

# A Church Family Is A Church Family

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you so much and that we can have this chance just to be together to study your word together, to hear your voice speaking to us and even in all the disruption of the power being of we thank you so much that we we still have this chance to reconnect and we pray that you would just bless us as we study your word, help us to read and understand it and we pray that you would just guide and teach us as we spend a little bit of time studying your word together just now.

We also just want to take a moment to thank you so much for those who work to maintain and restore the power supply to the island. We think of all those working for the high throw and for any other support, any other any other contractor who support their work and if they're out in this rough weather we pray for their protection not just here in the island but across the whole nation we pray that you'd continue to guard and protect them. So we thank you for that.

We thank you for the provision of our power and our homes, our shelter, our protection. We thank you for that so much. But above all else we thank you for your son, our Lord Jesus and as we come to have this short time of worship together just now we pray that we would meet with you and you that your blessing will be upon us and that we would just know more and more about what you've done for us through your son, our Lord Jesus Christ. So bless us. We pray in his name. Amen.

Okay, so we're going to read God's word together. Our reading is from Romans chapter 8 and hopefully you can see that on the screen there. I'm going to read verses 1 to 17 just now.

Then is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do.

[ 1 : 53 ] By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. For those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, but it does not submit to God's law. Indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You however are not in the flesh but in the spirit if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you although the body is dead because of sin the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

So then brothers we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deed to the body you will live.

[ 3 : 05 ] For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. But you've received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba, Father.

The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Amen. This is God's word and may he add his blessing to it. Well we're going to just spend a wee bit of time looking together at God's word.

And we are continuing, well in fact we're concluding the series that we've been doing over the past few weeks in our Sunday evenings called Doctor Information. The aim of this series is to think through some of the key biblical truths that can help encourage us as we seek to share our faith. As we've been saying all along, sharing our faith is something that we all want to do and that we're aware that we need to do. And there's people all around us, we want to see them come to faith in Jesus and we want to be able to tell them about the difference that Jesus has made in their lives. [ 4 : 22 ] But that's not easy. And often sharing our faith is something that we struggle with. So we've been looking at some foundational truths throughout the whole of this series.

And I've just summarized them there on the slide, you can see them there. We started off by saying that God is God and that really is the foundational truth that we have to remember that God is the one who's able to save people.

He can do that because he's God. We looked at the fact that the truth is the truth, that good news is good news, that grace is grace. That eternity is eternity. And then in the second half of our study, we highlighted the fact that you are you.

And we're trying to emphasize the fact that in sharing your faith, you don't need to have a radical personality transplant. And you are the person that God has made you with the gifts that you've got and with the contacts that you have in the location that you are this week.

And as you are, God can use you. And so that's really the key lessons that we want to remember from this series. That God is God and you are you. We also saw that witnessing is witnessing.

[ 5 : 23 ] It's not necessarily converting someone, that's God's job. We saw it evil as evil. And then last week we saw that people are people. We're going to bring it to a conclusion tonight with our title, The Church Family is a Church Family.

And we're going to look at various passages, but we can read again as a text from John chapter one. Verse 12, where John describes Jesus coming. The word made flesh God himself becoming human.

And as part of that great description, John one, he says in verse 12 to all who did receive him, who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God.

Many weaknesses in life is fizzy juice. I absolutely love a can, a cold can of fizzy juice from the fridge. And one of my favorites is right here.

Dr Pepper. I love Dr Pepper. But for many years, Dr Pepper was not one of my favorites for the simple reason that I'd never tried it. And the reason I didn't try it was because I didn't like the sound of a soft drink that tasted like pepper.

[ 6 : 43 ] Turns out, of course, that Dr Pepper doesn't taste a pepper at all. It's fruity and sweet and it's lovely. And when I first tried it, I was very pleasantly surprised at how nice it was.

And as I'm sure all of you who've seen the adverts for Dr Pepper know, the marketing team have realized this. And so they know that people don't like Dr Pepper because they've never tried it. And for many years, we've had these advertisements emphasizing that Dr Pepper is the drink that's been so misunderstood.

I definitely misunderstood it. I didn't try it because I thought it would taste like pepper. I didn't think for a minute that it would be sweet. The only thing that's more misunderstood than Dr Pepper is the church.

Because for so many people, following Jesus and coming to church appears less like thinking a lovely sweet kind of juice. And it seems far more like eating a stick of celery.

It's probably good for you. It's something that you should do. But for most people, it's highly likely to be pretty unpleasant. Now, I apologize to everybody who loves celery, but I like most things.

[ 7 : 52 ] But a stick of celery is really quite a painful experience in my eating experience. Jokes aside, we've got to recognize that one of the biggest challenges that we face in terms of evangelism is that people around us, long before they ever come close enough to taste and see that God is good, they jumped to the conclusion that being a Christian is not going to be particularly sweet.

And there's no doubt many reasons for this, but I think one of the biggest reasons for it is a misunderstanding that people have. People think that following Jesus and being part of a church is going to feel like a form of slavery.

Now, there's two sides to that problem. I think one is the fact that our sinful nature leaves us in a state of rebellion against God. So just as Adam and Eve wanted to be their own master, so do we.

We don't want to obey God. We don't want anything interfering with our lives, with our autonomy, with our routines. And so we tend to just refuse to acknowledge that God is our ruler. And instead, we don't want to be held to account for who we are or for what we do. And so as a result of that, you get people saying what has to be one of the biggest misunderstandings in the whole of history, where you hear people say, I don't want to follow Jesus because I will lose my freedom.

[ 9 : 22 ] For people on the outside, Christianity is seen as slavery. But the other side of the problem is that far too often, Christians have made Christianity look like slavery.

And throughout the history of the church and still today, there's been frequent occasions when Christians have been harsh and cruel towards other people. And so often we have defined our lives as disciples in terms of everything that we're not allowed to do, and in terms of making sure that we take a certain set of boxes that are expected of us.

And the result of all that is that not only has Christianity been misjudged by people on the outside, it's been misrepresented by those who stand within.

All of that's a really big problem. It's a problem because it stifles our discipleship. It robs us of our assurance, of our confidence, and it leaves us thinking that God is this kind of angry taskmaster who we have to try and impress.

And it also cripples our evangelism because it makes following Jesus and being part of his church look painful and joyless.

[ 10 : 37 ] And what makes all of that so tragic is that it's all based on a monumental misunderstanding of the Gospel. Christianity is not about slavery. Christianity is about family.

Now when I say that, that's not some kind of like nicey-nicey sort of optimism to make Christianity sound appealing. When I say that Christianity is family, I'm not saying some kind of nicey-nicey thing.

I am asserting a cast-iron truth of dogmatic theology. And it's crucial for every part of our lives, and especially for our evangelism, that we never, ever, ever forget that a church family is a church.

As you may know, theology is divided up into various big subject areas. I'm just going to give you examples of two or three of them.

One of them is what we call biblical theology, BT for short, biblical theology. That looks at how God has progressively revealed himself through the Bible, from Genesis right through to Revelation.

[ 11 : 49 ] So biblical theology is just following the timeline all the way through the Bible from beginning to end. Systematic theology, ST as that's known, instead of following the order of the Bible, it picks certain topics and it says, what does the whole Bible say about this?

So whether that's God or sin or the atonement or whatever it may be, it's time to piece together every single thing that the whole Bible says. And then practical theology, or PT as it's called, I suppose to be a T there, over a moment, here we go, PT.

Practical theology explores how these truths can be applied to our lives and our experience in the church. So biblical theology is following the history of Revelation from the beginning in Genesis right through to the end.

Systematic theology identifies key topics and summarizes everything that the Bible says about each of them. And practical theology shows us how to take what we've learned and to apply it to life today as members of a local church and as missionaries in a field that is ready or harvest.

What I want us to see is that for all these areas, family is crucial. So let me think for a moment with you to begin with about biblical theology.

[ 13 : 11 ] So we're going from beginning of end to the Bible. From the very beginning of the Bible, family is at the heart of God's purposes. Adam and Eve are united together in marriage. They're instructed to raise children.

And that union of a man and a woman is essential for the growth and survival of the human race. And it's also a source of immense joy as people share in the beautiful bonds of love that you find in a family between husbands and wives, between children and parents.

These bonds though have been badly damaged by sin. And because of sin, there's now hostility and cruelty between men and women. There's neglect and resentment between children and parents.

All of that's a consequence of the fall, a consequence of a rebellion against every creator. But what I want us to see is that the story of biblical theology reveals that God's plan of salvation has family

at the very heart of it.

You see that from the very start when God responds to the fall in the great words of Genesis 3.15, he gives a family promise to Adam and Eve. He talks about the offspring. Sorry, I couldn't go back there. He talks about the offspring of the woman.

[ 14 : 30 ] That there will be enmity between you and the woman between your offspring and her offspring. That offspring promise is a key part of God's purposes. In Rev.1 to Genesis 12, God comes to Abraham and he promises to make a great family out of Abraham.

And through that family, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed as well. And the rest of the Old Testament is the story of a family.

And that's something that's very easy to miss. When we think of the Old Testament, we tend to think of Israel. And when we think of Israel, we tend to think in terms of a nation, primarily because, well, probably because today when we talk about Israel, we're talking about a nation just like all the others in the world.

And yes, Israel was a nation in the Old Testament, but first and foremost, Israel was a family. The name Israel comes from a name that God gave to Jacob in Genesis 32.

You can see it there on the screen. Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, where you've still been with God and with men and have prevailed.

[ 15 : 37 ] And so Israel, the nation, is just the descendants of Jacob, what the Bible frequently says, the children of Israel. And so that means when you read about Israel in the Old Testament, when you read about the Israelites, you must think in terms of family before you think in terms of nation.

Now for us here in the Highlands and Highlands of Scotland, most of our surnames begin with Mac, which as you all know means son. So Mac something means you the descendant of a particular person, whether that's Macdonald, Macleod, MacArthur, Macrae, whatever it may be.

And I think that it's probably helpful for us when we think of Israel in the Old Testament, we should think of them as the Mac Israel's.

Other than thinking of a nation, primarily we should think of a family, the Mac Israel's, they are the descendants of Israel, they're a family, and their identity, their administration, sometimes even their jobs were all structured around that family relationship.

The Mac Israel's though, were a broken family. For centuries they were slaves in Egypt, and although God freed them from slavery and brought them into the Promised Land, they quickly turned away from him.

[ 17 : 03 ] And in the centuries following they argued, they divided, at times they were even at war with each other, so that by the end of the Old Testament there was only a tiny remnant of the Mac Israel's left.

The prophets however, that God raised up among the Mac Israel's, gave amazing promises that God had not forgotten this family. And that family theme continues as you move on in your study in biblical theology into the New Testament.

In fact the very first thing that you read in the New Testament is what? It's a family tree in Matthew chapter one. And Jesus has come as the Messiah that the Mac Israel's were longing for. He's a Mac Israel himself, but he's come not just to restore the Mac Israel's of the Old Testament, he's come to fulfill the promise that was given to Abraham that all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.

And that's why when Jesus came into the world, John told us, tells us that whoever believes in him will be given the right to become children of God. And that's why Paul can later on say that it's those who have faith, it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Jesus has come to call all nations into God's family. Biblical theology is the story of our family. The family is also crucial in systematic theology as well. When we come to systematics, ST for short, we are again talking about, sorry, it's not working for me just now, we're talking about, again, when we're talking about systematic theology, we're talking about the big topics, all pieces, all separated, and family is crucial to this as well.

[ 18 : 49 ] Do you think about family? The two pillars of family are marriage and parenting. I'll give my hand right here, but you know what it says. These correspond to two of the most glorious doctrines of systematic theology, Union with Christ, Union with Christ, and adoption.

These are massive doctrines in the New Testament. The theology of how we're saved is known as soteriology. That's the term we use for all the teaching about how we're saved.

And at the very core of soteriology is union with Christ. It's absolutely central to how we're saved.

That's how someone is saved as a Christian by being united to Jesus by faith.

We're united to Him in His death. That means that when He died, He took all our sins upon Himself as our substitute. We're also united to Him in His resurrection. That means that just as death has no power over Him, and instead He lives forever, so too now, the power that sin and death had over us has been broken, and we can receive resurrection life because we're united to a resurrected Saviour.

All of our salvation is grounded in the fact that we are united to Jesus, or as the New Testament often says, we are in Christ. And that union is described in terms of marriage. Jesus came as the bridegroom.

[ 20 : 30 ] Ephesians 5 speaks about marriage and then shows that that's teaching us about what Christ has done for us. And the great climax of God's plan at the end of Revelation is the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And in Revelation 21 verse 2 we read these great words, I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We are united to Jesus. We are His bride. The church is His bride. He is our bridegroom. Marriage points us towards what God wants to do with us through His Son.

In fact, the whole recent humans have marriage instead of just mating, is to point us towards the ultimate marriage, the union of Christ and His church.

But alongside that, in terms of our salvation, if we are united to God the Son, that means that we can also enjoy the same liberties and privileges that He enjoys.

[ 21 : 31 ] That means that just as He knows God as His Father, so too can we. Or as John told us, we have the right to become the children of God.

And this is where we see that God's working of salvation follows a beautiful order. By God's grace He chose not to abandon us, instead He calls us.

He opens our eyes like a newborn and we're given a new heart. That means that we can see our sin and we can see our Savior. So we come to Him in repentance and faith. By that faith we've justified so that our sins no longer held against us.

And instead the judge whom we had wronged so much doesn't simply acquit us. He adopts us and welcomes us into His family.

He transforms us to make us more and more like our elder brother, His Son, Jesus Christ. And that's what makes the Gospel so amazing. The God whom we rejected has never given up on us.

[ 22 : 34 ] And His goal is not just that we would fall on our knees in front of Him as worshippers. His goal is that we would fall into His arms as His beloved children.

And that great work of adoption involves the whole Trinity. If you were to go and read the whole of Ephesians chapter 1, you would read that God the Father plans it and wants it. God the Son sheds His own blood in order to accomplish it.

God the Holy Spirit comes to guarantee it. God's great purpose is to bring us into His family. That's what His salvation is all about.

And the key point I want to emphasize is that that family salvation is not slavery. It's not slavery.

That's what Paul made so clear in the passage that we read at the start in verse 15. You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba Father.

[ 23 : 38 ] You can see slavery and adoption are contrasted. It's not slavery you are brought into a family. Paul says the same in Galatians 4, because your sons God sent the spirit of His Son into our hearts kind Abba Father.

You are no longer a slave, but a son. Now when you see son, please don't feel that that, don't think that that is missing out the women. It's not at all. It's expressing the concept of sonship being brought into God's family and all the privileges of being His child.

So it's not just a male thing. It's a children thing that everybody, every believer enjoys this status as God's precious child. And so we see it in Romans 8.

We see it in Galatians 4, but the place where I think you see this most clearly of all is in the parable of the lost son. In that parable, after rejecting his father and ruining his life, the son realizes the

mess that he's in and he returns home hoping that maybe, just maybe, he would be allowed to be a slave in his father's house.

But as he returns to his father, his father runs to him, meets him, puts a ring on his finger and in doing so, he's making it absolutely clear that this broken boy is never, ever going to be a slave.

[ 24 : 57 ] He is a son. And that's why the Bible can talk in terms of, talk and talk about our salvation as redemption.

When we talk about redemption, we talk about Jesus as a redeemer, we talk about being redeemed. All of that is speaking about being bought out of slavery. That's what that word means, redemption. It means to be bought out of slavery.

Jesus redeems us by laying down his own life as a ransom. He's come to set us free. He's come to bring us into his amazing family.

So family runs right through biblical theology. It runs right to the core of systematic theology, but it is also absolutely essential for practical theology.

Now practical theology takes in a whole range of topics, pastoral care, leadership, what a church service should look like, church discipline and many more. All of these things must be understood in terms of family, not slavery.

[ 26 : 03 ] So the pastoral care of the church is care for a family. That's why people who come to church are neither customers nor staff. They are family.

And that's why loving one another is so crucial in the life of the church. It's not a bonus if we love one another. It is the acid test of whether or not we actually love God.

Leadership in the church, that's also a matter of family. We're not taskmasters, we're not bosses, we're not managers. We must lead the church in the same way, with the same care and the same wisdom as we would lead our own families.

That's why when you look at the qualifications of being a leader in the church, in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, it talks about being able to look after your family, because that's exactly what being an elder or a leader in the church is all about.

When we meet together to worship, whether it's just now on Zoom or whether it's as we usually do in the church building, when we meet together for worship, we meet as a family.

[ 27 : 08 ] And that's why if it's the case that after church, when we go home, there's more warmth and joy at our homes after the service than there is during the service, then there's something far wrong.

Because when we meet together to worship, we are meeting together as a family and that should have all the warmth and joy that any family gathering, a healthy family gathering, would have. The sacraments tie in with this.

So baptism that welcomes new members into the family. The Lord's Supper is a meal shared by the family for the nourishment of the family. So pastoral care all about family, leadership all about family, meeting together for worship, it's all about family.

And probably most importantly of all, church discipline is all about family. Now, this is something that the church has got desperately wrong many times throughout our history.

So often when a Christian makes a mess of things and falls into sin, churches have responded to that by thinking that the best way to protect the church family is to push the person out.

[ 28 : 23 ] But what we have to recognise is that doing that never protects the family because the person you're pushing out is family.

And the Christian who makes a huge mistake in their lives is not a slave who needs to be sacked. They're a child who needs to be healed. And that's why all through the history of the Reformed Church, the emphasis has always been that church discipline is about one thing.

It's about restoration. And that's why if you ever, ever have to deal with somebody who's fallen into a sin, whether that's in a church setting or even just among friends, if you've got a friend who's a Christian who makes a huge mistake, who does something that's really bad or really wrong or really stupid, and you have to try and deal with that situation, always ask yourself the question, what would I do if this was my child?

What would I do if this was my mother? What would I do if this was my brother or my sister?

Because that's actually what we are.

[ 29 : 42 ] Christianity is not about slavery. It's about family. Paul speaks of this beautifully in Galatians 4, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth the Son, born of woman, born

under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. So family runs right through the whole of theology. It's also absolutely crucial as we seek to share a faith.

And it's really important to recognize this because, you know, what we've been seeing tonight is that there's often a bit of a battle between slavery and family, in terms of how things can be understood.

And this slavery family battle doesn't just surface in biblical theology, in systematic theology, in practical theology. It also spills over into our minds as we seek and try and struggle to share our faith with the people around us.

And consequently, we can be crippled by feelings of slavery when we try to share our faith. And I think that can happen in two ways.

[ 30 : 59 ] On the one hand, we can feel like we're going out as slaves. So if I say to you all, you know, we all want to try and share our faith this week, we can feel like slaves having to do that, that we're going out as slaves.

There's a sense of pressure. You know, we need to evangelize as Christians. There's a sense of guilt. You're failing if you don't do it. And there's a sense of fear. We're probably going to do it badly, but we've still got to make sure that we do it.

And all of that can combine to make it feel like going out with the gospel is like slavery. It feels like slavery. So we can be held back thinking, you know, like that we're going out as slaves, but we can also be held back by the feeling that as we try to share the gospel, we're going to sound as though we're calling people back into slavery.

In other words, if we feel like slaves, then asking people to be like us means calling them to be slaves as well. And that's not a particularly appealing message to share. And if we fall into this trap, we can get caught in a cycle that sees Christianity as slavery, therefore we see Christians act as though they're slaves, and therefore we make it look like slavery, and the whole thing just turns into a kind of depressing cycle that goes on and on and on.

That kind of thinking is crazy. And it's also heresy. Because Christianity is not about slavery.

[ 32 : 22 ] And thinking that it is will give us a woefully inaccurate picture of what we're doing as we share our faith. That's because an understanding of evangelism that's based on slavery is going to think in the following terms.

It's going to think in terms of intimidation. You know, you've got to share your faith because God's going to be angry with you if you don't. And likewise, the people you're talking to, they've got to come to church because God's going to be angry if they don't.

And so there's this intimidation. Or there's coercion. If you don't share your faith, there's going to be serious consequences for you and even more so for the person that you don't. There's criticism. You've been failing at evangelism, so you've got to up your game. And the people who aren't coming to church, they've got to sort themselves out too. There's restriction. You've got to tell people to stop doing all the wrong things that they're doing in their lives.

But you've got to make sure that you don't get too close to them in the process. And probably most of all, there's fear. They need to be saved. They need to evangelise and you're going to be in trouble if it doesn't happen.

[ 33 : 29 ] Intimidation, coercion, criticism, restriction, fear. A family built on those kind of things is not a family.

It's a prison. And this is where we've got to remember that the church family, that God the Father loves, that Jesus died to establish and that God the Holy Spirit is sanctifying, is a church family. And a family is not built on intimidation. It's built on friendship. That's why when we go out with the Gospel, we're doing that as friends together, supporting one another, encouraging one another, praying for one another.

It's not a competition as to who can get the most converts. It's not a contest to see who can be the best evangelist. We're doing it as friends, we're doing it as part of the same family and we are calling people into a community of warm, kind, welcoming Gospel friendship.

A family is not built on coercion. It's built on compassion. As we go out with the Gospel, we've all got the same feelings. We feel nervous but excited.

[ 34 : 37 ] We feel shy but hopeful. We feel inadequate but still longing for God to be at work. As the people we meet, they're getting hammered by life enough. We don't need to add any more blows.

We're coming to offer healing and hope just as Jesus did. A family is not built on criticism. It's built on joy and celebration. As we go out with the Gospel, we are looking forward to that amazing moment when we will see lives transformed.

And as heaven rejoices over a sinner who repents, we are going to be joining in. A family is not built on restriction. It's built on protection.

So as we share the good news, we are doing this task together. That means supporting one another, helping one another, never leaving one another to just go it alone. We're evangelising as a team. And that means that for the people we're trying to reach, our message is not a message of dull restriction that's going to squeeze every bit of fun out of their lives.

We're not pointing people to a cage, we're pointing them to an open door. To the freedom of knowing Jesus, the freedom of being able to thrive as we follow Him instead of having to meet the expectations of everybody around us.

[ 35 : 48 ] The freedom of knowing that death has lost its sting, the freedom of knowing that you are now safe and secure in God's family together. So a family is not built on intimidation. It's built on friendship, not coercion.

It's built on compassion, not criticism. It's built on joy and salvation, not restriction. It's built on protection. But most of all, a family is not built on fear. It's built on love.

And as you seek to share the gospel, you are doing that as a child of God who is so utterly and wonderfully loved.

And if you remember anything from this series that we've done over the past 10 weeks, this is what I want you to remember. That as you go out with the gospel, you're going out as a child of God and He loves you.

Every step you take, every invitation you give out, every text message you send, every invitation, every time you welcome someone into your home or go for a coffee, every conversation you try to have at every single moment, God is looking at you and saying, I love you.

[ 37 : 00 ] I have loved you forever. I will love you forever. You're my precious child. Do not be afraid.

But at the same time, when God brings you to somebody with whom you're sharing your faith, God is also saying, I love them as well. And I want them as part of our family too.

Please can you tell them that? As you share the gospel, you are going out from a family and you're calling people back in to that family.

It's God's family, a family of friendship, compassion, celebration, protection and love. It's not slavery. It's a family.

And that's why if God does use you to help someone come to faith in Jesus, the end result is not that you've got a task done.

[ 38 : 06 ] The end result is that you now have a brand new brother or sister. How awesome is that? And this is where everything that we've been trying to say comes together.

God is God. It's only in complete and utter dependence on him that we can share the gospel. It's only through him that any harvest is going to come. You are you.

You have relationships, contacts, friendships that place you in a unique position to be used by God, where you are and as you are. The people that are around you, they are people.

They're so precious and they need Jesus so much. And God, the God who is God has got a wonderful goal. He wants all of these, him, you and them all together in a wonderful, wonderful family.

And the more we realise how incredible God is, the more we see how brilliant his plans are, the more we will stop saying to ourselves, it's too hard.

[ 39 : 20 ] I can't share the gospel. So often that's how we feel. We think I need to share the gospel, I can't. It's too hard. But the more we think of how amazing God is, the more we think of all the amazing plans that he has and all that he's doing in our lives and for everybody, the more we'll stop saying to ourselves, it's too hard.

I can't share the gospel and instead we'll find ourselves saying, it's too good. I can't keep this to myself anymore.

That's what we want to happen to us all. That the fullness and the beauty and the wonder of what Jesus has done fills us to the point of overflowing.

So that instead of saying, I can't speak it, we'll say, I can't keep quiet. I've got to pass this on.

God is God. You are you. He can do amazing things through you.

[ 40 : 29 ] Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your amazing work of salvation.

Thank you that you've not abandoned us. We thank you for bringing us into your family. And we pray, Father, that you would bind us closer together as a family. We pray that for any who are maybe just standing on the edge of that family, even right now, and who long to be part of it, but who are just maybe not sure, just help them just to take that step. There is absolutely a place for them in this family too.

We pray, Father, that you just draw them in and be at work in all of their hearts and help us all to go out and share the good news. We pray that we wouldn't be driven by fear or slavery, but instead that the love that you've shown to us and the joy of being part of your family would just overflow so that we can be a witness to the people around us in the week ahead. Help us at all times to remember the truths that you've said before us in your word.

Please guide us. Please use us. We know we're not strong enough. We know that we're weak and nervous, and we know that we'll make lots of mistakes along the way, but we also know that you are God, and so we pray that you take us and use us to share the good news of Jesus this week and for the rest of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you so much for being with us this evening. Just because of all the potential issues we've had with internet and everything, we're not going to close with us singing. I'll just pronounce the benediction in a moment, but please feel free to stay on for a wee while if you want to afterwards.

[ 42 : 18 ] We're so grateful again for your patience and for joining us and that we did get the chance to just spend a bit of time in God's word together and just hope that you're all able to stay safe and rest well despite all the wind tonight.

So let me pronounce the benediction as we close. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Thank you.