

## Fresh Faith | Walk This Way

Aaron Brockett | Ephesians 5

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We had a great big party Friday night. It's so good to see you. We had our Special Needs Prom at three of our locations Friday night. We had over 550 guests, which is amazing. We had 1,100 volunteers across all three campuses, and it was just an amazing event.

If you have never been to one of our proms, you are really missing out. It's just a special group of people. It's just hard to explain what goes on there.

So I just genuinely want to thank the hundreds and hundreds of you who came together to make that happen. Those of you who began meeting months ago to plan and prepare and to get all the decorations available and all the food, and those of you who did makeup and those of you who were hosts. I just want to thank you. Can we just give it up for all of our volunteers? Thank you so much. Without you it just wouldn't be possible.

Well, I want to welcome our first-time guests and visitors across all of our campuses. We are one church gathering in multiple rooms and locations around our great city. It's so good to have you.

We have been in this series called *Fresh Faith*. We actually have one more. We'll wrap it up next weekend.

Really quickly, before we get rolling, I just want to address a couple of things. Two weeks from today, so not next Sunday but the Sunday after, I'm going to be doing a short two-part series of messages called *On Edge*. We're just going to be addressing the very heavy but very relevant subject of anxiety and depression, so I want to encourage you to be here.

It's going to be an encouraging message two weeks from today. I'm just going to be talking about freedom from anxiety, and so I want to encourage you to be here. This will be a great series to invite a friend or a family member to here in a couple of weeks.

Sort of connected to that, we've just sort of had a heavy couple of weeks in the life of our nation, and I just want to pray for us as we kind of get rolling. We want to just continue to stand with those who have been the victims of terrorism, all the shootings. We want to stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters as they are still grieving the loss from the shooting that took place at the synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Racism is still a very real thing and it's rampant across our nation and it shouldn't be. As a church, we want to just stand and we want to go to God and ask him to allow us to be the Church, to bring hope and healing and light in the midst of such darkness and pain.

Let me pray for us before we get going.

Father, we come to you today and we're just at a loss at times as we turn on the news or turn on our devices to scroll through social media just to see what happened, just the latest thing that happened and the devastation that it's caused, and we're just at a loss.

So we come to you just in a sense of brokenness. We want to grieve with those who grieve, and we want to, as a church, be reminded never more than ever have you asked us to be the Church, to be the light and the hope that brings healing into this world, so I pray that we could lean into you as we seek to comfort others.

I pray for those who are still grappling with just unspeakable hatred and violence and racism. God, we pray that we would stand against that in the power of your Spirit.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said amen.

Well, we are and have been in this series called *Fresh Faith*. If you're just now coming into this, we have been walking our way through a book in the New Testament, which really is more of a letter than it is a book. That's important to remember because thousands of years ago this guy named Paul writes this letter to a group of regular, ordinary people who are really not so different than you and me today.

They were living in the world-class city of Ephesus, and they had their issues, their problems. They had their deadlines. They had relationships that they were working on and marriages that they were maybe working on, and they were feeling the pressure of life.

My guess is that whenever somebody asked them how they were doing their response was not all that different from yours and mine. They probably said, "Busy and overwhelmed," and because of that it was sort of robbing them of these two things that are oftentimes closely connected: just a sense of peace and an understanding of identity.

I would say these are the two things that we grapple with even today, that is just a sense of peace. We're fearful. Maybe we worry about the future. And then just an understanding of really who we are.

So who am I? Am I my accomplishments? Am I my appearance? Am I what other people say or think about me?

We've been looking through the first few chapters of Ephesians together where Paul's been laying the groundwork so that we could get a solid understanding of these two things right here because we live in a world that wants to rob us of one and confuse us of the other.

So on week number one, if you were here, I just said that God, before he laid the foundations of the world, that he had you in mind and that he chose you in advance and that he decided ahead of time to place his love upon you and for you to be the recipient of his grace through his son Jesus long before you ever began to live your life.

I don't know how that works exactly, but there's something really comforting about the fact that it's not based upon anything that I could do because God decided in advance to do that.

Here's another way that I could say it maybe as practically and plainly as possible. I would just simply say it like this, that God has a favorable disposition towards you.

I know that maybe that doesn't light your fire or anything. It sounds a little bit academic, but I want you to think about that for a minute. It's not like God's like up there and you have to flag him down and get his attention to pay attention to your life. He is already dialed in on you. It's the wind that's at your back, like you're not working upstream; you're working downstream; that God has a favorable disposition towards you.

Let me see if I can try to illustrate it this way. When I was in high school, I was on my varsity basketball team. I know it doesn't look like it. That laugh just hurts.

What you need to know about me is that I did not have a very good reputation with high school referees. Once again, the laugh hurts. If there was a call that I didn't agree with, I would often tell them about it and I would sort of run my mouth and give them dirty looks. By the way, that doesn't help; it just makes you a bigger enemy of them. I never learned that lesson.

This is why it was really surprising. I was playing in a tournament one weekend and one of the refs had a favorable disposition towards me. All the calls were going my way and I didn't understand it.

Like I would pick up the ball, drive the lane and take three giant, LeBron James steps. I didn't look anything like LeBron James, but I traveled, and the other team's like all upset. Ref didn't call it, looked the other way.

I'd take a shot and the other team would try to jump up to block it. They wouldn't touch me. They would be a foot from me, but he would call a foul on them and I'd go to the free-throw line. I was like, "Wow! I'll take it. Horrible call, but I'll take it."

At one point, when it just sort of went over the edge, I hit a three-pointer. Running back down the court, he runs up behind me, kind of pats me on the back, and he goes, "Hey man, great shot." I was like, "Okay, who paid you off? This is really weird at this moment."

So at halftime, we came back out. We're all warming up shooting to get ready for the second half and I'd noticed him kind of looking at me just sort of with a grin on his face. So I walked over to him and I go, "Man, do we know each other?" and he goes, "No, but I know you." And I

was like, “Okay, you gotta explain something to me because it’s getting really creepy right now.”

He went on to explain that when he was in middle school, my mom, who was a teenager at the time, used to babysit him and he had a big, giant crush on her then. And by the way he was telling me sort of made it sound like maybe he still had a crush on her. It was just very weird and (ahhhhhh) creepy.

So I think this illustration has backfired on me. But in a far less creepy way, God has a favorable disposition towards you, not because of anything that you have done, but because of his son Jesus.

Some of you, you hear that but you don’t believe it. Some of you, you hear that but you need to understand it because some of you are living your life right now feeling as if God is upset with you, that he’s annoyed at you, that he is punishing you.

I don’t know how many times I hear that from people. It’s like, “Clearly God isn’t listening to my prayers. I’ve done something wrong. He’s upset with me. He’s angry with me. He’s loves me, but he’s annoyed with me because I can’t ever get this thing right.

And you need to understand that God has a favorable disposition towards you. He wants you to win. He wants you to overcome. He wants you to experience joy and contentment in your life. Man, listen, it is so important that you understand that because if you don’t, you’ll read Ephesians 5 all wrong.

Most of the time, that’s what ends up happening is that because of our perception of God, we get the tone wrong. We hear the words, but we get the tone wrong because Paul’s going to say some things here in Ephesians 5 that are very direct.

By the way, Ephesians 4 through 6 is pretty much all application. Ephesians 1 through 3 is theology on God, thoughts about God. Paul’s kind of laying the framework for us. Now he says: Okay, here are the implications. Here’s how you should live your life in light of what we now know about God. So he’s going to say some direct things, but if you don’t get the tone right, then you’ll receive it wrong.

Paul is going to essentially say some things in Ephesians 5 and 6 when we wrap this up next week. He’s going to help us in our walk and he’s going to warn us of some things that can trip us up.

If you’ve been around here for any extended period of time at all, then you’ve heard me say that one of the most common analogies in the New Testament to describe our relationship with Jesus, to describe our faith, to describe our spiritual journey, whatever you want to call it, is a walk. It’s what Jesus invites us into.

Part of that is because in the first century that's the way that you would learn from your rabbi. You wouldn't necessarily sit behind a desk in a classroom; you would walk with your rabbi. You would live life with your rabbi and you would learn from them. And that's what Jesus invites us into.

How simple is a walk? It's just putting one foot in front of the other. Yet it's still somewhat complicated, but at this particular point, for the vast majority of us, when you walk, like when you walk out of here later today you're not going to necessarily be thinking about balance and mechanics and coordination. You just sort of do it.

But in the early days, when you were a little kid—have you ever been around a toddler who's learning to walk? Man, it's a big, big deal. They're totally focused on those steps. When they take their first steps, the adults around them cheer them on.

But not now. You're not going to have anybody cheering you on when you walk out of here. That would be weird. But yet Jesus invites us to walk with him, nothing super technical, just to walk.

Now Paul says as we walk with Jesus there are things in life that are going to trip us up. There are times when we're going to turn an ankle, pull a hamstring spiritually speaking. Some of us are going to get pushed down by others. Some of us feel like that person who pushed us down now has a foot on our throat and they're not letting us get up. Some of us have fallen because of our sin. Paul says: Listen, I want to warn you of some things that can trip you up.

Here's how I would maybe say it. How do you stay upright in a world that's upside down? So Paul is going to help us. If I could maybe put a title over Ephesians 5, it would just simply be Paul teaching us how to **Walk This Way**, and that's a shout-out to one of the greatest musical duos of all time, Aerosmith and Run-DMC. And if you're under the age of 30, you have no idea what we're talking about. Just Spotify it. It will change your life.

So here's the outline for the passage. You could just take a picture of this with your phone or write this down or get it in the app notes. It's that Paul's going to say: Hey, you want to stay upright in an upside-down world? Walk in love, walk in light (walk with the lights on), and walk in wisdom.

So let's look at this together, chapter 5 verse 1. He starts off and he just says, "**Imitate** God, therefore, in everything you do, **because** you are his dear children.

Now he says that word *therefore* because this is a follow-up of everything that he's been teaching us about who God is in the first several chapters of Ephesians. He says: Therefore, now that we know the kind of God that we have, imitate him.

That's sort of a weird thing. I was studying that this last week and I thought to myself, "You know, I don't know of very many sermons or lessons or even conversations where people have

encouraged me to imitate God.” I’ve had people encourage me to pray to God or worship God or be obedient to God, but nobody’s ever said imitate God.

It sounds a little bit weird, but this is not like imitation in the sense that you think that you are God; this is imitation that you’re one of his kids. Now, imitation is the way that we learn. Whenever you’re trying to learn a new skill, one of the best ways is to imitate somebody who’s good at it.

When I first started preaching, I didn’t know what I was doing—still partly don’t know what I’m doing—but in the earliest days, I would just imitate some of my favorite preachers and that’s how I learned to find my voice and to say, “Hey, how does God want to speak through me specifically?”

Imitation is one of the sincerest forms of flattery and it’s the way that we learn, and Paul says: Hey, imitate God. Imitate God now that you know who he is.

How do we do that? Well Jesus said, “If you have seen me, then you’ve seen God the father,” so just imitate Jesus. A good list to kind of abide by would be the list in Galatians, the fruits of the Spirit: Love, joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Just do that, and when you mess up, own it. That’s just maybe the simplest way to do it.

And he says: Don’t imitate God because you’re trying to earn his favor; imitate God because you already have it. You’re his children.

And then in verse 2 he says, “Live a life **filled with love**,” (that’s hard to do because sometimes I just want to cherry pick when I want to love). He goes filled with it “following” once again “the **example of Christ**.” So love the way that he does, and then he tells us how Jesus loves. “He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us,” which is then “a pleasing aroma to God.”

Now most of the time, when it comes to like loving other people, we oftentimes will give them love or respond to them in love based upon our understanding of whether or not they deserve it, and so it’s like, “Well of course I need to love other people just as long as they deserve it. Just as long as they are treating me right and others right, then I’ll extend love,” but he actually says: Yes, that’s great. Do that up to that point, but then even when they don’t deserve it, that’s when you know you’re loving like Jesus, when you go beyond that moment. And it’s very difficult to do. I know that in my head. It’s so difficult to get in down into my heart.

I’m reminded that I don’t do this all the time. It was like a couple weeks ago I was having lunch with a good friend of mine, and we’re standing in line at the cash register waiting to order and there was a man standing right in front of me. It was kind of tight quarters, and my friend said something funny that I wasn’t expecting and so I laughed out loud, kind of like a loud, obnoxious, sort of visceral belly laugh—the best kind, but not for the guy standing in front of me because his ear was like right here.

As soon as I laughed out loud, he winced and I thought, “Oh no. That was pretty obnoxious. I shouldn’t have done that.” He sort of turned. He gave me a dirty look, and I smiled at him and I said, “Hey man, I’m really sorry.” I said, “That was unintentional, didn’t mean to do it.” I said, “That was a little loud.”

He did not smile back and he sort of glared at me and he goes, “No, I don’t think so.” He goes, “That was a lot loud.”

I was like whoa, pardon me, Mr. Sound Police. And I said, “You know what?” I said, “You’re right. It wasn’t a little loud; it was a lot loud. I just want you to know I didn’t do it intentionally. I’m really sorry,” and I smiled again.

He did not return my smile. He just sort of glared at me, mumbled under his breath, and turned away from me. And that was where my love ended, right there, just right there. I was like triggered, ready to go. I was like, “Come at me again, man. Just say something. I’ve got my response ready.”

And I immediately felt convicted. I was like number one, what if he goes to my church. Number two, the best reason, and maybe he’s here today, genuinely once again sorry. So number two is like I’m always ready to love up to a point. It’s beyond that point that Paul says that is a sweet aroma in the nostrils of God.

Maybe the best biblical example of this is one time Jesus is having lunch at a religious leader’s house and this woman, who had a reputation in town, she interrupts the lunch and she walks in, does not care what they think about her—there’s something about that I really love—and she’s weeping and she falls at Jesus’ feet. She takes out this really expensive jar of perfume that’s worth like a year’s wages and she dumps it all over his feet.

The religious leaders judge her for this. They’re upset about it because they say, “What a waste. We could have taken those resources and sold them and given the money to the poor.” It’s sort of a false spirituality.

Jesus could see right through it, and Jesus actually didn’t reprimand her at all. In fact, Jesus didn’t even do one of those things: Well, yeah, you have a point, but... He didn’t do any of that. Instead, he just goes: Don’t reprimand her. In fact, anytime the Gospel is going to be declared in the future, her story will be told.

That’s why we’re still talking about it. Because what you thought was a waste is actually a pleasing aroma in the nostrils of God.

The way in which our lives are filled with love is when we get up to that point when this other person does not deserve our love and we love them anyway. God is pleased with that.

Here's a question that I want you to maybe take with you and talk about in your groups this next week. How would my relationships and interactions with others change if I loved everyone the way that Jesus loves?

He goes on in verse 3. He says, "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among **God's people**." So once again he's warning us of some things that can trip us up, and sexual immorality and greed would be big ones. They are actually the roots of maybe some bigger issues in all of our lives.

He just says: Hey, as God's people, man, keep an eye on these areas of your life. And what we have to understand is that the gift of physical intimacy is a gift that God gave to us. Our society's attitude towards physical intimacy is largely that it's just another biological urge not unlike other biological urges that we have; therefore, when you have it, just go fulfill it.

So it's like when I'm hungry I should go eat. When I feel the need for physical intimacy, I should just go fulfill it with whoever and whenever I want to and yet God says: No, be careful. I've put some parameters around this thing that I've given you, not because God is old-fashioned, not because God says that it's dirty, but because it's God's idea and honestly, he doesn't get enough credit for that.

Physical intimacy is something that God thought up. Can we just take a second and thank God for that? Good idea, God! Way to go! Awesome!

That's feels weird. Some of you are like, "We are clapping for physical intimacy in church. That feels wrong." But it's like, "No, good idea, God. It's awesome. It's a great gift, and yet he gave us the gift with some parameters around it, not to hinder us, but to enhance it.

It's not unlike these devices that we all sort of carry around with us, that we all seem to be somewhat addicted to nowadays. I think we would all say that this is an incredible tool, that it's actually helped us in many ways, but it's also held us back in some ways. Would we not agree?

I was watching an interview with Tim Cook this last week, the CEO of Apple, who was actually talking about one of the things that they've just come out with and one of their latest updates called Screen Time. Screen Time helps you sort of monitor how many times you pick up your phone and how often you're on Instagram and it can help you kind of put some parameters around it, some downtime.

You can even control your teenager's phone from your phone. I'm having so much fun with that. They hate me right now, but I love it! I have such power. I'm imitating God.

So anyway, I'm watching this interview and Tim Cook actually says the reason why they came up with Screen Time was because Tim Cook realized he was spending too much time on his phone. I thought, "Huh. That's interesting."



He goes, “We invented these devices not because we wanted you to be on your device all the time, but we wanted it to enhance human relationships, not hinder it, but if you’re on it all the time, it hinders it.” So he just came up with this tool to kind of set some parameters around it.

Listen, what God says about physical intimacy in his Word is the exact same thing. He just said: I’ve just put some parameters around it not to hold you back, not to hinder you, but to enhance it in your life.

Some of you who are maybe uncomfortable because we’re talking about this, you’re ready to move on. He also talks about greed in the same sentence. You’re kind of like why would he put those two things together? Paul is an equal-opportunity offender here.

Some of us are like, “Yeah, we need to talk about sexual immorality.” Oh yeah, but also greed. “Oh, okay. You just hit me there.”

If we could just kind of define the word greed. Greed would just be a craving for something that I don’t have, but in an unhealthy way. It’s not a bad thing to have aspirations. It’s not a bad thing to have goals. It is a bad thing to be greedy and I think that all of us would say that what’s at the root of most injustice and abuse in our society is greed and it’s sort of we go after something in an unhealthy way.

So why put greed and why put sexual immorality in the same sentence? Because they’re both rooted in the same thing. These are good gifts that God has given us. God meant it for our good, but we twist it to something that becomes harmful.

So Paul says as we’re walking with God, don’t get tripped up in these two areas of your life. Now can I just gently and directly and pastorally just ask you, I can’t do this for you, but to just simply do an evaluation and say, “Are there any parameters that I need to set around these two areas of my life?”

For many of us, maybe this is what has tripped us up. See, we can’t say that we are fully surrendered to Jesus if we are still openly pursuing those things that put him on a cross. And I’m not saying that you’re not going to struggle. Every single one of us struggles with both of those things. And I’m not saying that you’re not going to fall. I’m just saying that when you do, stumble towards Jesus, not away from him. And when you stumble, get back up.

For many of us, I think maybe even this is the reason why maybe many of us left the church and stayed away from the church is because we fell, which we all will. Instead of somebody lending a hand, they put a foot on your throat and they wouldn’t let you up. Pauls says: Man, get up and keep walking. And keep walking towards Jesus even when you stumble and you fall.

And he says in verse 15, “So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are **wise**. Make the most of **every opportunity** in these evil days. Don’t act **thoughtlessly**, but **understand** what the Lord wants you to do. Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will **ruin**

**your life.”**

So what he says here I think is maybe the meat of the passage. He says: Listen, in these days that are evil, in these dark days ahead of us, don't live thoughtlessly. Don't just live randomly but live with some wisdom. Don't act like you have it all together. Wise people don't have it all together. Wise people don't have all the answers. Wise people do this. Let me give you this definition of wisdom. Wisdom is learning to think clearly about unclear things.

There are so many things in the Bible, there are so many issues that we have in our lives, so many questions that maybe we have about our future, and there is not a verse for it. And it's like, "So should I take that job? Should I stay here? Should I go to school over there? Should I marry this person? Should we move?" and the Bible doesn't have a verse for that, but what the Bible does is something so much better; the Bible enables us to begin to operate in wisdom, and he's going to say it here in a minute, to be filled with his Spirit so that we can think clearly about unclear things.

So what causes so much anxiety and fear for so many of us is we don't know what's coming in the future. As we are trying to answer questions, we're trying to make decisions, we're trying our best to figure it out, can I just ask you what's the grid by which you make decisions?

For many of us, it's feeling and that's not necessarily all bad, it's just not all good because feeling is limited. In fact, let me see if I could illustrate it this way. I want to invite you to kind of follow me. I'm going to walk backstage for just a minute. We're going to turn all the lights out. We're going to turn the night vision camera on the lens. It's very, very dark. I can't see. This was kind of a bad idea.

So many of us are walking through life and we can't really see much in front of us. I don't know if you've seen those night-vision cameras before but I think you can see me pretty clearly, but I can't really see you and I actually can't really see much of what's in front of me all that well. There are some very creepy things backstage.

I'm walking my way through and my eyesight's very limited, but I've just got my hands out in front of me. That's basically what happens in life whenever we're walking our way through life and when we say, "Well I'm just making a decision based on feeling." It's not so bad. I mean, we can't predict the future, but there's something much better that God wants to give us.

Psalm 119 says, "Your word is a light unto my feet and a light unto my path," so God wants to turn a light on. Paul says if you want to stay upright in an upside-down world, you walk in love and walk with the light on. It's far better than just feeling alone. And walk in wisdom. Invite his Spirit into your life so that you can begin to think clearly about unclear things.

And then he finishes this up by saying, "Instead, be **filled** with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord **in your hearts**. And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now he's not talking about we all need to find ourselves in a musical. You know, we just run around singing songs to each other. Some of you would love that, I know. What he's talking about here, sing psalms and hymns in your heart, is what's the tune you're living your life by? What's the narrative that's going on in the back of your mind? What's the lyric of the song and the refrain that you're singing? And he says even though you may not feel this to be true, please know this to be true, and when you start singing the song, eventually your life gets in rhythm with that.

So Paul is talking here in this whole section about how to live upright in an upside-down world. Next week, when we finish this series, we're going to talk about putting on the armor of God so that we can walk even more with wisdom and light, but as a church, at the end of the day, what we're trying to do is we're trying to just help every single one of you in your walk.

The last 11 years that I've been able to serve here, one of the things I've just noticed is that we have people who are in all stages of their walk. Some of you are yet to take your very first steps. Some of you are maybe what we would call just like toddlers in the faith; you're just learning to walk. Others of you have been walking for a long time. Some of you are ready to speed walk.

What we want to do is we just want to come around you and just help you in your walk, so as a church, how can we do that best? Maybe you even walked in here today at one of our campuses and it's your first time and you're just like, "What kind of a church did I walk into? What is this all about?"

If I could, I just want to close today by just offering you this visual that I think will help remind all of us who've been here for awhile what we're aspiring to and then it'll maybe kind of inform some of the answers to those questions that you have.

See, within our church family, we've got people with all kinds of backgrounds and experiences. Some of you, this is the first church you've ever experienced. Some of you, this is the first church in a long time. Some of you, maybe you came out of a denomination or a certain religious tradition. Here we are, one big family in this church, so what kind of church are we?

I would say that among all of us, there are maybe four general sort of teams kind of represented. By team, I mean your background, maybe your denomination that you came out of, maybe your particular preference. I would just say that all of us kind of identify with one of these teams maybe more so than the others.

The first would be what I would just call Team Theology, and this just represents *the mind of God*. What I love about this team is that they really value the truth that comes from God's Word. They love deep conversation around lots and lots of coffee.

Maybe if you came out of a reform tradition, maybe you came out of like a Bible church, maybe you have your Master of Divinity and you would kind of say, "You know what? Man, I really

identify with Team Theology.” Honestly, this would be the group that has really played a significant role in my formative years as I began to follow after Jesus.

And even now. If I want to get close to God, just give me a good book written by a dead person and give me lots of good doctrine and allow me to take a bunch of notes. I just feel really, really close to God.

In fact, how many of you, just raise up your hands, would just identify with this team? No, just kidding. You don’t need to raise up your hands. You don’t raise hands in church. We know. C’mon, I’m just having a little fun.

So the great thing about this team is that they love and value God’s Word, but maybe one of the potential weaknesses of this team is that if we’re not careful, we can get so focused on getting the Gospel right that we fail to get the Gospel out. Jesus would say to the religious leaders one time—oh, there’s applause for that; we’re going to cause a fight.

Jesus would one time say to the religious leaders, he would say: Hey, you diligently search the Scriptures because you think that by them you have life but you fail to come to me. Sometimes we can be guilty of that if we’re wearing this jersey.

Another team would just be Team Charismatic, and this team represents *the heart of God*. This team just loves the Holy Spirit and they give us some of the best worship music, so groups like Hillsong and Bethel and Elevation and others; maybe if you have a Pentecostal background in your past or you come from an Assembly of God church. And if you identify with this team, you don’t just raise up one hand, you raise up both hands. That’s just what you do.

What I love about this team, there’s so much to love about it, is that they are marked by the belief in the miraculous power of God that is at work like right now. It’s not like God moved then, but God’s moving like right now, and they have an expectation that they’re going to experience his presence and they are expressive and enthusiastic and encouraging, and if I’m just being completely honest, they are the most fun group to preach to because they talk back to you and they encourage you.

Can I just say that if I’m preaching bad, it’s at least half your fault. I just want you to know. Actually, if you don’t like this sermon, you can respond your way to a better sermon because I’ll get like, “Oh wow, they love it,” and I’ll get excited and I’ll be encouraged. And if you don’t like the sermon—I’ve learned this from my African-American brothers and sisters—just say, “Bring it home,” and I’ll know I gotta land that plane.

One of the potential weaknesses of this group is that you can sort of value personal subjective experience over maybe just about everything else and we need to be careful of that.

Another team would be what I would just call Team Growth, and this team represents sort of like *the mission of God*. This group loves to accomplish things for God. A lot of

nondenominational churches might be represented here. There's an emphasis on evangelism and programs and systems and effectiveness, and they're always thinking, "How can we reach more people for Jesus and get them connected and help them to grow so that we can reach even more people for Jesus?" They believe just in the stewardship of resources and time and dollars, not because the church is a business, but because the church is something that is far more important than a business because eternity is at stake.

One of the strengths of this team is that they're effective and they reach lots of people. And honestly, our church is very influenced by this. However, there is a weakness to this team that we've got to keep in balance, and that is we can be so focused on reaching more Christians for Jesus that we fail to make better and deeper Christians for Jesus. So as we go wide, we also want to go deep.

The last team that I'll just mention is just Team Justice, and this represents *the hands of God*. This group loves serving the felt needs of real people and they stand up against injustice and we want to serve the poor and we want to be involved in the community. Maybe you grew up in a smaller church that had a missions committee, and a lot of the missions committee would be Team Justice.

If they got tattoos, which most of them never would, but if they did, it would be James 1:27—true religion is to look after orphans and widows in their distress. They're always thinking, "How can we give ourselves away? How can we comfort those in distress? How can we take care of people?"

Man, so much to love about this because we live in a very broken, hurting world. One potential weakness of this group is that sometimes they can maybe begin to resent or look down upon the other teams as being less spiritual because maybe they don't care as much about the pressing needs, or at least it appears that they don't, as what they do.

Now there are strengths and weaknesses to all these teams. And maybe as I walked through them, you kind of identified with one of them. I actually have a jersey from each team in my closet because throughout my walk with God I've been sort of an advocate, I've really gravitated towards one of these teams at different times in my walk.

So the question is what kind of church are we? And a better question would be what kind of church are we striving to be to help us in our walk? If I could just give you this visual. This would just be what we're shooting for.

[slide-graphic of all four with TP in the middle]

We don't do it perfectly, but this is what we want to be, and we want to be right in the center of this—to be a church that loves the mind of God and follows the heart of God as we express our hearts for God, seeking to accomplish the mission of God in the power of the Spirit of God.

Because there is a world that is broken and hurting, and that's the way we stay upright in an upside-down world, to walk in love and to walk in light and to walk with wisdom.

Let's pray together.

Father, we come to you today, and I pray that there would be somebody here today who would just really need what it is that you had to say from Ephesians 5.

I pray that you would help us in our walk just to put one foot in front of the other and to grow stronger in that walk, and when we get tripped up, that we would have the strength and the courage to get back up by the power of your Spirit.

So, father, as a church family, we need to come together more than ever and we need every single person on each one of these teams to come together and to realize that we're going to accomplish what it is that you've asked us to accomplish when we are working together with your mind, with your heart, with your Spirit, with your hands to make a difference in this world.

God, there's so much that can trip us up in the world. We want to stay upright. We want to keep walking towards you, so give us the strength to do that.

We pray that you would meet us right now in this space and in this place, in the seat that we're at right now, that you would just do a work on us in these next few moments.

We've heard from you. Now we want to ask that you would speak to each of us individually. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.