And I talked about the Fruit of the Spirit that was called joy. And I tried to recommend for us to think about it the way that I think Randy Alcorn rightly argues, and I put his book on the back of the worksheet for you or our digital worksheet on the second page there, which I think he makes a good case for this.

And the homework assignment if you don't buy the book, you can reach this discovery on your own by just looking at every time you see the word "joy" in the New Testament, research it in its context and see if you can make the bifurcation that so many people have made when

we were growing up in Sunday school, by trying to say that somehow that joy is a long way and a distant way from happiness. And I think what you'll find is it's hard for us to make a big distinction between joy in the Bible and happiness in our thinking. And that book on the back that you'll find, the first one on the list there, Randy Alcorn writes the book on happiness, I think it's a good corrective for us in trying to make some big distinction that you can be sour and dour and still claim to have the thing that the Bible calls joy. I just don't think that's possible. It doesn't mean that you start by saying well, I get to be joyful when I feel it, but it does mean that when you choose to be joyful it's going to change your disposition.

So we're going to say, as I've tried to word it here, that we're going to decide to be joyful on purpose. And if you say well how do I do that? That's a good thing for you to ask me. I'm going to turn you to First Thessalonians Chapter 5 to give you some simple instructions, and then we'll move quickly onto the second sub-point. So turn with me to First Thessalonians Chapter 5 to see if we can get some instruction on how to do this. First Thessalonians Chapter 5, we'll start in verse 16. We'll look at three short verses here and see if we can decide how to do this to choose joy which will really affect our disposition. And if it affects our disposition then we'll become one of the people in the church who changes the whole attitude of the church, which if you come to church doing this it'll change the kind of church that we have. And I think we'll start to see the God of love and peace dominate our congregation.

All right. Did you find it? Here it comes, a very common command, verse 16, First Thessalonians Chapter 5. Here it is again. "Rejoice." How often? "Always." So it doesn't matter what kind of day you've had, doesn't matter what kind of week you've had, Christians should be able to respond to this by saying, okay, whatever it means to rejoice I have to do it today. So it's a good idea for you every time you're driving to church to say I know the command as I'm heading into the parking lot or to my small group or to my sub-congregational meeting, I am called to be a rejoicing Christian. So I have to rejoice. Rejoice always. Well, how do I do that? There's a comma here at the end of this in English and it's not a bad thing to move quickly on to verse 17. "Pray without ceasing."

Now that's helpful. And it's the kind of prayer that's different than the kind of prayer Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount when he says go into the inner room or into your closet where there are no windows and you start praying to God in secret, or as he goes off to a mountain by himself and he prays, or we talk about praying through some kind of list as we teach people to pray very ardently through a series of things. That's a different kind of praying. That's a focused kind of praying. This is a praying that's a little different than that. It's a kind of praying that you can do while you're driving down the road because I prefer you don't close your eyes as you're driving to church praying. I prefer you keep your eyes open. And when you pray in this kind of manner, pray always, "pray without ceasing," right? This is a kind of awareness of God that you're going to have which is very important if you're going to be rejoicing.

If you're going to rejoice in any situation or rejoice always it's helpful for you to say okay, what I need to do is to be aware of God right now. Because that's super helpful. If I'm going to change my disposition and choose to rejoice on purpose, I need to think about the presence

of God. I need to think about the omnipresence of God, and you need to think about the omni-perception of God. And you need to think about God being present in my vehicle, God being present in my life. He is here. He's watching. He's involved. There's a God who is here and I need to be communicating with this God. It's hard for me to keep my dour, negative, sour attitude when I'm now speaking to the God of the universe, the God who saved me, the God who sent his Son to die for me. So that's a good starting point.

Now the next one takes me even further into adjusting my attitude. Verse 18, "Give thanks in all circumstances." Give thanks in all circumstances. Now that's even more helpful because it's moving me into something that is by nature a positive act. To be thankful is something I do not do FOR every circumstance because in that sense you'd say well, it's hard for me to be thankful. Let's just look at the Apostle Paul being in prison. I'm not thankful that my liberty is stolen, but to use his prison epistle as an example, he's telling them to rejoice always. And "again I will say rejoice" in Philippians 4:4. But let's go back to the beginning in Chapter 1 when he says he's in prison. He's not happy that he's in prison but he then goes on to give thanks that because he's in prison he knows the Word of God is not in prison and he's able to have a captive audience in sharing the gospel with the Praetorian Guard. And he has people who are hearing the gospel who wouldn't otherwise hear the gospel. And now he's thankful for the way the gospel is going out in a new environment. He's found something to be thankful for.

And it may seem like, oh, he's just looking for the silver lining on the dark cloud. Well, in essence, I guess you could say he is but he's genuinely thankful in the circumstance of his imprisonment. And I think for us we need to say okay, that's a positive thing to give thanks in all circumstances. And you can be thankful if you as a Christian start looking for what to be thankful for and to be thankful for it is a positive act. I am thankful and you can find thanksgiving in any circumstance if you just start looking because eventually you'll get to the transcendent issues that move beyond this life. Because even in the worst situations in this life we start looking beyond this life. If I'm in the E.R. with a broken leg I can start looking to what's going to happen in the next life when Christ who is my life appears and I'll appear with him in glory, and I will never have a broken femur, right? I'll have a body that's impervious to any breakdown. I mean, I can think about things for which I can be thankful, things that are not yet realized. And I can begin to change my disposition to get to verse 16, to rejoice always.

Well, I have to be mindful of God. I have to be talking to God. I have to be directing thanksgiving to God. And if you say well, that doesn't sound like it's for me, well read the rest of verse 18, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Right? And if you are in Christ Jesus then you do have an endless amount of things for which to be thankful because you are sharing in the coming inheritance and there's no possible situation in which there won't be something transcendent for which you can be thankful. And you have to say okay, that has to be my practice.

So you're driving to church. If everyone this morning was driving to church thinking about the realities that somehow you can get your mind excited about the thanksgiving that we can offer

to God, that changes our disposition, that brings us back to verse 16 to rejoice. And we all show up on campus rejoicing, or to your small group rejoicing, or to any situation that we find ourselves in, it instantly changes how church feels, how anything feels. Because Christians now have chosen to be joyful on purpose. Number one, "Do What Good Fellowship Requires." Good fellowship requires that we rejoice. It's a command to be joyful on purpose. Choose joy. It's a common, decisive thing that we do no matter if we're in prison or in the E.R. it's something that we can do, and most of us aren't in prison or in the emergency room, so this isn't quite as hard as I'm making it to be in the scenario that I'm giving you.

Sub-topic 1.b. This is a bit of a review from last time. What's the next phrase in verse 11? Go back to our passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 13 verse 11 says, "aim for," here it is, "restoration." Now this is the same word in English that we had up there in verse 9. "We're glad when we are weak and you are strong." In other words, if we don't have to bring our discipline and authority and you are doing the right thing, well, that's great, right? Because it's your restoration that we're praying for. Now, this is a cognate word, a first cousin word. So it's translated the same way. "Aim for restoration," aim for this repairing. And this was the picture that we got last week from Matthew Chapter 5 and the Old Covenant scenario of you bringing your offering to the altar. And if you remember that your brother has something against you, the context was that if I said to my brother some nasty word because I was mad at him, and of course I offended him, and I'm bringing my offering. And I say, oh yeah, he's mad at me because I called him a fool. Well, then leave your offering and go be reconciled to your brother. The idea of fixing a relational problem.

Okay, so number one if I'm going to do what good fellowship requires, sub-topic 1.a, I'm going to be joyful on purpose all the time. Sub-topic 1.b I'm going to "Fix My Relational Problems." If I have a problem with someone in the church I'm going to fix it. What we're good at is finding another door to come in so I don't run into the person I have a relational problem with, or just figuring out how not to, you know, talk to them, or avoiding the issue, or changing the subject, or trying not to go to the same service they go to, or whatever it might be, changing small groups. But what God would have us do is to fix the relational problem. So what we need to do is, well, everything we talked about last week, we don't need to belabor this because that was what the whole sermon was about. Fix the relational problem whatever it is.

And just to add one layer to this, right? A lot of people keep relational debt in their relationships and they shouldn't. Right? There's a conversation they need to have but they don't have it. There are apologies that need to be made but they don't make them. There's forgiveness that needs to be granted but they don't grant it. And then something happens. The ultimate, let's just be as dramatic as we can be here, right? That person's life is lost and then you end up going to their funeral and you sit there and think to yourself or, God forbid, they ask you to give a eulogy at the funeral and you think to yourself, well, I never solved the problems. And you think to yourself how petty, how ridiculous, right? The conversation I should have had, the apology I should have given, the forgiveness I should have granted. It'll all seem so ridiculous at that point, right? There's no need for us as brothers and sisters in Christ to not fix the relational problems we have. There should be no relational debt that you hold. We should owe nothing to one another to quote the book of Romans except love and

that's what we owe to one another. And that certainly involves all the forgiveness, all the apologies, all the mending of relationships. And that's what we looked at last week.

Do what good fellowship requires. We don't need to belabor this. Be joyful on purpose. Fix your relational problems. That's the idea of "aiming for restoration." What's the next one here? Sub-topic 1.c, "Comfort one another." This is an important word and it's almost worth learning the Greek language for this one because it's translated in three different ways and all of them are important and all of them will bring ideas back to your mind because you've learned them in different contexts. And let's just think of the three different ways that you've probably heard this word taught depending on how long you've been around in church. The Greek word, let's just give you the Greek word because you know the Greek word if you've been around here for very long. "Parakaleo," there's the verb, parakaleo. Now parakaleo or "Parakletos," that's the noun, you've heard if you know that word parakletos, you might be thinking of, okay, I've heard that in the Upper Room Discourse in the book of John, that's the word that's used of the Holy Spirit. Okay? Nod at me if you know that. That's the word for the Holy Spirit, parakaleo. And you think what's that translated as some translations? He's called the "Helper," right? He's the Helper. Okay. That's one way the word parakaleo or parakletos is translated. And that's fine. That's good.

The Spirit's going to come when Jesus goes away, right? He is now the rabbi. He's, you know, leading all these people. He goes away and the Spirit comes, and he is the Helper, and that's helpful, obviously, pardon the pun. And he is going to guide them. Okay. Well that's one way this is used. Another way that it's used it's used this way right here is to "comfort." It's the way that the book of Second Corinthians uses it all the time. More on that in a second. There's another way it's translated often throughout the New Testament and that's the word "encourage." We see it translated all the time as "encourage" in Greek parakaleo.

And all the time I try to illustrate it and I only try to illustrate, not only, but almost only try to illustrate words that are compound words that start with a preposition. And here's one that starts with a preposition. "Para" is a preposition, "next to," and "Kaleo" is a verb "to be called into." So called into, next to, to be called next, called in next to, and I often illustrate it with the knee brace. Do you remember that? Or maybe a stick that holds up a sapling tree, something that comes in alongside to help something. So if you have a knee brace, you have a wiggly knee, you have the knee brace come in with some, you know, strong things around it and it holds it in place. And you can see where that could be called a "helper." You could see where it could be called even a "comforter." It depends. Maybe more a blanket might be seen that way or an "encouragement." That idea works. So to come in alongside carries all three of those. And that's why in the English translation it's translated all three different ways.

I'm going to use it this way in the sub-point, if you're taking notes, because I think it's the broadest way that we can think about it in terms of a church being a church where you feel like this is a church where the God of peace and love exists. I put it this way, sub-topic 1.c "We Need To Encourage Someone." And I'm going to add this word "pastorally" today. You should say that's my goal. As a church I want to encourage someone today and I like the

word also to help someone. Right? You can add that too if you'd like. I want to be helpful, but that's help in terms of encouragement. How can I encourage someone?

Now the way it's used in the book of Second Corinthians is massively translated as "comfort." And I want to go back to Chapter 1 just to show you this. This is sounding way too wordy for me at this point, but go back to Chapter 1 with me, Second Corinthians Chapter 1, and see the word parakaleo all over the place in Chapter 1. And let's get the sense of how you and I should be acting to help make the church what it should be, doing what good fellowship requires. This is all something God wants to do among us. And again, I want to go to a church where God, the God of love and comfort, is evident and obvious. Well, then I have to be the kind of congregant who makes that evident, makes that happen.

Verse 3 Second Corinthians Chapter 1. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's great. I want to praise God. He's the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the Father of mercies," he's definitely merciful, the "God of all," here's our word, "comfort," of help, of encouragement, "who comforts," helps, encourages all of "us in all of our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort," help, encourage, "those who are in any affliction, with the comfort," help, encouragement, "with which we ourselves are comforted," helped, encouraged, "by God. For as we abundantly share in Christ's suffering, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort," help, encouragement, "too. If we're afflicted, it's for your comfort," help, encouragement, "and salvation; and if we are comforted," helped, encouraged, "it's for your comfort," help and encouragement, "which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that you as you share in our sufferings, and you also will share in our comfort," help, and encouragement. Do you see it? Everywhere here in this passage, and all of it is God doing something in our lives through the mediation of individuals and people.

Now go to Second Corinthians Chapter 7. This is where we often see, I mean, clearly the mediation through people. It's Chapter 7 verse 6, and I want to show you there are people who desperately need this in our church today. And if you make a commitment to try and be this today then God gets this done. Verse 6, Second Corinthians Chapter 7 verse 6. "But God, who comforts the downcast," this is a big word, you should do a word study on this sometime, someone who is downcast, who's depressed, who's walking in with their head staring at the top of their shoes.

He comforted us. There's our word, parakaleo. "Comforted us," encouraged us, helped us, "by the coming of Titus." So Paul was downcast and yet God was going to comfort him. Who did that? Who's the subject? Verse 6. God does it, but he does it through the mediation of a person, through Titus. Now if you make it your purpose to say, I'm the parakaleo being used by God to be part of what the Spirit of God wants to do in the church, parakaleo people. Then I'm going to just say every day I'm going to purpose to do this somehow. Okay. And it's not hard to do. I want to show you how easy it is to lift a pinkie to make this happen, right? And just think in terms of your own life and you can even have selfish thoughts even push this.

And I'll just give you an example from my selfish life. Struggling a little bit, getting the sermon together, thought of hey, I'm preaching and preparing. Surely some other pastor, this was last week, is struggling and so I thought of two pastors I haven't reached out to in a while and I texted two different pastors, hey, praying for you. Hope your sermon... I don't know what I said, I said something that took me ten seconds to text them both. One of them said thumbs up! Cool. Whatever. The other one said something like profound. Like I hit a nerve, like this was needed. Like a thirsty drink of water.

Well, then six hours later after, you know, our Sundays were over, maybe eight hours later, the second guy writes me back, right? This is from a whole other church. He writes me back. I hadn't texted this guy for, I don't know, six months. And he lays out this long text about how this text in the morning to a downcast pastor we felt like he was going to quit that day, you know, was totally turned around by a ten-second text that I happened to shoot off, off the cuff without giving any prior thought to it other than, hey, I'm struggling, maybe I should comfort some other pastor out there. How easy was that? How simple was that? It took nothing. It took ten seconds to do. And all I'm telling you is if you just make yourself available to God to say how can I just be a help and encouragement, a comfort to someone to come alongside and give the right words, or maybe even like Titus, to be physically present in someone's presence to say how can I help someone today? How can I encourage someone today?

If you did that along with adjusting your attitude to say I'm going to choose joy today, and if I have a problem I'm going to fix it. I'm not going to avoid it. Right? We're off to a great start to going to a church where the God of love and peace is active and present. Sub-topic 1.d what's the next one on the list? "Agree with one another." Agree with one another. No one ever agrees on the same flavor of ice cream, I get it. Or thin crust pizza or whatever you can't agree on. And there are a lot of theological things even, the tertiary or secondary issues we can't agree on. I understand that. But First Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 10 started with a focus on agreement. And we saw in Second Corinthians Chapter 12 verse 20 the problem of their, and I'll just quote verse 20, "quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder." They had all kinds of relational problems. They were, let's put it this way, disagreeable people. And so what Paul was wanting these people to do was to agree.

I'll put it this way, sub-topic 1.d here's how I put it, to agree on what matters, to agree on what matters. Now, you can't agree on all your, you know, opinions about this or that, but you need to agree on what matters. Now that line, if you don't know where it is you should ask one of your pastors. Because when it comes to church your pastors should be really good at figuring out like, is this a matter and a hill to die on or is it not? Really you should defer to your pastors on that, because there are a lot of things that aren't worth dying for, hills that aren't worth dying on, and some things you may think, well, this isn't worth dying on and in fact, it may be because it's going to somehow divide the flock in some big way. And there may be things you might be surprised by. Well, it's not worth it. I mean, it doesn't matter if you disagree on that.

So it is important that you decide and figure out based on some guidance and input what's worth agreeing on and what's worth not agreeing on. Of course, we have to agree on the main doctrines of the gospel and of Christ and Christianity and salvation. But, you know, I

hope you've seen modeled in this church that every last little thing is not worth saying hey, we have to go to different churches over that. That's not the way it is. It's certainly not the way it is. But there are certain things that deal with how we handle Scripture, right? Or how we end up seeing, you know, the issues of the gospel. Clearly we have to draw lines of division. But we need to be agreeable people and we need to not be the kinds of people who use the words in this passage that are "quarreling, jealous, anger, and hostility." And then the words like "slander, gossip and conceit and disorder." Those are personal problems of character, right? We can disagree and have a theological distinction and go our separate ways and have none of that "jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder." That doesn't have to be a part of it. But that's not what often happens with people who are disagreeable.

You know disagreeable people, right? You don't need to raise your hand or point to anyone. But you do know who disagreeable people are. That's not what we want in the church. So to have a church where God is evident, the God of love and peace is evident, that means that we need to agree on what matters, and be the kinds of agreeable people who aren't the disagreeable people that are known for Second Corinthians 12:20, which was a problem, certainly a problem in the church and the kinds of things that divide churches these days are certainly not worth it. Dress codes, decibels, decor, schedules. Just think of it this way. Are we going to be embarrassed when Christ shows up about the things that we argued about and he shows up and we're going to go I can't believe we were dividing and squabbling over that. There are certain things we have to, I understand we have to, but there are certain things we don't. Defer to your pastors if you're confused about which is which because those things we have to think about all the time in pastoral leadership.

Sub-topic 1.e, what do we have so far? Be joyful on purpose. Fix your relational problems. Encourage someone today. Agree on what matters. Here's the last one, "Live in peace." Live in peace. And if I can take this in the context of the church which is what I think the context of this passage is to sum up this letter, I'll put it this way, "Stay at Peace With Your Church." Stay at peace with your church. This fellowship needed to stay at peace. Live in peace. What's he talking about? Their congregation, live in peace. I want you to stay at peace in your church. Now, this isn't a covenant relationship. You're not married to your church. I understand that, but there should be a kind of peace that you keep with your church that you shouldn't be leaving on slight provocation. You should settle into a church and you should be fine being at a church until the church goes sideways, right? You should.

So all I'm saying is the God who is the God of Chapter 5 that we studied in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, the God who reconciles people to himself who are not like him. And you can add to that as a cross-reference, Romans Chapter 5. People who are hostile toward him while they are enemies he sends Christ to die as a substitutionary atonement for people who are not like him. Right? He brings foreigners to himself. That's an amazing thing. Aliens, if you will, to himself. And that reconciliation he brings tight to himself and we now say okay, that's the kind of people we're going to be. And so when we get to know people, if we have issues we're going to fix those issues. We're going to agree, we're going to be agreeable people, and therefore we're going to maintain the bond of peace in our church. And yeah, there are going to be bumps. There are going to be disagreements. There are going to be

issues that sometimes are not going to be comfortable, but we're going to stay at peace with our church family. Live in peace. Live in peace. That's an ongoing continuum. Live in peace. Right? Let's not bail out on this in any slight provocation.

I just think the context of this is so good, especially coming on the next phrase, "and the God of love and peace will be with you." And that's something you don't want to bail out on. So those are five things really quick to get to that wonderful last line. Be joyful on purpose. Fix your relational problems. Encourage someone today. Agree on what matters. Stay at peace with your church to put it in those terms. And then "the God of love and peace will be with you."

All right, now on to kissing, Second Corinthians 13 verses 12 and 13. Do you want to talk about that? Nobody? Okay. Verse 14 then. Verse 12, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." This is an interesting line, obviously a cultural context of how they dealt with one another in greeting. And the injection that is Christian is the word holy. "Hagios," the word "holy." Two words, though, certainly reflect a kind of behavior. The first one is "greet." Greet, at least etymologically mean pulling someone close. It's like a hug. You greet someone. It certainly has the concept tied to it of pulling someone in. And kiss, of course, is kiss, putting your lips on their cheek. That is certainly what it means.

What the Christian exhortation in the New Testament added was this word "holy." Just to make it clear that there's nothing weird about this, you know, there's nothing amorous about this. Nothing that is, you know, romantic about this. This is just a platonic greeting that was done in the early church of showing as Tertullian ended up saying by the end of the second century, the phrase that almost replaced the phrase "holy kiss" was the phrase the "kiss of peace." It became something to show that we're at peace with one another, that there are no barriers between us, that we're fine with each other, that everything's good between us.

Matter of fact, it was practiced as a part of the liturgy of the early church by the second century when they went to the Lord's Table, when they had the Lord's Supper, they would engage in this. Now they would engage in this in a greeting, because they would greet and they would kiss, but they would also do it as an act of liturgy in the church service when they engaged in the Lord's Supper as a part of what they did to show that they were at peace and they were in "Koinonia," where they were in fellowship and shared commonality with each other. So this is a good thing to show what we're talking about in the context and that is that there are no problems, which is the core topic in the larger context of Second Corinthians Chapter 13, aiming for restoration, there are no relational issues that aren't solved. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." And then he says from where he's writing "all the saints greet you," right? They're from a distance and we can't do that up close. We can't hug you from where we're at but we're sending our greetings to you from Macedonia. We're doing that.

So all of this is about, hey, we're all showing that we care. And that's what a church, by the way, if God is active, the God of love and peace, that's what we should be doing. Number two, let's put it that way, "Show Your Church That You Care." There should be an expression of your care in your church. There should be an expression of your affection, which, by the

way, that's what the word "kiss" comes from, the word "Fellatio." That's where the word comes from, which, you know, that word is another word in Greek for "love." We get the word Philadelphia from that. And it means an expression of brotherly love, right? This is not erotic, right? This is brotherly love. It's an expression of your care. Like a sibling kind of love, which you probably didn't kiss your sibling, but the idea of you showing that you're on the same page, you're on the same team.

Now, I want you to go to another passage, Chapter 6 in Second Corinthians. And I want to show you something that if we're going to show your church you care, it needs to start with this, because there are plenty of people showing a lot of stuff that isn't real. And we need to start with this. And I think it's an interesting word study. And though we've had plenty of word discussion today this one is interesting and worth having. So let's have it. There is a word that you probably have heard if you've been around church for a while that is a transliterated word. You know what a transliterated word means, right? That means it like "Baptízō" becomes "baptism" and "ángelos" becomes "angel." These words are just slid over from the Greek language to English or whatever language initially if it's slid over and not translated, it's transliterated. Okay.

Here's one that's transliterated. The word hypocrite is transliterated. Have you heard this before? Smile at me if you've heard this before. Hypocrite. And the only reason to bring this up in Greek is because it's a compound word with a preposition. Right? "Hypókrínō" which is helpful. "Hypó" is the preposition meaning "underneath." And "Krínō" is the verb to estimate or to "judge" or to make an assessment. So hypókrínō is to make an assessment but you have to make the assessment under something. So if I look at you I would make one assessment. But if I got under whatever I'm looking at I'd make a different assessment. Now you'd see where you get the idea of hypocrite from, right? If I look at you the way you're appearing I would make the wrong assessment. But I have to look underneath to make the right assessment because you are a hypocrite. What you're appearing to be like a whitewashed tomb is not what you really are. You're full of dead men's bones. I have to get past the whitewashed tomb, the sepulcher and I have to get in to see what you really are. You're just a dead corpse, right? You're a hypocrite.

The Pharisees are hypocrites. You look one way to the people. You look righteous but you're really unrighteous underneath. You're a hypocrite. Okay, I want you to look at verse 6 of Chapter 6 in Second Corinthians. Okay. Here's the last word and Paul's just listing things that are true about his ministry. He's saying here's something true about us. Let's just give you the whole verse, "purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit," okay? He's just listing some things that he's trying to point out in defense of his ministry, who he is. And then he uses these two words, "genuine love." Do you see those two English words, genuine love? The last word is the word "Agape." You know that word, "love," and the word in front of it is a negation of the word in essence, hypókrínō or "Anypókritos," which is "not hypocritical." So not hypocritical agape, not hypocritical love. So we have love that is not with a mask on. We have a non-masked love. It's not phony love. Okay.

So when it comes to love we know it can be hypocritical. It can look one way but not be real when it comes to love. And there are plenty of people who do that. And when it comes to the concept of a kiss, right? We certainly know what it's like for someone to use a kiss in a hypocritical way. Is there anyone who has ever used a kiss in a hypocritical way in the Bible? There is. Right? There's a name that's associated with that. That's certainly not associated with our nursery this morning. What's that name? Judas. Right? You didn't name your kid Judas did you? Because he is a hypocrite and he is one who used the kiss which is a sign of showing affection that I'm with you. You're the rabbi. I love you, but I don't love you because I'm cashing you in for silver pieces and I'm really trading you in and I'm your enemy. I'm your betrayer. I'm a traitor but I'm acting like I'm your friend. Okay.

So if I'm thinking about the concept of a kiss, the worst thing you could do is to give the ultimate expression of I'm your friend. I'm in the inner circle with you. I don't go around giving the kiss of friendship to strangers. I give it to my insiders in the first century. But I wouldn't hate you. Well, that would be the ultimate betrayal. Well it is, that's Judas. Well, here's a great line. What I need is unhypocritical love. I need to make sure that my expressions of affection are genuine. So let's not try to do number two, to show your church you care, unless we know that your care is real, it has to be genuine. And I'm getting ahead of myself just a little bit because I need to have that given to me. And that's where we're going in verse 14. I have to have God grant that to me. But I do know this. I don't want it to be fake. I need it to be real. And it's not some excuse to say if I don't feel it, I don't do it. I need to make sure I get it so I can do it. And I say to God, God, I need this granted to me.

But just know this I don't want to ever be fake. Fake is flattery. Fake is me trying to manufacture something so that, you know, I can make you think I care when I don't. I want to make sure that this is something in my heart that I'm working with God's grace to produce. It's making sure I'm not a Judas with a mask on. Paul was able to say and he meant it, Second Corinthians Chapter 12 verse 15, which we studied not long ago, that he is glad to "spend and be spent for your souls," right? If you're talking about these five things we talked about in the first point, I hope you can say I'm glad to do these things. I'm glad to do it. I'm happy to sacrifice for the body of Christ.

All right, then, it needs to be expressed, right? The whole point of a kiss in the first century was doing something. It's expressing it. You would know this person is expressing that they're part of the team. It's a cultural expression of saying we're on the same team. It was done and even put as a part of the programming before the Lord's Supper to show that we cared for each other. And I will just say this from First John Chapter 3 verse 18, that all love should be expressed. If you have love that's not expressed like the proverbs say, what kind of love is that? So we love not in word and in talk, but we're supposed to love in deed and in truth. So what is it that you're doing that shows that you care, right? If you care it has to be real. And if you care it has to be shown. What kind of affection and care is it if it's not shown, if it's not given, if it's not somehow expressed?

I used the phrase last week and I said it's part of our family discussion all the time that we don't go around, you know, confessing our grudge that we have towards someone because

who knows if that person has even sensed the grudge. So what do we do instead? Well, we reaffirm our love for them. Do you remember that phrase? Well, that comes really from Second Corinthians Chapter 2 verse 8 when the idea of the man who was under judgment had already received enough and Paul says, "reaffirm your love for him." Now that one they knew, right? The guy knew that the church was disciplining him and they just needed to make sure that he wasn't overwhelmed with sorrow. So Paul says, "reaffirm your love for him." It's just a great phrase, though we should affirm and reaffirm our love for people. And if you love people in the church, if you care for people in the church which you should there should be some reaffirmation of that over and over again. That's exactly how the kiss in the expression of peace was in the church.

And then, as Paul says all the saints here greet you, right? All the saints greet you which I just want to show you this is part of how we should always want to see, as Paul talked about Titus coming and being a comfort to him, Paul always wanted to close the distance in terms of his affection all the time. Just quickly turn to First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 17 with me as I run out of time here. First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 17, First Thessalonians 2:17. Paul says, "since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person and not in heart." By the way, if you don't come to church for two weeks, you don't go to small group for two weeks, you don't go to your Home Fellowship Group, you don't go to a sub-congregation, if you don't go to a Partners meeting, if you're not part of the body of Christ for a couple of weeks, I hope you feel this: I feel bereft, I feel torn away, I feel like I'm not where I need to be. And then I hope you can say well, it may not have been in person, but it was in heart. Right?

A real Christian who is part of a fellowship where the God of love and peace is evident and real and you're engaging in the five things here that summarize the teaching of Second Corinthians, you're going to be like I want to be there, and I love those people, and they're on my heart all the time, which probably will be reflected in your prayer life every day. And then he says we're going to make sure we stop being bereft. Right? "We endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face-to=-face, because we wanted to come to you -- I, Paul, again and again -- but Satan hindered us." It will be Satan. It will not be just your preferences to be somewhere else. "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before the Lord Jesus at his is coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy." It should be a high priority for you to be with your church.

And all I'm saying is Paul wanted to close the distance between the people who he cared for. Show your church that you care and one of the ways you do that is by "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." You close the distance, you show your care, and part of it is being with them. And when you can't be, you do all you can to get face to face with the people who are your church.

All right, one more verse, Second Corinthians Chapter 13 verse 14. He ends with this Trinitarian prayer, which is a prayer. It's a wish. It's wish language. But a wish for Christians is not a wish it's always a prayer. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." You see the Trinitarian pieces here, right? The person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord, the King, Jesus the Savior, Christ the Messiah.

That's the second person of the Godhead. The love of God, the word "Theos" often used as the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. That's what I want, right? Paul says I want you to experience all three persons of the Godhead. I want the grace, the love, and the fellowship of the three persons of the Godhead to be with the church, evident in the church, just like we saw up in verse 11. I want "the God of love and peace to be with you."

So this is a great thing but it's worded as a prayer. This is what I want. I want all of this for you. So if it's a prayer that's what we should be praying. And I put it that way, number three, we need to "Pray for What You Can't Manufacture." And like I said in number two, you really can't manufacture love for people who you wouldn't have anything in common with if it weren't for Christ. So yeah, let's start by just recognizing that we should be praying all the time for the three things that are here. Let's start with the middle which is the love of God. We're supposed to love the people here. I just talked about Paul loving the people of Thessalonica when he was away from them, and how did he get the love in his heart for them? Why are the Thessalonians his joy and his crown? Why is he looking forward to being with them? Why is he trying to be with them? And the only thing keeping him away is Satan blocking him from being with them, because he loves them. Where did the love come from, right?

The love of God has been spilled out in his heart, poured out in his heart. As the book of First John says he loves because God first loved him. And all of that. As it says in First John Chapter 3 verse 16 he learned to love because Christ loved him. And now all of a sudden we've learned to lay down our lives for the people around us. And all I'm telling you is you need to pray for that. God, give me the love that you have for these people. Let me learn to love like you love them. Give me love for my church. Give me love for this body of believers. Give me love for this small group that I go to. Ask God to give you the love that he has for them.

Do you remember the Apostle Paul as he was leaving Ephesus? He tells those people, you know, these are the people for whom Christ shed his blood for. These are the people who Christ loved so much that he died for them. I just want you to learn to love the people who you fellowship with just a fraction. If you could just love them a fraction of how much God loves them, right? You couldn't be a better congregant if you just had a fraction of the love that God has for them. Pray for it. Ask God for it. Look at the first one, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." He prays that they have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We learn in Second Corinthians Chapter 8 that God, this is a great, great statement in verse 9, "for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." What was that? It was a great theological statement in the middle of them giving to the struggling Christians in Jerusalem. Right? Jesus, his grace was that he emptied his divine prerogatives and all of his divine attributes, the exercise of them, to come and die and die even a terrible death on a cross so that we could be saved. To put it in terms of Philippians Chapter 2, all of this is couched in a picture of me learning to put your interests before mine. The grace of God is something that becomes this target for my Christian life. If I am a Christian and I'm in Christ, I

ought to walk as he walked. And how did he walk? As an offering of grace. The whole picture of Christianity is Christ's grace toward me.

So I want the grace to live like he lived which is for me to lay down my life for you, and for you to lay down your life for each other and for me. This is the picture of the church working to have the grace of God evident among us. And Christ was the living example of grace. I want that grace in my life. I want to echo that grace. I want to emulate that grace. Ask God to give you the grace that Jesus Christ demonstrated by doing what he did in living among us. Then the koinonia, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the last line here, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. You do know the word koinonia means commonality, the commonality of the Holy Spirit. Now, what did he say in Chapter 1 about the Holy Spirit? Here's the commonality of the Holy Spirit. It says in Second Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 21 and 22, the Spirit has placed us or, it's a great, strong word, has established each of us in Christ. So when you became a Christian, you repented of your sins, you put your trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit said, okay, you are now adopted into God's family by being placed into Christ. So Christ and all of his righteousness and all of the place where the spent wrath of God has been on the cross of Christ, you are now placed into that, established into that.

And then it says in verse 22 the seal of God has been placed upon you so that you are guaranteed the inheritance in the next life. So the Spirit of God has done all of that, and if you're in that and I'm in that, that's our koinonia, our commonality. And the Spirit has caused that commonality. You could have a twin that you have done everything with that twin your whole life. You went to the same schools. You do your hair the same, you dress the same, you went to the same colleges, you eat the same foods. And if that twin is not a Christian, you and I have way more in common than you and your twin. Because you and I are established in Christ. We have the same righteousness. We have the same forgiveness, right? We have the same grace, the same mercy. We have the same inheritance coming. Right? We have commonality in Christ even though we may have nothing else in common.

I've been watching for years from the pastoral perspective Christians who have nothing in common living in commonality in a church having the best of relationships even though there's nothing in the world that would draw them together. But they are together in the same fellowship because of their commonality through what the Spirit has done in pulling them together in Christ. And that because of sub-topic 1.d under number one that they are committed to live at peace in the church and they stay together for years in fellowship, the Spirit's unifying fellowship.

Let's pray. Lord, we trust in you. We trust in your finished work. We're thankful for what you've done on our behalf. We pray that you would be honored by all that is done in response to your Word here. That you would give us your grace, your love, and your fellowship so that we would live it out in real, practical ways this week.

In Jesus' name. Amen.