

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

August 27, 2023

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

REACH Sunday

PART

1

TITLE

Reaching Together

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10



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... Providence family. There we are. I hope you've had a really good week. If you are new here with us, we're thrilled that you've joined us as our guest. If you're in another room, welcome. We're also glad that you are here with us. If you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me to 1 Thessalonians and in a few moments we'll be in chapter two. It's been a great morning already and I pray that this time will be as well. What I'm going to pray for here in just a moment is the Lord would open up our hearts and help us to see how he would have us activate and engage our own life at this season of our life in the mission that he's about. So let me pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you and I ask that you would be gracious to us to open up our eyes and help us to see the glory of Jesus.

God, we know that what you've called us to do requires endurance, and we affirm to you that no matter how much mercy is wells up within us, no matter how much effort that we have, no matter how much determination that we can muster, the fact is that unless we see a blazing and beautiful and glorious picture of what is so worthwhile in Jesus Christ himself, we will not endure with what you call us to do. And so would you help us to see that you and only you are worth not only our day, but every day of our life. And I pray God for those in the room who don't have a relationship with you, who perhaps are simply learning about spiritual things, learning about the Bible, learning about Jesus, and what he did, what he said. I pray Father, that you would use this morning to draw them to yourself. And so we lay our lives before you and ask that you would speak through weakness to each one of our hearts. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

So there's a word in the Bible called mystery. And in the Bible it's used very differently than how we tend to use it. We normally think of mystery and we think of a kind of a movie, something that perhaps is dark or spooky, and yet that's not how the Bible uses it. In the Bible, a mystery is something that is a secret that is so unapproachable by our imagination that we would never solve the mystery unless God Almighty revealed it to us. And there's a lot of mysteries that the Bible unpacks for us, who he is, who we are, how to live in his world. And some of the mysteries are more significant than others. He even calls some of them great and one of them that he calls great is found in 1 Timothy chapter three. And there the Bible says, "Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness."

Now, if you are in that book of the Bible, you know that what he's referring to there is how is it possible for people like me and like you who have sinned against God, who have accumulated guilt before God, who feel the weight of that guilt to take that guilt away and become godly enough to be able to go to heaven when we die. The mystery of godliness. It's interesting that throughout the whole world today and even in this room, people are trying to solve that problem. And we tend as humans to solve it in one of three ways or at least we try to solve it. This riddle, this mystery of godliness. Some of us we choose to simply escape and sometimes we escape in non-religious ways and other times there's entire religions that are based upon escaping our guilt by literally elevating or trying to elevate ourself to a higher state of consciousness. Other people, they don't choose escape, they choose pain. Sometimes in non-religious ways, sometimes in religious ways.

Some of us, we talk bad about ourself to ourself, we insult ourself. And when the thought is man, that if I can insult myself enough over how I've lived my life, if I can live with such insecurity, with such low esteem of

who God created me to be, then he's going to see that I'm really sorry for the guilt of my life. And then there's other kinds of self affliction that takes place in religious forms. Such as like this festival in Greece or other festivals down in South America where they pour hot wax over worshipers hoping to show God how sorry they are by giving penance for their sins. And then there's still others, and this perhaps is the most common among people in the world and in this room, and that is we try duty. We try to be devoted to pray a certain number of times to be at church, a certain number of times to be good, and the hopes that our goodness that we could stack up would weigh more than the badness that we have accumulated in our sins, the reason that we are feeling guilty.

But it's interesting that Paul tells us, he says that great indeed we confess is the mystery of godless, and then he's solves the mystery. He tells us what God has done and instead of giving us a to-do list of what we're supposed to do, he gives us a Jesus already did this list. He says, "Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness. He Christ was manifested in the flesh." That means that part of the gospel, part of the mystery revealed is God In the person of his son, the Son of God came to the earth in the form of a man. He took on flesh and he lived here on the earth. Not only that, he was vindicated by the spirit, which means that when he was baptized, if you remember that the spirit came and rested upon him. God the Father said, "This is my son whom I'm well pleased."

And then the Holy Spirit vindicated the authority and the power of Christ as the son of God by giving him power and authority to do miracles over all kinds of different things, over evil, demons, over water, over sickness, over blindness, as well as to teach with authority the truth of God. In addition to that, he was seen by angels, and this is a reference to the fact that when Jesus Christ died for sin, our sin, and he was buried in a grave. He rose from the dead and when he rose from the dead, people came to the tomb looking for Christ, but instead of Christ, they saw angels. And the angel said, "He's not here, he's alive. Just as he promised he rose from the dead." And then he appeared to his followers. And those same followers began proclaiming him among the nations and where they proclaim people began to believe on in the world. And not only that, Jesus was taken up into glory. He ascended to heaven and he sent his Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those who would call out to him and faith.

Now, what we have just seen in this passage, this is the mystery revealed, it is Christ. If you've ever wondered what is necessary for me to become Godly enough to go to heaven, the answer is nothing to do with what you must do. It's putting your trust in who he is and what he has done for us. He's the mystery revealed. Only Christ can take our heart that is guilty and actually make it perfectly righteous. You say, well how would he do that? Well, this is what the whole Bible points to. It's condensed in just of a couple verses in Romans chapter three to describe it. He says, "All of sin and falls short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith." That's a lot of words, and for those of you who are perhaps new here or you don't even know necessarily what these words mean, it's okay, so let me just try to describe it.

He says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of his glory. When we sin against God, he's written his law

upon our heart. When we sin against God, it cuts our heart. We feel guilty. Not only do we feel guilty, it's an insult to his glory. And so there is a debt that is accumulated and there is a redemption price that is required to get out of debt before God. And none of us have the moral capital to be able to pay off that debt. None of us has the ability to pay that price. And so God did what we couldn't do. He sent his son, he says he put forward Christ Jesus as a propitiation. That's simply a word that means substitutionary sacrifice where someone else dies in our place. Christ came, he lived without sin and yet he bled to pay the penalty of our sin.

On the cross, he died, he was buried and then he rose from the dead and he says that for everyone who places their faith in Jesus Christ, he becomes the redemption price for their own heart. And as a gift of grace, he justifies us. It's different than forgiving us. It begins with forgiveness where he takes away our sin, but then he gives us his perfect righteousness. And therefore he looks at us and he says, you're justified. You're innocent before me. This is the only way that sinners can become godly to go to heaven is we go in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's why we just saying, "He is the way, the truth and the life." There is no other way than Jesus Christ. This is the gospel. This is the mystery revealed and flooding the whole world with this saving news of Jesus is the mission of God Almighty. And yet 70% of our community and 75% of the 8 billion people in the world are still trying to solve the mystery alone.

So the question is how will they know? How will they know? Last week we spent the Sunday looking backwards over the last year to recount some of the ways that God has been kind and faithful and merciful, generous to us as a church family. What I want to do in these moments this morning is to look ahead to see our part in God's mission. We call it Vision Sunday. Sounds very corporate, doesn't it? Vision Sunday. What it simply means is this is I want to help you try to see something. That's what vision is. I just want to help you see something today. You see what vision is really is seeing with our heart what we could see with our eyes if the vision propel our hands. This is true in all of our relationships and responsibilities, whether it's a business, a garden, a marriage, doesn't matter what it is. It's not today and we imagine what it could be and that vision is so attractive that it mobilizes our feet and our hands and we begin working towards creating and seeing with our eyes what one day we only saw with our heart.

That's what today's about imagining. What could it look like? What's interesting is seeing is really hard. It's really hard. Not many people are really good at it. Not many people can see because seeing is so hard. In particular, good and godly things in the future are really hard to see. Even Proverbs affirms this. In the fourth chapter of Proverbs, he says that the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn. That's pretty dark. The light of dawn is when there's barely any light which shines brighter and brighter until full day. And so he's comparing by contrast the paths of sin versus the paths of righteousness. And this is what he's saying. Unlike simple paths that begin so promising and bright and spectacular and wow, this is going to give you so much joy and the further you walk in them, the more devastating and dark and enslaving those paths are. The paths of righteousness are initially lit only by the dim promises of God himself, but the further you walk in them by faith, the brighter and brighter and brighter the path gets.

And so I want to help us see. Some things right now are literally so dark you can't even imagine. And some

of us have people within our life right now that we care about deeply and they're so far from the Lord. They have no regard for Christ. They have no regard for his word. This is what I want to ask you to try to do, strain right now. Try to strain right now and just imagine that person that you're thinking of praying to receive Christ, saying amen and looking up into your eyes. Just imagine water flowing from their face as they come out of baptism. Just imagine here at Providence that the next generation became truly fired up for the glory of Jesus Christ. Just imagine if there was a spiritual awakening in Raleigh. It was so intense and it captivated so many hearts and it caused so many people within our city to be born again that it actually changed cultural life despite broken policy.

Just imagine if that spiritual awakening passed beyond the boundaries of Raleigh into our state and into our country, even in places in the northeast where we have 10 church planters who are trying to plant in places where there's very little gospel witness. And just imagine if that spiritual awakening not only moved into those regions, but it also began to spread and the other continents around the world where the villages and cities around the world and urban centers and small little towns, the glory of Jesus Christ was being felt and seen for the very first time. Just imagine Providence, the breach between the worth of Jesus Christ and the worship he is receiving from people who have been created in his image. Imagine that breach eliminated. Imagine seeing everyone at Providence extending themselves to the point of discomfort to help others become disciples of Jesus.

This is the vision called reach. It's a five year vision and we're about to start year three of it. Every year we're simply looking and saying, what are some things here at Providence where we look at we think what needs to be short at? What needs to be fortified to be able to see in five years now three years time, what if we were able to see everyone at Providence being so willing to extend themselves to the point of discomfort in order to help people who are so far from him to put their faith in Jesus Christ? Some people have asked, well, what does the acronym mean reach? It's not, it's just reach. It's like they're way over there. We're over here, we have to reach towards them and yet it's hard to do so. Most of us don't like to be uncomfortable. But listen, extending to the point of discomfort is exactly how Paul arrived in Thessalonica. So if you did turn in the Bible to 1 Thessalonians, we're finally there.

Look what it says in chapter two, verse two. He says, "But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict." You can read about what he's just describing in Acts chapter 16. Paul and his friends, they get to Philippi and eventually, very shortly after they're put in prison, they're beaten, they're flogged, literally they're bruised up, they're battered. After a night in prison, they find out that he's a Roman citizen. They're like, oh man, we're not supposed to do that to a Roman citizen. They try to get him out of Philippi so they don't get in trouble. He shows up next at Thessalonica, that's Act 17. This is what he's talking about.

He goes, "Look, you remember when I got to you? I had bruises on my face. I was willing to extend myself to the point of discomfort in Philippi and then instead of getting bruised up and simply going home, I went to a new city, your city, because you didn't know the mystery of godliness that has been revealed. I wanted

to reach you as well. And so I came to share with you the gospel. That's Jesus Christ, come to the earth to die for our sin and rise from the dead to give us his righteousness and take away our sin." And he wanted us to know, and he wanted them to know that it wasn't sort of a drive by drop off the gospel and get out of here. Notice what he says in verse eight. He says, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel, we wanted to tell you about Christ, but we also wanted to give you our own selves because you had become very dear to us."

There was love and truth that we wanted to dispense and give to you in that moment. And then what we're told is this, in Acts 17, we're told that once he got there just a few weeks after, a mob incited this riot in the city and Paul had to leave town. When he leaves town some time passes and he becomes so burdened. He's like, I wonder about that little church in Thessalonike. I wonder how they're doing. I wonder how their faith is doing.

And so he takes one of his sons in the faith and he says, "Listen Timothy, I want you to go back and I just want you to check on them. I'm fearful that they've walked away from what we have given to them. That somehow the affliction and things that are taking place in the city, maybe some of them are just like, man, this is just too risky to follow this Jesus." So he sends Timothy, he goes, he checks them and he comes back and he hears that the church is thriving, that they're growing in faith, and Paul is so overwhelmed with gratitude that he sits down and he writes them the letter 1 Thessalonians. And in this section that we're about to read, he's going to describe what I just described about his relationship with them.

Notice what he says. "But since we were torn away from you brothers for a short time in person not in heart, we endeavor the more eagerly 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. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus that is coming. Is it not you? You are our glory and joy. Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone. We sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ to establish and exhort you in your faith that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction just as it has come to pass and just as you know. For this reason when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live. If you are standing fast in the Lord for what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God as we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Now, I know that many of us perhaps don't see initially how this is so relevant to what we are experiencing right now at Providence. Right now at Providence, we are experiencing two amazing realities. One is that we are growing quickly as a family of faith. And the other is we live in a city that is expanding quickly, not only in population but in its footprint. And as such, there's two things that happen because of that. First thing is there's a lot of people who now call Providence home who were not meaningfully connected in healthy, refining, encouraging, loving relationships. There's so many new people here that even if you know someone, you don't know them really well, you're just perhaps getting to know people. Some of you, you don't know anybody. You walked in here, you literally, you're like, I see all these people. I know nobody.

And at the very same time that's happening because the city is growing it's lots less. The number of people, 64 people move to Raleigh every single day. And so the population of people who have no relationship with Christ is actually growing bigger around us. And so the question naturally comes, okay, this is where we're at. Year three of the vision. What should we do? Because we've grown so much, should we consolidate our people and invest all of our time in creating healthy refining relationships where everyone is known, where everyone has their people or should we scatter in order to reach the world that is lost? And the answer the Bible gives is yes. And the reason it says that is because it teaches us if you have eyes to see that healthy biblical community and missional living are not in conflict with each other. They're actually one and the same.

Let me just show you from what we just read. The first thing we see here is that healthy community practices sincere love. Just notice the words and phrases that Paul chooses to stack up to describe his love for them and his longing to be near them in verses 17 and 18, since we were torn away from you. That's the word that says we didn't want to leave. We were ripped away from you for a short time. Saying we don't want it to be a long time. We want to be right now with you in person, not in heart, which means that it doesn't matter, even though they can tear us away in terms of our physical bodies next to each other, that we can't be in the same city with you, they cannot take my heart away from you. We endeavor the more eagerly with great desire to see you face-to-face because we wanted to come to you. In other words, it's not good enough for me to have memories of our encounters and interactions and prayer times. I want to be face-to-face with you again.

Providence, we want our love for one another in this place to be so real that when anyone is missing, someone feels this way about us. It is impossible for everyone to feel this way about us, but it is entirely possible for someone to feel this way about us. And so for the mission, it's incredibly important for us to invest in small groups where we can be known, cared for and where we can know and care for other people. You see 60% of Americans, which would include us, say that they feel noticeably lonely. Isn't it interesting that God's first recorded concern was about human loneliness? He says, that's good and that's good and that's good and he's Adam by himself and he goes, that's not good. It's not good for the man to be alone.

And it's interesting is that you can be lonely in a crowd. Some of you right now, you're in a room with hundreds and hundreds of people and you're terribly lonely. What's interesting is when God said it's not good to be alone, science, even recent science confirms this. One of our most recent US attorney generals, Dr. Vivek

Murthy, he says this in the Harvard Journal. He says, “During my years caring for patients, the most common pathology I saw was not heart disease or diabetes, it was loneliness.” And so for the mission, some of our effort this year needs to be devoted to developing meaningful relationships with one another. If you’re not in a life group, if you’re not in a small group, whether it meets on Sunday or midweek, if you’re not surrounded by other people who know you, who care for you and praying for you, that’s available to you and you need to invest some effort this year to pursue that.

The second attribute about this healthy community that we see is that it pursues growing faith. It pursues growing faith. There are so many reasons that people pursue being together. Some of you have already been to a life group today. You were just a life group. You went to a little small group, got done, you came down and now you’re here. Something happened there. I would ask you to consider, was it the best thing that happened there? You say, “Well, what do you mean?” There’s a reason you went and there’s a reason you talked about what you talked about, right? I just want you to notice what was the driving concern that Paul had for wanting to get back to Thessalonike to see them face to face?

He says it five times over. Verse two, “We sent Timothy to establish and exhort you in your faith.” Verse five, “When I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith.” Verse six, “Young Timothy has brought us good news about your faith.” Verse seven, “In our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith.” Verse 10, “We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.” Friends, we are all going to die and then we are all going to stand before God almighty and in that moment, we will either be rewarded or impoverished forever on the basis of our faith. And so when we gathered together, there’s no doubt because we’re humans, we’re going to talk about sports and we’re going to talk about the lake and we’re going to talk about current events and we’re going to talk about family and our kids because those things are part of our life. But undergirding all of those discussions about life and responsibility and relationship must be a driving concern. What is this person’s faith?

I am standing in front of somebody. We’re talking about NC State football, but are they going to heaven? Is their faith thriving? Is it growing? If it’s lacking, if it’s diminished, what can I do or say in this moment to fortify their faith? I know this is an interesting relationship, but there’s been twice in 25 years that somebody in this church has asked me, “When did you put your trust in Christ?” It’s sort of an assumption, right? I mean they probably wouldn’t have hired him unless he knows Jesus, and so, but isn’t it true that we make the assumption about each other? I’m not going to make you because it’d be really awkward, but just imagine looking at the person next to you on either side. Ask yourself this question, do they know the Lord? Is their faith growing and thriving? And so for the mission, part of our energy this year needs to be to devote our love and care in these relationships to also fortifying and supplying each other’s faith.

And third healthy community, scatters for the mission. Scatters for the mission. I want you to notice Paul’s willingness. Notice Paul’s willingness to break apart his community for the sake of the glory of Jesus. Think about this for a second. Notice what it says in chapter three verses one and two. He says, “When we could

bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ to establish and exhort you in your faith." Now, think about this, Paul, he had his team, Timothy was on his team. They prayed for one another. They knew one another. They helped one another when they felt lonely, they encouraged one another. They strengthened their hands in the Lord and yet for the mission, there came a time when Paul says, "You know what? When I can't bear it any longer, I'm going to temporarily break up my little team and send one of them away."

Next week when we start a study on 2 Timothy, you're going to find that eventually Paul broke apart his team permanently for the sake of the mission. There's a willingness. You see, uninterrupted fellowship within a small group cannot be the point of the group because Christ our king has already told us to go and make disciples. What you'll find is that when we have within our heart a deep longing that's not met in Christ, and we assume that it will be met by our small group, we turn our small group into an idol, and two things always happen to an idol. In time, they disappoint us and in time they die. If your small group is only leveraged in your own mental capacity to meet your needs and the needs of the people in that group, it's deficient in its God-given purpose. It's also there to strengthen your hand to reach out to people who don't know Christ. In 1792, 5 men began a small group, John Ryland, John Sutcliffe, Andrew Fuller, Samuel Pierce and William Carey.

Carey felt the Lord calling him to be a missionary in India. And so he left. It was a little small group. They waited a year to hear anything from him, and once they did, Samuel Pierce wrote back. This little group, they were just made up of five sinners just like you and me. Needed Jesus, found encouragement in one another. Samuel Pierce wrote back, and this is part of what he said, he says, "Your account, this is him writing to carry inspired and strengthen our hands in the Lord. Who, but the Christian feels such pleasures as are connected with friendship for our dear Lord Jesus." We as a church family and all of our groups are not designed for our dear self. They are designed for our dear Lord Jesus. To see everyone extending themselves to the point of discomfort to help others become disciples of Jesus, it requires the support of a loving faith pursuing community. And the reason is because together we want to do a number of things. Together we want to reach our for.

What that simply means is first, we want to pray that God would expand our heart for people. That we would be wondering when we're in traffic, when we're at Walmart, when we're at the grocery store, when we're seeing human beings walking all around us, I wonder if they know the Lord. To expand our heart for people. God make my heart softer to wonder about people's faith around me. And not only that, but to identify for unbelievers, for people maybe you don't even know if they're unbelievers, just for people that you would begin to bless. Now, bless is an acronym. It stands for Begin with prayer. You pray for them, listen to them. You have a conversation with them, you eat a meal with them or have coffee with them. You serve them and some practical way and you share the gospel with them to bless them. This happens together.

We also want to reach our city. And a number of things that we desire to do together that requires us working

together is we want serve our city. Literally, we want to invest 10,000 man-hours simply making Raleigh a better place to live. Picking up trash in parks, being a caregiver to RPD, healthcare workers, refugees, market-places, parks, neighborhoods, simply caring and looking for our city and seeking its welfare. Twice a year, we do this thing called City Serve, where we organize all these service projects. We all gather together, we go out into the city and we serve 10,000 hours. For a group. This size simply means eight hours a year per person. A service project once a quarter. It's possible.

In addition to that, we desire to revitalize churches and plant churches. Hopefully, you know, there's a church in our city. It's called New Hope Baptist. New Hope Baptist has a room that sits about this many people and they have about 85 people there. And they have struggled, struggled, struggled, and the Lord opened up their heart and our heart through others sought to connect the two. And we're seeking to revitalize them in an area of the city where there's just all kinds of people who don't know the Lord. There's an informational meeting that's now scheduled. I know we moved it. They've since voted in overwhelming affirmation of what the church could become, and now it's time for us to have an informational meeting. For those that God would put it on your heart to say, I wonder if I should participate in some way to help that church. September 10th, right after this service, in two weeks, there'll be a meeting and you can simply learn how you might be able to extend yourself to the point of discomfort to help them.

In addition to that, we desire to plant a church, to plant a church within our city. Ironically, two weeks later, September 24th, we're not only going to put before you a candidate as the plant pastor, we're going to have an informational meeting where you can learn more about a church plant that we believe is going to take place in Wakefield. These days are coming, for many of you, this may be brand new, but hope you'll remember if you've been here before. Our strategy in this church plant is that it would become autonomous over time, but it would sort of imitate a parenting process. As parents, we first have kids and they're infants, and during that season of their life, parents provide full authority, protection and provision for this little child. And we'll do the same thing for this little church. And then they move to childhood. And as we have kids and they move from infants to child's parents intentionally over those years begin to expand the boundaries to open up independence and autonomy for them. And yet at the same time, reinforcing the family, DNA, the structure, the core values.

And then eventually we as parents, we recognize that our child is no longer a kid anymore. Now they're an adult. And so we recognize their independence and autonomy and yet because hopefully we have spent such intentional time helping them to grow as there's a desire to partner in life. And then with this local church, the first couple of years it'll be like an infant, and then the next couple of years it'll be like a child and eventually they'll become fully autonomous in the hope that they would partner with us in years to come in planting other churches within our city. And the third thing that we want to do to gather is reach our world. We want to pray for missionaries. We want to give towards missions. We want to send people with the gospel to the nations. Next year we're planning 28 mission trips. It makes rooms for 400 people. There was over 375

people who went this year overseas to take the gospel to people who don't have it.

And so these are opportunities that are in front of us. And I know some of you're like, well, what about us? Reaching requires roots. And so we as a church family will continue investing time and energy to grow in truth and reading the Bible together, teaching and Bible studies, praying for power and gathering in groups that we might know each other and love one another. But during the next nine weeks in particular, we're going to be going through a series, as I said through 2 Timothy. The series is called Pass It On. We've created a little journal and they're free. They're in the lobby. There's a daily reading guide and there's a prayer guide. And our hope in walking through this series, it's not only will we become confronted with the truths that are found in 2 Timothy, but the truth of 2 Timothy is Paul is about to die and he's passing what he has to Timothy. And Timothy is not quite certain he wants to take it. And he's telling him, you have to be willing to extend yourself to the point of discomfort, to give away what you've received.

I know for many of us, what we're hoping is that we would know more so within our own lives, how am I supposed to live my life? How can I live for a mission that's bigger than my life? And so over these nine weeks culminate the last Sunday in October, what we're going to be doing is not only looking at this book, but also praying every day. God, would you help me to understand more clearly in this stage of my life, in this season of my life, in spite of all this around me, how is it that you desire for me to activate in your mission in this season? And there's a number of ways that you're going to be hearing repeatedly over the next several months. And we're simply asking that you would take time with the Lord and maybe he would confirm one of these or more in your own life.

For some, it's literally to surrender your life to Christ. That's the first step for all of us. If you don't know Christ, is to trust him with your life. For some, we have trusted Christ with our life, but we haven't been baptized, which is the first thing he tells us to do. And so we would encourage you to be baptized. Then there's this thing called the pathway at providence. And the pathway is simply four steps to connect, grow, serve, and go. And it's built to help people who come here say, "All right, I see what's happening, but how do I engage in it? What's the steps that I can actually participate as well?" That'll start September 10th. And then a life group. Some of you're in a life group and many of you aren't. Some of them, most of them, they meet on Sunday, but many now actually meet midweek if you can't stay for two consecutive hours on Sunday.

I would encourage you to engage in a life group. For some is to serve, to serve with children's, to serve with students, to serve in adult life groups where we're needing so many more to accommodate the growth of the number of people who are here. For others that may be that God over the next two months is telling us to give. Giving financially, it may not be here, it may, that's between you and the Lord, but to give of your resources to wherever he would tell you for his glory. For others, it would continue to move to where we would identify one, two, three or four people within our life who don't know the Lord to bless. But perhaps it's to participate in city serve in October or to go on a mission trip. Or for many of us, we've been on a mission trip many times and we're praying, God, would you send me for longer than a week, maybe for a summer or

a year or two years or beyond?

And then for others, we would ask you to consider, which is a really weird thing to ask someone to consider, but it would actually be to say, God, would you call me to extend myself to the point of discomfort, to leave Providence for a time to either help with New Hope or to help with a church plant? And what I want to do right now is to simply encourage you to do what we're going to do over the next nine weeks. And that's to take some time and give you a moment to pray. Would you just take a moment right now to ask God to expand your heart for people and would you pray that he would show you over the next many weeks how you are to activate in this mission? Okay, let's pray.

So Father in heaven, thank you for being willing to send us Christ and Jesus, thank you for being willing to come extend yourself to the point of discomfort to save us. Thank you for bringing people into our own life who are willing to extend themselves to the point of discomfort to tell us about Jesus. And we want to be able to give what we have received. And so would you open our hearts towards people? Would you connect people in meaningful relationships and groups? Would you turn our groups and help them to become missional groups that care so deeply about people who don't know the Lord, who aren't in the group? And so we know that the only way this is going to take place is not because of our determination or effort or mercy. It's only by seeing the glory of Jesus Christ. And so as we sing now about Christ our king, God, would you open our eyes and help us to see his regal authority, his worth, and help us to sing as an expression of faith. Fellow hearts we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Would you stand? Let's sing.



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