

Godliness That Honours The Vulnerable

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[0 : 00] Well, I want to begin with a question. And that is, what would you say are the marks of a healthy gospel church? And I use the language of healthy gospel church because our vision as a denomination has been to have healthy churches in every community in Scotland.

But let me maybe put that question another way. If you had a son or a granddaughter or a nephew or a friend who was going to another town or city and was asking what they should look for in a church, what would you say?

What would you say as the kind of, what is the kind of church where they should settle and make their home? And just to make it harder, you can't get away with just saying a free church.

Let's just say this is somewhere, I was going to say London, but there's a free church in London.

Let's say it's somewhere like Newcastle or somewhere in America. And you don't know the church is there. What would you say are the marks of a healthy gospel church?

Where would you encourage someone to go and settle? I imagine you'd go online, maybe you'd look at a few church websites, you'd look at the doctrinal basis, maybe you'd listen to a few of the sermons.

[1 : 10] And I'd hope that after having studied this first half of one Timothy, you'd look carefully and see what is taught. And you'd see that it's really important that a church should have the gospel at its center, that they should be guarding and proclaiming the gospel.

But even as you've gone through those things, maybe listening to sermons, I imagine you'd might whittle it down to two or three churches, maybe if it's a decent sized city.

But then what do you think about? What do you look for next? What are the other marks of a healthy gospel church? And I'd like to suggest that maybe your number two there, your second priority to look for should be family.

It's not something that you can necessarily find out about on a website or by listening to sermons online. It's something that you find as you spend time in a church, as you walk around with the people, as you live life with people.

Does the church relate to one another as family? And when I say family, I don't just mean, you know, does the church, do people smile at each other?

[2 : 19] Do they chat after church? You know, it's much bigger and much, much deeper than that. You might actually say that the time when you can most tell whether people are family is how they interact over conflict.

How do they interact when life isn't just smooth and happy and when it's just a matter of a quick hello at the door? How do they interact throughout the week? How do they care for one another when it's actually quite difficult?

And I think that's the thing we see in one Timothy here, as Timothy, as Paul highlights for Timothy, both the priority of a church as family and what family looks like in the nitty gritty of life, not just in the simple, but in the hard, when there's difficult conversations that need to be had, when there's people that need to be cared for and real discernment is needed.

How does family govern and guard that and the importance of actually that when a church interacts like family, what kind of message does that send out to the rest of the world?

So what makes a healthy gospel church? I hope we'll see from these passages, these verses, that a healthy gospel church relates and cares for one another as family.

[3 : 36] So first we're going to have two points, first point, that we are family, so let's relate to one another as family and second, we are family, so let's care for one another as family.

And that whole concept of family is right at the centre of one Timothy. We've already seen it over the past few weeks. Paul began his letter by calling Timothy, he refers to Timothy as his child, but

right at the centre of the letter, where Paul talks about his purpose for writing, he says in verse 15, a writing so that you may know how you ought to behave as the household of God, which is a pillar and buttress of the truth, as the household of God.

What he's saying is that central to your identity as a church is being God's family. So you might, you know, I don't know what kind of things that we think of as a part of our identity, maybe where we're from, who our parents are, what our job is, what football team we support.

And but Paul is saying that, you know, whether you, well, that part of your identity, if you're a follower of Jesus, isn't just being a Christian in some isolated way, is that you are part of God's family.

You know, if you're born in Kalliwai, you're part, you know, you're part of this community in some ways, whether you like it or not, you can not see people, you can stay at home and just hop off to the shops and have nothing to do with other people, but whether you like it or not, in some ways, you're part of the community.

[5 : 04] Well, in the same way, when we trust in Jesus, when we come to be part of the family of God, not just a Christian in isolation, but part of God's family.

The Westminster Confession really summarizes this quite nicely. It just says that the church is the house and family of God. You know, and even just to note from that language, it doesn't say the church should be the family of God.

It says it is. Whether we relate like that, whether we act like that is another question. But the simple fact of our identity, of who we are, is that we are the family of God.

And most of us aren't related to one another. Well, actually, when I was writing this, I was thinking, actually, I want probably half the people here actually are related to one another. But as well as being biologically related to a lot of people, we're bound together by stronger bonds than that.

You know, when someone repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus, as we were saying earlier on, we're taken from death to life. We're born again into a living hope.

[6 : 13] Suddenly our identity, suddenly the horizon of our lives doesn't end at death. Suddenly actually our identity stretches through death into the new creation. You know, we're taken from being enemies of God to being friends with God, from following the Prince of the Power of the Air, being on the devil's team as it were, to being part of Jesus' family, to having him as our elder brother, to being able to call God Father.

And subsequently that means everyone else becomes fellow brothers and sisters, members of God's household. You know, if you're a follower of Jesus here today, look around you because these are the people you're going to be spending eternity with.

Not just people who, whether they're members or not, I know there's people who both members are not who are trusting in Jesus, who have repented and believed.

And those are the people who are your brothers and sisters in Christ, who are your fathers and mothers. And it's quite helpful, I think, in some other cultures, like I think probably where I was in Nepal growing up, that people don't always just call each other by their first names, maybe that's bigger.

But older men or women in church, you'd call uncle or auntie like that. It's almost a recognition of those relationships that you have in Christ.

[7 : 37] We are family. And it's also worth saying that if you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus today, maybe if you're listening online or you're just still thinking through the claims of Christ, I just wonder what is your view of Christianity?

What is your view of what the church is or what the church should be? And I'm sure you know as well as we all do that Christians don't always act like family. In some ways, actually, they can act like the worst of family.

But can I encourage you to look deeper than that and to ask the question of what is your identity and what identity does the Christian have?

Because if you trust in Jesus, you become a child of God and your identity is no longer simply who you are, where you're from, something that ends at death, but your identity becomes fixed in Christ, being part of his family forever.

Can I just say, do you know what you're missing? As we work through this passage, have a think. Do you want to be part of this? So we are family.

[8 : 49] So let's relate to one another as family. Family isn't just a mushy way of describing the church. It should be part of our DNA. You should be able to cut us at any time of the week and we

should bleed family.

Whatever we're doing, that should show in our lives. And the verses is 1 and 2 of chapter 5. Paul takes a slice, you might say, of the Ephesian family life. And he addresses in particular, how do we speak to one another?

Let me just read those words again. Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father. Younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, young women as sisters in all purity. Paul's writing particularly to Timothy, but even if you just look up into chapter 4, Paul tells Timothy that he's to be an example to other people.

And so what Paul's saying is to Timothy is also applies to us as well. And in short, I don't know how you would summarize those verses, but I guess my best stab at summarizing would be that we should relate to every person in the household of God, every person, every day of the week, whoever we are.

[9 : 57] Wherever we are, whatever we're doing, we should relate to one another as family. That should be just the governing principle that affects it. Every person, every age, whether you get along with people or not, whether you naturally have interests that you share.

I mean, you don't choose our brothers and sisters. I think often maybe you grow up in a household and we might share similar interests, but if my sisters are, I don't know, I had four sisters.

And so as you can imagine, I had like a pirate party, my sister who was born two years and two days after me, she had a princess party. You know, we definitely, we don't have the same interests, but I don't, she's not my, it's not that she doesn't become my sister because we share different interests.

When your family, well, that's just what you are. Whether you get along or not, whether you enjoy the same things or not. And it's the same thing with church. It's the same thing with the people of God.

God takes an eclectic group of people who would have different personalities and tastes and he gathers them together for his mission of displaying his glory and sharing the gospel throughout the world.

[11 : 04] And when the church relates rightly as family, it should become a really loving and nurturing place as we'll see in our second point. And that's a wonderful witness to the gospel.

But I think it's also just helpful that Paul is so realistic that he starts in verses one and two with the acknowledgement that sometimes there's going to be disagreement in a family, just like in your biological family.

There'll be times when the family of God will be tested as it were with how we relate to one another in those difficult conversations. You might say that those times will be the real test of whether we believe who we really are, whether we believe the gospel.

And when it comes to the difficult conversations, how we choose to act then will be the real test of whether we see each other as family. And whether we see that, that's what the gospel has made us.

So first notice what Timothy is mustn't do. Timothy isn't just to stay quiet. And we're not to just stay quiet. It's much easier often when there's a conflict to just give someone the silent treatment.

[12 : 09] And if you're not living with them, it's much easier to just make sure you don't see much of them or to just talk in a civil way, but not actually invest it all in them. But that's not what Timothy's to do.

Even when there's been a disagreement, even when there seems to have been someone that he might need to rebuke for doing something pretty wrong. Timothy's to still talk to them, not to give them the silent treatment.

So for us as well, let's never let silence break the bonds of family. It might be easier, but it just pulls apart and it tears apart the family that God has created us to be.

But when we talk to them, it must be in love. Timothy is told, don't rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father. Now, Timothy isn't saying, Paul isn't saying to Timothy, you should model all your interactions on how you lived as a teenager.

I think the church would be a pretty crazy place if all of us decided that the worst of our teenage years would be how we talk to each other. We'd probably be all, I mean, very emotional and catty and shout at each other and with hysterical emotions all the time.

[13 : 23] I don't know, maybe that's just a cross-section of my family, me and my sisters growing up. But what Paul is saying to Timothy is that the best of family relationships that you've had, that you've seen, should be reflected in the church.

The best, not the worst. Think of, I mean, just think of the best relationships that you've had. When correction doesn't happen for point scoring, that can often happen between siblings.

When you know that someone loves you so much that even when they correct you, even when they point out where you've gone wrong, you know immediately that they're doing it for your good.

And then, ultimately, that even that kind of thing draws you together and doesn't pull you apart because it shows how much they're on your side, that they're willing to challenge you, they're willing to try to point you in the right direction.

The best of family should be seen in the church family. So that's why Paul tells Timothy not to rebuke but to encourage. I don't know what you see as the difference between those two.

[14 : 26] I guess it's, you know, in some ways not humiliating someone but trying to point them to a better course of action. You're not trying to put them in their place, which is probably the easy thing to do, especially if you know you're right and if you are right.

But to be trying to build them up, you know, Paul doesn't just say, if you're right, Timothy, make sure that other people get on the side. It's not about just being right. It's about helping other people to grow.

I think that's a, that can be a real challenge, especially if, especially if you really sure you're right and you know that people, someone else is doing something wrong, but the aim isn't just being right and getting other people right.

It's pointing them and helping them to grow in Christ. You know, just as you, just as you'd hopefully want to do with a younger sibling or your kids, you know, just tell them what's right.

You want to help them to grow and to nurture that growth. Now we'll see, that doesn't mean that persistent sin, Timothy, is to just let that go.

[15 : 28] And if people are behaving really badly, that doesn't matter. We'll see later on in chapter five next week, what, what, what that will look like in terms of publicly rebuking persistent sin.

But I think this is just going along the same lines as like the Proverbs, when it talks about, you know, a gentle answer turns away, we're off, not letting the sun go down your anger. You know, we need to speak to one another.

Keep short accounts, not just be, give someone a silent treatment, but try to build them up. And we see that's the same, yeah, across younger men, older men, older and younger women, the best of families should be seen in the church.

How we speak matters, but I think it's worth saying at this point that can't just be superficial. It can be easy, can't it, when we're talking to someone to just, well, to just put on a happy face and to just say the right things.

But the chances people will be able to tell. If I do that, you'll probably be able to tell. I'm told that I wear my heart on my sleeve and I'm not very good at just putting up a show.

[16 : 34] But what when we speak to one another, it needs to come from the heart. You know, otherwise it's fake. And, and as Jesus says to his disciples, it's out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, you know, at some point in or another, the true, the true feelings are going to bubble up and spill out of our mouth.

If we're going to relate rightly to one another's family and speak rightly, all we need is heart change. It's worse. Yeah, I think it's just worth understanding then that if we have a relationship problem, if we have a speaking problem, that means we have a heart problem.

And so first and foremost, we need to be asking God to help us to change our hearts. We need to ask God to help us to see one another as family, to feel one another as family.

So can I just ask you all, do you see other people? Do you see the other believers in this room in your life as family?

In every sense of the word. If like me, you've probably got some improving to do and probably got some repenting to do, if we're honest.

[17 : 46] I mean, one of the, I've only been here, I've been here for a few months, so I guess one of the advantages is I don't know all the intricacies of relationships that are out there, but there may well be simmering tensions and disputes that have, you know, just have gone on that people have just buried under and haven't resolved.

And that might need to be addressed if people are going to truly act as family. You know, we might need to say sorry to God for the ways in which we haven't loved his children as his children.

We might need to have tough conversations with people and say sorry, even if we feel like they started it or they're in the right or they're in the wrong.

I mean, you know, our sinful nature of the devil would always tempt us to want to justify our actions or to convince ourselves that actually it's not our fault and it's the other person's fault.

Can I just challenge you to never withhold any love from someone that God sent his son to die for, that he loved them so much?

[18:57] If God would do that, then who are we to say, actually, I don't really want anything to do with them? God didn't say that about us.

We need to work hard on being family, even in the tough situations, even when it means having difficult conversations.

We need to pray and ask God to help us to have heart change so that we can speak and relate to one another rightly. So we've seen that being God's family can bring challenging conversations because we live in a fallen world.

But the challenge, I think the wonderful part of this passage is that the challenge is far outweighed from the blessing of being family. We can even just see that in how Paul waits this passage.

There's two verses to the challenge. We get another, what is that? Catholic Mass, 13 verses to the blessing of caring for one another as church family.

[19:57] So let's look at that now on our second point. We are family so care for one another as family is our second point. And Paul now zooms in to look out, what does it look like to care for older women as mothers?

You might say the first bit was looking at fathers. Now we're looking at what does it look like to care for older women as mothers? And we get it to the summary statement really in verse 3 on a widow's who are truly widows.

Paul's focus here is on caring for the most vulnerable in the church. Now most widows in those days would have been pretty helpless without a man around in the house.

That's not anything to do with, that shouldn't have been the case. But in that kind of society, a woman was reliant on their husband or on their son or their brother or something like that and if they didn't have a family member in their life to care and provide for them, they were really just out there on their own and very vulnerable.

So that's why Paul's particularly looking at the care for widows here. But really what we see here and what we learn here can be applied more broadly to just care for the vulnerable in general.

[21:07] As we were just reading Deuteronomy, we saw how God cares for the widow, for the orphan, for the stranger, often those three come together. The point is that God cares for the vulnerable.

Here's just a particular application. We're just going to break this section to first looking at who, who is the church to particularly look out for and care for.

When Paul says, you'll notice he says honor widows who are truly widows. And by honor, you can see in these following verses, he's particularly meaning financial assistance.

So in verse nine, he'll talk about a widow being enrolled. So this is caring for someone financially for life. Who should the church be caring for financially for life in some ways?

We see that not everyone is eligible. First of all, what makes someone truly a widow is that they don't have family to care for them. So in verse four, let's just read that again. We read that, but if a widow has children and grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

[22:13] So we even just see two reasons there. Why family should care for, for their vulnerable, you know, children should make some return. I don't think we often think about that.

But children should make some return for the care their parents have given them. But also it's pleasing to God. You know, God cares about the vulnerable. So so should we.

Some Jesus's last words on the cross were telling them, John the disciple to care for his mother.

That tells us a lot about the heart of God and his care for the vulnerable.

First, say it adds to that. If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially the members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

You know, that's, that's, that's heavy language. But the gospel is clear that the Bible is clear.

[23 : 07] The gospel should affect every area of our lives. And the watching world will see that if we're not caring for those people in our family, what does that say about how the gospel impacts our lives, that we can just be selfish with one area of our life and exclude some people and just be a Christian on Sunday?

The gospel should affect every area of our lives. Now what that looks like is, you know, we need to talk about and that probably we don't really have time to give that nuance because we do live in a welfare state in a way they didn't there.

But I think probably now these days in our society, people could be too quick to just shove off an elderly relative into a nursing home or something like that. It's an important challenge for us today to ask, what does it look like to care for those who are vulnerable in our immediate family in a way that truly shows, reflects God's care for the vulnerable that we see in God's word?

The final reason we see is in verse 16. If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened so that it may care for those who are truly widowed. Essentially Paul's just saying, look, the church has limited financial resources. You know, part of the reason we should care for our own family is so that the church can have, can use its finances to care for those who have no family, no biological family.

[24 : 31] There's just, just economics there in some ways. But I just encourage you guys to think more about this because this is something that really is quite counter-cultural.

This is, might say, an opportunity for the church to, to challenge the culture around us. That really does often say, I mean, I don't know, I've only been here for a few months as I said, it's certainly more on the mainland, that when people, when your parents are old or when people are, started getting dementia, when they are a burden to you, stick them in a home.

That really doesn't reflect the heart of God and his care for the vulnerable. We have an opportunity to show the glory and beauty of the gospel, to show the character of God who cares for the, who cares for people who might not have anything to give back at that moment, to care for people who might be difficult to care for, or who might be a financial strain, or who might mean that we need to cut some hours to be able to spend more time and look after them.

But we have an opportunity as a church to show what kind of God we have in caring for our family. So that's the first thing, the church, families should care for their, care for their own in that way.

And second, the true widow is part of the household of God. We see that in verses five and six. Paul emphasized that she who is truly a widow is left all alone who is set to her hope on God.

[25 : 59] In contrast to verse six, someone who is self-indulgent and dead. And we might think that this is a bit harsh. Paul, are you just saying that, you know, if someone hasn't, if someone isn't, that someone has to be like a perfect kind of Christian to be cared for, excuse me.

But I think more, more Paul is just saying that the church isn't, isn't to be taken for a ride. If you think about it, when there's no welfare system, if suddenly news comes that the church is caring for widows, then anyone and everyone is going to come in and want to be part of that.

That doesn't mean that the church isn't to care for people who are vulnerable outside the church who aren't following Jesus. More Paul's point is that the church is to prioritize first and foremost the people who are inside the household of God.

And again, Paul's not giving hard and fast rules. He's trying to help Timothy to have wisdom on how to use the church's resources to rightly care for the family. Third, I'm just very briefly, Paul mentioned in verse 9 the age of the widow.

We mustn't again take that as a hard and fast rule. Just think, simply think about that as discerning a true widow as someone who's unable to provide for themselves. As you can see that third point on the screen.

[27 : 20] This is think of it as retirement age. If the person is young enough to be able to do some work and provide for themselves, the church isn't to use their resources for that.

Finally, one thing that people find difficult about this passage and it's understandable is why does Paul spend so much time and saying that younger widows need to marry?

I'm mentioning this not because it's the main point, just because some people can find these verses difficult. And I think Paul isn't saying a big thing that everyone has to marry.

That's not the point. I'm mentioning one Corinthians that Paul says that those who are single should remain single if they want and that's a wonderful way to serve God.

And it's also completely fine to get married and that's also a wonderful way to serve God. Paul isn't holding up marriage over sickness at all. Neither must we. Rather, it's probably that in this particular context that the false teachers seem to have been maybe preying on these women in some way.

[28 : 27] They were teaching that marriage is bad and as a result we have these people who want to get married who instead not getting married, going from house to house, possibly they cause them idlers and busybodies, possibly spreading some of this false teaching.

And actually what would be far better is that they got out from under the heel of these false teachers and got married as they want to and that would just practically lead to a lot of help for the situation. So this isn't Paul making some big rules about marriage in this passage. But back to, we need to think though for us though.

There's some complicated verses but for us though, what does it look like for us to care for the vulnerable? That's really where the rubber hits the road for us. What does it look like for us to care for the vulnerable who God has placed in our midst?

I want to hold up my hand at this point and say I need you guys to teach me. A lot of you have lived the Christian life far longer than me.

[29 : 28] You know the culture. You know what it looks like to care for relatives and to care for people within the church. And so the stuff I have, a few things, points I have to say here, please add to that.

Please make this be the start of a conversation in us thinking more how to care for the vulnerable. I don't have a ton of wisdom. I know a lot of you do have lots of thoughts.

So let's have this as a conversation and thinking how we can do this better. But here's a few things that I've been learning as I'm listening and observing. And first of all, I found it really helpful listening to a talk from a women's conference and a lady was saying how it's helpful how we define widow and just thinking about who is truly bereft.

And she was encouraging in this talk that we think of a widow as not just someone who is bereft because of death, but that actually there's lots of ways in which someone can get to the position where they are bereft of provision and bereft of flourishing.

That can be through abandonment. That can be through death, through imprisonment. And that can be, what other things to say, through divorce, through mental or physical disabilities being rejected by family.

[30 : 45] Someone can be single all their life and still be in a stage at a position where they really need the church to care for them and they can't care for themselves. So we need to make sure we expand in some ways.

That's not to minimize the pain of death and the needs it brings up. But we might need to expand our definition of widow in some ways or the vulnerable to think about who the church might care for. We need to have our eyes open really to see and think hard about who are the vulnerable in our midst. That doesn't necessarily mean that everyone needs the financial support of the church. But it does mean that we have to seriously think about how we can reflect God's care for people, how we can care for people as if they are our family in the church. So we've looked about the who. We've looked about the how. How can we care for people? I've just got four quick points on the how. Four words as it were. First of all, by encouraging people. People need encouragement not just in the first few months after a bereavement but throughout their lives.

[31 : 54] They need to be reminded that they're valuable. They need to be, you know, the pain might dull but it doesn't go away. People need continuing encouragement and having people draw alongside them.

Second, empowering. People who are vulnerable, widows as well. They need to be empowered. Not just providing the basic needs for survival but, you know, empowered to flourish.

Some of the most important people I am, I have, some of the most critical people to the life of a church that I have seen in other churches that I've been in have been people who are widows. And actually the energy that they have, the opportunities that they have to invest in other people are amazing. Let's not think that, let's think of people, let's think of people as, and see all their potential and the ways in which we might be able to encourage and help people to flourish and empower them in that way.

And third, learning from. One of the most helpful, one of the ways you can make someone feel most valuable is learning from them and that's not just superficially. You know, those of you who are

younger, can I encourage you to look for and try to learn from those who are older.

[33 : 15] But those who are older as well, people won't necessarily just come to you and say, I want to learn things from you. They need you to draw alongside them.

They need you to actively try to invest in those people who are younger. You have a lot to give. So can I encourage those of you who are older to draw alongside those who are younger and seek to teach them and live your Christian life with them and help them to walk through life as you have. Finally providing for. Practically there will be ways in which we should provide for one another. But one helpful question that I was encouraged to ask isn't just saying, you know, how can we help? But being specific. You know, if we're visiting someone, ask, you know, what do you need over the next, what do you need today? What do you need tomorrow? You know, ask those specific questions to try to help with their needs.

There's a few points on how. Just a little caveat as well. I think that people, I think we can sometimes think that it's just the duty of deacons maybe to care for people.

[34 : 19] But the duty of deacons is to coordinate the care in the church. We are all church family. So we all have a duty of care one to one another. And finally, I just want to touch on the why.

And perhaps this is the most important point. Why care for one another as family? If there's nothing else you remember, I hope you remember this. Because quite simply the spiritual health of a church, I think could be measured about how we care for the vulnerable.

The spiritual health of a church could be measured on how we care for the vulnerable. So in James 1 verse 27, it's up on the screen there. James writes this, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

That doesn't mean that teaching is unimportant. We've seen how immensely potent that is in 1 Timothy. However, true God-iness, true worship, true religion is seen in caring for the vulnerable. There's nothing unspiritual about caring for those who are in need. There's something extremely spiritual and godly about looking out for those who are in need as we reflect the heart of our Father.

[35 : 36] The Pharisees made that mistake, as if there was one thing that was really spiritual and actually they even had this whole rule about how you can not care for your parents by saying my money and resources are devoted to the temple.

There's nothing unspiritual about caring for the needy. In fact, the godliness of a church is reflected in how it treats those who are most vulnerable. I think one way in which that challenges the church, maybe I don't know whether that's here or the church more broadly, is who do we invest in? Sometimes there can be an attitude in churches that those people who are vulnerable, those people who maybe have less to give, we might think, just get pushed to the side. Those people who are strategic, you can invest in them.

These people have a lot to give back, so these are the people who we'll focus on. I've made that mistake as well in the past. What does that say about our God? What does that say about the gospel? That God only saves those people who are strategic or He only offers the gospel to those people who are going to be especially useful in His church?

God saves us while we're still sinners. Paul says that he was saved while he was the worst of sinners. God doesn't save us because we are going to be particularly useful cogs necessarily in His plan.

[37 : 02] Let's make sure that we don't leave aside those people who are more on the margins or those people who are more vulnerable. In fact, this is a wonderful way in which we can display the love of Christ and which we can witness to the community around us in how we care for the vulnerable.

Just to sum up, brothers and sisters, we are family. Let's relate to and care for one another as family. Let's pray and ask for God's help to change our hearts, to see one another that way. The change has to happen there first. Otherwise, it will be superficial and it will fizzle out quickly. Let's ask God to help us to truly feel for one another as family, to demonstrate that in our words, to display that in our actions on the Sunday and throughout the week. To Him be the glory. Forever our man. Let's pray.