

"Why Should I Bother With Church?" (Eph 3:1-13 + Q&A;)

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Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] board. And before Pastor William preaches, if Pauline could please read our Bible passage for us today, Ephesians chapter 3. So I'd love to. Okay, Ephesians chapter 3. Has everyone turned their Bibles to that or Google search? Ephesians chapter 3 verse 1 to 13. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles, surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you. That is the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through him, and through faith in him, we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, do not be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. Amen. Amen, that was the word of the Lord. Thank you so much, Pauline, for reading that, and thank you, everyone.

Just please keep your Bibles open with you, and we're going to dive into this passage very soon, but let me pray as we hear from God. Father, your word is living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. Let it pierce us now as we consider the mystery of how church displays your marvelous plan for the watching world and for the heavens even to see, to declare your glory. Help us as we understand why it is that we meet together and what part we have to play in it.

Father, I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I want you to imagine your Nate. Nate loves spending his weeknights gaming with his high school friends, and then one day, one of Nate's friends asks some questions about Christianity, and eventually, you know, just chatting over, yeah, between games, he gets a chance to ask a question of him, you know, have you ever gone to church before? And then the response is, oh, yeah, I'm not really interested in church.

[3 : 19] I don't have anything against it, but I'm fine where I am. I don't know why you guys even bother with church. It made me think of Rose. For several years, Rose, she attended her church regularly and faithfully, but then after a bit of disagreement with a few others in the church, it wasn't really handled well.

People started gossiping about her, excluding her. Rose decided to pull back, and you know what? She hasn't met anyone from church for months now. I mean, why bother?

Or take Jeff. Look, Jeff has loved lockdown the last three months. They've actually been pretty good for him, right? Because, I mean, for Jeff, his church has a live stream, and so Jeff can join in with his pajamas.

He can skip the worship and just jump in whenever he wants. Maybe you can just sleep in and catch the recording later. In fact, it's been so convenient, lockdown church for Jeff, that even the thought of, you know, pre-registering or driving to a church building even, or wearing a mask, or even socializing with other people again, doesn't really seem like an improvement.

Why bother with church? Let's be honest. Sometimes on a Sunday, especially a beautiful day like today, Lord Ellsmore Park looks like a better option, right?

[4 : 44] Or the couch, or the bed. And then sometimes it's easier not to face people who've hurt you, or vice versa. Or sometimes, if we're honest, we look around on the Zoom call, and we go, is this worth it?

Is this better? But what have I told you? The most important thing that is happening in the universe is happening right now, as we meet as families, as brothers and sisters, and groups all over Pakaranga, all over East Auckland, as church.

I mean, that's what we get a glimpse of, right, in the passage that Pauline just read us. Let me bring your attention again to verse 10. His intent, God's intent, was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

Wow. Who knew that as we signed into Zoom from our bedroom, something cosmic, something world-changing was happening. There's lots of places to go in the Bible if we want to consider our topic today of church.

We could look at God gathering a people to himself in Exodus. We could look at the birth of the church in the book of Acts. We could even look at some of the letters that John Dictator writes on to the seven churches, all right, that we read in the book of Revelations.

[6 : 14] But for the next few minutes, I want us to take a few, just a closer look at the Apostle Paul and his take on church, which we have in Ephesians chapter 3 in this first half.

And now some of you who have joined us from the start of the year, you may remember, right, that we preached the whole book, and Pastor James took this passage for us early in the year. So I won't be going into the same detail.

Feel free to jump on the podcast if you need a refresher. But I want to just make two points about church. And our first point is this.

Our first point is this, that the mystery of the church is that it is a global family in Christ. The mystery of the church is that it is a global family in Christ.

We see this in the first six verses. As you have just heard, Paul writes this letter from prison, right, to the Ephesian church. And he starts off by reminding his Gentile or non-Jewish readers that God has given him a job to administer, a plan to make clear, to share God's grace with them, right?

[7 : 23] And he responds, and then he continues and says, what is he's responsible for is a mystery. Did you see that word in verse 3, the word mystery? This is a fascinating word that shows up only in the book of Ephesians a lot of times, right?

He talks about it in chapter 1 and chapter 6. And then in this little passage, in this section, he talks about it here. The word mystery appears again in verse 4, the mystery of Christ.

And then it appears again in verse 6 and verse 9 as well. So it's clearly an important word. One of our lockdown board games has been this board game called 221B Baker Street.

I don't know if you've ever played that. It's where you pretend you're a detective like Sherlock Holmes. And part of the way you win the game is that you chase down clues.

You go from house to house to try and solve a mystery. But here in the Bible, the Greek word for mystery is quite specific. It means something that was hidden but now has been revealed by God himself through the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 30] So what kind of mystery would turn a man who originally imprisoned, right, and chased after followers of Jesus into a man who's willing to be imprisoned for Jesus?

What kind of mystery turns a religious terrorist like Paul, a Saul, into a missionary like Paul for the Gentiles? Have a look again at verse 6 where it says, This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members of together of one body, and share us together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

You see that? You see how together that word appears again and again? This is a mystery, right? This is a mystery to Paul's first readers because for the longest time, God's people, they knew they were to look for and trust in what's called a Messiah, a promised king.

But God's people did not know who it would be. Our first parents, they longed for someone who would, in Genesis 3, say, crush the serpent's head. Abraham, a hope for the one who would bring God's blessing to the nations in Genesis 12.

And prophets like Isaiah spoke of someone, right? Someone in the future who would be the light of the nations, who would bring salvation to the ends of the earth in Isaiah 49, verse 6.

[9 : 58] But at the cross in Jerusalem, the veil is lifted. The unboxing happens. The secret sauce is spilled, as it were. Verse 6 tells us this, that through the gospel, the mystery is revealed, through the gospel in Christ, people from different cultures and backgrounds can join together.

Together as fellow heirs. Together as fellow members. Together as fellow receivers of God's grace. And you know what?

We see a glimpse of that, even in a church like ours. And don't be fooled by appearances, right? On first glance, you might think we're just a Chinese church, right?

Full of families who have known each other for years. But I challenge you, put on gallery view, okay? And have a look at all the different faces and names we have here among us.

PCBC, we are more than just a bunch of faces and names. I mean, if you think about it, there is diversity even here among us. Some of us pray in English.

[11 : 06] Others might pray in Mandarin or Cantonese. Some of us have only known life here in Auckland. Some of us, like Pauline, have lived in Australia. Others of you have lived in Asia, Europe, America, elsewhere.

PCBC, we worship, don't we, as people with roots and connections to Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, German, New Zealand, even Australia.

But it goes further, doesn't it? Because every Sunday afternoon that you and I make the effort to connect together with brothers and sisters, to praise Jesus, to do life together by his spirit.

We are also standing together with brothers and sisters from different churches all around New Zealand, all around the world, with Maori and Pākehā, with Asian, European, African, South American, Middle Eastern followers of Jesus.

That's the mystery revealed. Christianity, only Christianity offers you acceptance into a family that is not based on culture. It's not based on your visa status.

[12 : 23] It's not based on your performance or your bank balance. Why bother with church? Firstly, because it is a global family in Christ.

That's the amazing mystery of church, that we do well to remember and remind ourselves as we meet. And at this point, I want to be clear.

If church is a global family in Christ, right, in Christ, then actually, some of the ways we think we become Christians are not actually ways to become a Christian.

Growing up in a church or having Christian parents or just being surrounded by people who go to church don't actually make you part of this global family. We just heard from Pauline's testimony.

At some point, you need to make a choice to join the family. And even in this church, perhaps, there will be people who know all the rhythms and habits of church. You might even enjoy the social benefits of church.

[13 : 21] And yet, you need a relationship with Jesus to be a part of this global family in Christ. If you don't have this, you will face an eternity suffering apart from our Lord and Savior.

If Jesus is the bridegroom, you must be wed to him. If Jesus is living water, you must satisfy your thirst in him. If he is the way, the truth, and the life, you must turn from your sin and follow after Jesus.

You must have a living relationship with God and Christ. You must be born again. This is the picture of the church that Paul is willing to suffer for, willing to be imprisoned for.

And he goes on, right, in verse 7 onwards to recount and recall his commission, the gracious gift that God gave him to go out to the nations with the gospel.

And as he explains his mission, his goal in life, his purpose that he now has in Christ, he reveals another important point, right, about the mystery of the church.

[14 : 30] And this is our second point. And it's important too. The second point is this. The mystery of the church is that it is a spiritual outpost to declare God's manifold wisdom, right?

Church. It's a global family in Christ, but it's also a spiritual outpost that declares God's manifold wisdom. Let me pick up from when Paul uses that mystery word again.

Verse 7. I became a servant of the gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working on this power. Although I'm less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given to me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And then verse 9. To make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was created in God who created all things.

His intent was our through the church that manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[15 : 38] If you have paper Bibles or even maybe your electronic one, I want you to get a highlighter or a pen if you want, right? And if you're willing to, I want you to underline through the church.

Because this is such a key verse, through the church. And also, if you dare, when you get to the word manifold wisdom, you might as well highlight each letter with a different color.

Because that term manifold, right, in Greek, originally meant something like many-colored, okay? You think about how Joseph in the book of Genesis had a many-colored or multi-colored dream coat in the book of Genesis, right?

It's the same Greek word that's used there in the Greek translation, right? Think sequins that reflect every hue and dazzle, or I don't think LED light bulbs that kind of cycle through all the colors.

In the same way, the members of God's new creation, the church, shows the many-colored wisdom of God. Wealthy and poor coming together.

[16 : 49] Doctors and primary schoolers coming together. A rich tapestry of different ethnicities and cultures, all knit together in Christ. This is God's wisdom to our watching world, to our neighbors and co-workers.

And I want to point out, too, verse 10, look who else is watching, right? Who does it say is watching in your Bibles? It says, rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms are watching, too.

Right? Spiritual powers are looking on. Whatever they are, whether they're angels and demons, they are watching the church. They're watching history unfold with all the world going on, with men and women being united into God's family.

I wonder if that was what you thought about as we sang together with Julian, as we prayed with Venus, as we heard from each other's testimonies. Spiritual powers are all watching and thinking, wow.

Look at the way PCBC English keep gathering week after week and locked out. Look how they keep sitting under God's word.

[18 : 05] Look how they keep going out with his blessing. Look how they love and serve each other. Wow. This must be God's eternal purposes being worked out.

This must be God's wise plan. Friends, isn't that a powerful thought? That God's amazing design for his world is for the mystery of the gospel to be made known through these spiritual outposts here on earth called churches.

And we can say all kinds of things about the church, but according to the Bible, church is not God's plan A to show his wisdom to the world.

Sorry, plan B to show his wisdom to the world. It is actually his plan A, right, to make his glory visible to the people around us. This was according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so, friends, here at PCBC, we can come as unfaithful, as weak, as unstable people.

[19 : 16] We can come as open, transparent people. We can come and just get our hands dirty. We can come and rejoice our wins and weep about our losses.

Our website may not look slick. Our building may not look grand. But as we, the church, keep meeting, as we, the church, keep drawing to God and to one another, to the watching world, to the heavenly realms, God says we look more dazzling than we could ever imagine.

We are a spiritual outpost of God's manifold wisdom. That's what God says. But William, you might say, you don't understand.

You've only been here for a year or two. I have been hurt by church. If that's been your experience, I want to say, I'm so sorry.

And please, if it would work, come to me. Come and approach me with your hurts and your troubles, confidentially. Or approach your group leaders, someone you know and trust.

[20 : 28] Tell us your story. Tell us how we can make our church show God's manifold wisdom better. And, of course, as a church, right, as kind of a big church, we need to be quick as Christians to point out the log in our own eye, right, when it comes to terrible things that have been done in the

name of Christ.

We should say, yep, I'm so sorry, when we challenge with things like the massacre of Muslims during the First Crusade. Or the way that in lots of times of history, Christians have not done what is right.

Even in churches and schools where Christians have been responsible for harm. But you know what? Where Christians and those who bear his name have committed great evil, it's actually because of the Bible and because of the teachings of Jesus we can point out that these things are wrong.

Think about it. The Old Testament, it's full of prophets who called out the sin and the hypocrisy of God's people. And whenever churches behave badly, it's not the fault of Jesus.

His melody is fine. It's because of us. We have played his gospel melody out of tune, out of time, and in opposition to what he actually taught.

[21 : 52] And yet even with all our faults and failures, God still says the church is his plan A for the redemption of the world.

Can you believe it? No wonder that Paul goes on, right, you know, in verse 12 and 13 to say, we can have boldness and access with confidence in Christ.

There's no wonder that Paul, with this vision of church, can say to his readers, don't worry about me and my sufferings. You see, when you have a big view, a Bible view of Christ and his church, the struggles and discouragement we face comes into proper perspective.

Why bother with church? Firstly, in the mystery of Christ, it's a global family. And secondly, it is meant to be a spiritual outpost that declares God's manifold wisdom.

I'm going to pause in a bit and respond and so on. We're going to have some Q&A; time. But before we do that, I want to share just four quick implications.

[22 : 57] If this is really what church is about, right, not whatever we have thought of before. If church is more than just a community club, but all these things, then let me share four things that we should respond.

Firstly, we should commit to it. We should commit to it. The way into church is not through a family or friend connection. It's through submitting to Jesus and his wise rule over our lives.

It's to come to him with nothing and for him to give you his perfect record, his spotless sacrifice for your sin. And so if that's the way in, then let's commit to it.

Let's keep declaring this message alongside his people. Let's celebrate baptisms. Let's remember the Lord's Supper together. And let's week after week sit under his word. Let's keep building up his people.

And if church, right, as a kingdom outpost showing his wisdom, then actually as a spiritual family, secondly, I think we should showcase our church.

[24 : 02] We should showcase. We gather in Christ when we can, right, over Zoom, in person, whatever. But then when we can't gather together, we should showcase Christ, showcase his people.

We may not always feel it. But our friends and family need to see PCBC. They need to see the multicolored signposts that we are to God's wise plan.

They need to know that this is a place where introverts hang with extroverts, where we share God's word clearly, right, and excessively to young and old, to Kiwi, to Asian, to anyone who speaks English.

Our world needs to know God's wisdom. And we showcase it. And one way to do that, I think, is to build friendship and fellowship, not just among PCBC English, but across our different services as well.

Thirdly, if church is truly a global showcase, right, of God's wise plan, the third thing, I think, is that the world needs a church in every place.

[25 : 07] I like how author Sam Albury puts it in another letter. He tells Titus, right, in the letter to Titus, to appoint leaders in every town. Titus 1, verse 5.

Not every church, but to every town. It's as if he's saying the world needs a church established in every place, in every geographic location. Perhaps in light of a global pandemic, perhaps as Auckland grows and spreads, it's going to force us to reimagine how we as PCBC can help plant a church in every place.

And remember, too, that the world needs followers of Jesus like us to go to gospel-poor places like Japan and Indonesia, where less than 1% to 2% know Jesus.

Or to cities in the Middle East or India, Central Asia, parts of Asia and Africa, where people have never, ever met a Christian before. Friends, our world needs a church, a Christian gathering in every place.

And fourthly, if all the above is true, the world needs our church in this place. I think, and especially in a church like ours, you might sometimes ask, is our church worth the bother?

[26 : 32] Would people really miss us if we never returned to our church building again? Would people really care if we cease to exist? God cares.

The angels in watching spiritual powers care. We don't have to be discouraged if we don't reflect the whole global church perfectly. We are a local outpost, yes.

But in Christ, we are connected, right, with our brothers and sisters around the world. The world needs our church in this place. And look, a day is coming. And John sees it in his vision in Revelation, chapter 7, when church looks far better, far more glorious than the bigger Zoom call. The largest rally. The largest mass gathering the world has ever seen. Think about how it says in Revelation, chapter 7, verse 9.

It says, And you know what?

[27 : 53] Every time we gather as PCVC, we are a sneak preview, a trailer of this glorious gathering that moves angels and spiritual beings to praise and glorify our great God and King.

He has chosen to bless this world. He has chosen to bless this world, to showcase his wisdom in Christ Jesus by his spirit through the church, his plan A.

And so perhaps the question would be, why wouldn't we bother with church? Let me pray. Jesus Christ, you are King of kings and Lord of lords.

Because of your death and your resurrection, the church of Christ was born. And your spirit lit that flame and it has not been put out. Father, help us to be excited again about church, about your people gathering for your glory.

Help us to declare how good it is and that this is your plan to show your wisdom to our watching world. Father, I pray all these things in Jesus' name.

[29 : 07] Amen. Amen. All right. So time for our Q&A.; So remember that you can post your questions on the Jamboard and the link is just posted there.

Cool. And you can also post up on the chat as well. So for our first question, it's for Pauline. Thank you. So you, as you said, you work with lots of different churches.

And so you've been to lots of different churches. So just wondering kind of from what you've seen, what do you think is something we can learn about the importance or the purpose of church? The importance and purpose of church?

Where do I start? Look, I think we also need to acknowledge that this, we're also talking about the local church as well as the big C church, as in some, I guess, some of us call it the capital C church. But one of the things, like what Pastor William has already covered, so many points, but one of the things that Jesus said to his disciples, he said particularly to Peter, on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

[30 : 38] And I think that that is something that is important for us to remember, that the church isn't there just as an organization. It's not just there as a building.

It's not just there to have these structures and a church just for us to go to. I mean, yeah, church has also been established for us to have teaching in and to be taught and to be encouraged and all of those other things.

But also, as what we heard in Ephesians chapter 3, there is a manifold wisdom of God that should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, which is what Pastor William was preaching about.

And according to his eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And we already covered that one of the eternal purposes is that Jesus has crushed the serpent on the head.

And so, as Jesus says to Peter, that on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. We're talking about the gates of Hades as in, I mean, there's a couple of different explanations of what that looks like.

[31 : 48] But one of the more common ones is saying that that's the gates of death, gates of hell, in other words. And with that, we need to also remember in Ephesians chapter 6, you know, the word heavenly realms also comes in.

So in chapter 3, chapter 6, it uses the same words heavenly realms. And it says in Ephesians chapter 6, for our struggle is not against the flesh and blood. We've probably heard this a lot. For our struggle is not against the flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And so one of the more important, as in when I use the word important, I almost say this is crucial to our walk with Jesus, is to recognize that there is a spiritual battle going on, that the gates of Hades are trying to overcome something.

The gates of death are trying to overcome something. And so the church is built on this rock in which even the gates of Hades will not be able to overcome it. Then there's an importance there of the church.

[32 : 55] And so if we read on for Ephesians 6, I'm sure a lot of us have heard of the rest of this, which is, therefore put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground.

And after you have done everything to stand and to stand firm then. And then we talk about the full armor of God that we need to put on with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helm of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And all of these things really illustrate someone going into battle. And the things that are put on the armor of God are also a lot of the different branches in which a church generally, I'm talking about church now, organizational church, also able to do, to teach the word of truth, to teach what righteousness looks like, to then to pray for one another and to carry that gospel of peace, all of those things.

But then later on after that, verse 18, it says, Pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

[34 : 22] And I'm reminded of, you know, when Pastor William will say, let's not give up on meeting. Let's not give up on meeting. Let's keep meeting week by week. And I'm reminded of Hebrews chapter 10 when it says, Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promises faithful.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another. So I know I've just spit out a lot of Bible verses.

But what I'm trying to illustrate here is not only is it crucial because we're in a spiritual battle, but as we one another actually help each other put on the armor of God.

And the reason why we shouldn't give up on meeting together is because that's how we also encourage each other and spur each other on. And it's almost like I know I've used this illustration many years ago.

It's like when all the soldiers line up for battle and we all line up for war and we need to be side by side. That pink person has now just distracted me.

[35 : 33] But we need to be side by side and be together, armed, because there is a very clear spiritual battle that's going on.

And I'm not talking about the fluffy spiritual battle. I'm not talking about, oh, there's an angel and there's a red ugly thing on your shoulders and it's talking to each other. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about we looking at the world, looking even at politics, looking at the legislations that are passed in parliament.

And we can see that there is a darkness that is trying to engulf the glory in which Jesus has displayed. And so we, as a church, need to come together armed and arm by arm or arm in arm. I don't know. But we need to be together in oneness and in spirit and to also hear, because faith also comes from hearing each other and encourage each other.

And another thing is to be reminded of, you know, James chapter five, where it says, confess your sins to one another and you will be healed. There is a need for us to actually talk to another person and to confess our sins to one another.

[36 : 54] And from that verse on, it also talks about how then the church will pray for you. And so there's all that importance because there's a spiritual warfare going on and we can't be ignorant to that.

And it doesn't even matter whether it's an organization or not. And sometimes we need to have that perspective of what was the point of church in the first place? It's not just a building we walk into. There's more to it. And so, yeah, that's one of the things that I think is most important. Cool. And just because there was a new post-it note that you were so attracted to, it was related.

But I just wondered if you had anything more points to add to that. So it says, what are your views on not attending a local church and instead attending regular Bible studies to have spiritual growth and fellowship?

Is attending a local church still needed? That's an interesting question. So many things I could also say to that.

[38 : 00] I think my question back to this question, all the people who have asked this question is, it depends what needed means. Are we saying needed as in needed for salvation?

Are we saying if I meet God face to face, is he going to hold me accountable and say you didn't attend a local church and so you're no longer part of the heavenly realms?

It depends, I think, what the word needed means in this case. But if what I was sharing before about, okay, there's the local church and then there's the big C and, you know, all of us gathering here or just from church, by church or whatever, basically prayer groups or whatever, and have that spiritual growth.

Is there a need to attend a local church for your own growth? I think the local church has a lot of different, I mean, it also depends on which church we're talking about.

But there's a beauty of having a local church in which it, I know that we always talk about family and how it feels like family. But the word family also has positive and negative connotations for people as well.

[39 : 23] If I think about, I think it's in Philippians 1, Paul says, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

So he's saying to the church in Philippi, he's saying, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or hear, only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

So here we're talking about the spiritual battle again, that there's something that's opposing this church. And Paul is encouraging them and saying, no matter what happens, including the, you know, the dramas within a church, conduct yourselves in a manner that is worthy of the gospel. And so why is that? It's not just for reputation. I know that, you know, there are times where you might say, oh, for the reputation of the church or, or yeah, just for face as like, oh, we need to be a good church.

We need to do all these things. But really what he's saying here is to display the gospel and the gospel of Christ includes the hardships as well.

[40 : 44] And so in a local church, there's, it's almost like a simulation to what is happening in the outside world as well. There, there, it's a church where it's, there's humans.

So there's sinners. And so there's still sin that, that floats around. And so it's not all pretty, but it gives us almost a simulation of, as well as it is also reality.

But how do you conduct yourself that, that, uh, how do you conduct yourself so that it is worthy of the gospel? What does that look like in terms of really standing firm and believing that Jesus Christ is the Lord?

And that, yes, there are sins, acknowledging that there are sins, but that is covered by Jesus' blood. What does it mean to, to, uh, release forgiveness or grace or mercy, all of those things that actually display what the gospel of Christ is.

And are we, are we able to do that outside of the local church? Yes, absolutely. But is the local church also a place in which you're able to, um, almost, you have that permission in particular to be trained in that way.

[42 : 03] Um, and, and there's also just so many, um, so, I mean, I, I know PCBC. I mean, I know PCBC from the past when I was there and there's so many, um, learning opportunities.

I know I learned a lot of my foundations from PCBC and I know my majority of my Christian life is in there. And so I know that even when I say let's be armed for battle, um, the armor of God, a lot of those pieces have been put together from different Sunday school opportunities or, um, prayer meetings or us meeting together in groups, um, us praying together, all of those things as well. But most importantly, and one thing that I'm very, very, very thankful for, for PCBC, um, is being given an environment where, why use the word simulation as well?

I say being given an environment to make mistakes as well. Have there been times where even for myself, I've been, um, I've been hurt, um, and I want to retreat and run away.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. There have been. And have I been given the opportunity to then practice this thing called confrontation, um, or speaking the truth and love and all of those things?

[43 : 22] Yes, absolutely. And so in the same way, it's almost like the local church gives you this platform that you are safe in, um, practicing how to live life so that you can conduct yourselves in a manner that is worthy of the gospel.

Um, and look, ultimately with this pick post-it note that I like so much, um, it, it depends on so many other things.

So regular Bible studies, like what, what do they look like? Is there good teaching? Um, what does the fellowship look like? All of those questions that I would want to ask back to this question. Um, but I do believe that the local church is, um, is a good, um, and important platform for us.

And training for the army. Yeah. Cool. Thank you for that. It's yeah. Really good detailed answer.

Um, just maybe quick answer for the last question, just cause I think it will be quite relevant.

Um, so, um, both of you, um, you know, have a non-Christian parents or family. Um, so yeah, parents or family who don't have a personal relationship with God and might not understand like kind of, um, your faith and devotion, um, to Christ.

[44 : 38] Um, so from that kind of perspective, can you give any advice or thoughts to maybe people who are listening here who might have parents who, um, yeah, might not be very happy with them going to church and maybe especially more, um, during these COVID times as we come back.

So, um, I don't know, Pastor William, do you want to go first? And then Pauline, if you've got any extra points you can add on. Yeah, sure. Yeah. Um, yeah. Just some really helpful thoughts from Pauline. Um, remembering that if there's so much about the one and others and churches in there, um, and if, if a lot of, uh, Christian life needs to be done with someone else, then yeah, I think the local church is vital.

You know, we need to come together. Um, yeah. And one thing I'll point about on the local church point as well is, um, there'll be lots of opportunities.

You know, you go to campus groups, you go to other groups, um, heritage groups, you're going to be able to read the Bible, be disciplined alongside people who have very similar life interests and stages.

Um, but again, I want to go back to what Paul said, you know, he's trying to display God's manifold, multicolored wisdom. And there's something about church, a local church where you're actually saying, I am in the same family as people who are not in my life stage, um, who are young and old, who are rich and poor.

[45 : 56] Um, and we are all trying to, to glorify Jesus together. And I think in one sense, this is what, this is why God uses the plan of the local church. So, yeah, so I'm a big believer in, yeah.

Uh, encouraging people to not just make their own Bible studies with only collecting people, you know, that are like them, but actually, um, my, my, my kids need to be able to see that uni students and, um, and moms and dads and workers all follow Jesus and, and, and vice versa.

So they need to see people from different ages and life stages, I think, um, putting on the spiritual arm of God together. So that would be my point on the pink one, which is a great question and a really common one. Uh, for the blue one, I think, yeah.

Uh, one of the great, one of the commandments is, um, 10 commandments is honor your father and mother. And there's, we're going to have to balance how you do that, but actually there are ways that we need to, there are tough questions that we have to ask, especially when we have, um, a non-Christian parents.

So, yeah, so when I became a Christian, neither of my parents, uh, were, and I think we need to, one thing you can do is you want to try and honor them as much as possible while still following Jesus.

[47 : 07] So, um, there may be times where you have to not meet, um, brothers and sisters as often. You may have to go up and go out and have those family dinners and those times of conflict.

Um, finding small and easy ways to, to, to show them that you still love them and care for them.

Um, because actually in those moments, um, you will be the representative of what following Jesus looks like.

So I think that's really important, you know? Um, so actually, you know, church shouldn't be an escape from a difficult family situation, but actually when you are in those family situations, as hard as it is, um, this is where your armor makes a difference.

This is where your, what everything that church has prepared you, uh, gets lived out in the, in the battle. Yeah. So, uh, those are some thoughts from me. I don't know, Pauline, if you want to add.

Just was going to say similar things.

Um, it's, yeah, it's, it's about displaying the conducting ourselves also in a manner that is worthy of the gospel in our own families as well.

[48 : 11] And to be able to display the love of Jesus, um, in any circumstance. Um, but for me, there's still, even now, um, in full-time ministry, um, there's still many moments in which my parents are, um, not, I don't think they fully understand, um, what, what, why I've chosen the path that I have.

And so there's been moments where there's still moments of clashing. Um, but I think what's even more important here is what is your personal relationship like with Jesus?

And it's almost like it's going to church. Um, it's, it's almost like then the, okay, the Bible verse for, was it the Bible verse for the month that you guys have, um, to be able to actually give an answer, um, to your parents as well.

Uh, if, if they watch the way you conduct your life and they go, it doesn't make sense why you even give your life to Jesus when you don't do anything. Like there's no hope in your life and you complain about everything and you don't like help in the house and any house chores, all of those things.

Um, there's no, it's almost like you're not able to give an answer, um, to why you've chosen Jesus.

And so one of those, my questions would be, do you live your life in a way that actually answers the question also of why you have chosen Jesus?

[49 : 36] Um, and so it's also giving you an opportunity to find out more about Jesus. Um, I was at a baptism last week and one of the girls were saying, um, she'd invited all her, uh, a bunch of atheists or claimed atheist friends, um, to her baptism.

And she was giving her testimony and she stood there and she said, uh, I want to thank you, my atheist friends, because of you, I have now become a Christian because you guys have asked so many questions that have made me need to find an answer to your questions that now I believe that Jesus is real.

And so, um, my encouragement to you is, uh, if we shift this, um, this, this pain maybe, or this burden that you feel, um, from your parents into an opportunity, um, and, and to be able to then deepen your relationship and almost stand even more firm in your, in your faith, um, because of that, what we may feel like is oppression.

Yeah. It's really good. I think that's a great point to finish off. Thank you for those asking questions and thanks, Pauline. Thanks, Pastor William.

Thank you.