

# Bonded And United

## My 12 People

### by Chris Famisaran

Thank you, Sarah. That was an awesome story. So thank you, all of our volunteers, our band, our greeters. By the way you guys sounded really great today. But I know a lot of times our people do things and it goes unspoken. We just want to let you know we appreciate you. Oh, we're finally in November. You can stop appreciating me. Okay. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. Man. No, I just want to say thank you. I know I say thank you. And I really truly am appreciative of all of you. You know, from the first text that Rick sent me throughout, to the very last day somebody did send something. Thank you for all the calls and the text and the emails. Leisa and I are very fortunate and very blessed to be here. You know, sometimes pastors wonder, do they ever make a difference in their, in their churches? Here, I don't wonder that I know it. Thank you for not only sharing, because what it provides for me is affirmation and confidence encouraged to go forth. So thank you. Let's go ahead and pray. Father, we thank you for another day of life, Lord, we're gathered together as a church family. And as we talk about how we can love our church members, leading guide us in Jesus name, amen.

In over the last 15, actually 16 years I've been a pastor for 16 years. I've been very fortunate to be a part of the church. And it's been wonderful because being part of a church is like being part of an extended family, right. And for some churches, their family, they don't have anybody else. Whether they had to leave their home because of differences of philosophical or faithful or theological differences. I've met some people along the way where they were no longer welcome. They were literally thrown out of their house because of their belief. I'm thankful that I've been able to make many friendships that have lasted. Until today, some of my closest friends come from the church, whether it was from many years ago, to come to becoming as pastor I know, I'm not supposed to have favorites. That would not be true for me, I just I've gravitated towards some people doesn't mean that I love you all less. I love you all. But along the way, I've been able to just meet people who just we share the same interests, whether it's music, surfing, food, or you name it. Right. And the beauty of that is, that's what the church is a place that we can gather together and, and to live life together. So what's the purpose? Why are we here? Well, you know, what's the purpose of the church? And it's, not only are we our church family, but we're here because we're called to worship God, we're here for corporate worship as we're doing right now. We've come together, we want to give God praise. We've done that certainly, not only through prayer and through the singing.

But we're also here to learn more about who Jesus is and why Jesus should be important for our lives. We're also called the ministry not just to be here, but how can we be of service to help grow the church? We're here for evangelism. We're not called to just keep this message that's here in this book, in these walls were called to go out to share and how we do that, well, that can vary, but in essence, we're called to share the good news. It's also a place for fellowship that, you know, it's been a challenge over the last almost two years. Can't believe it's almost been two years since we've been

under a pandemic. Well, 18 and a half [months]. Yeah, and yet, we're still here that I praise and thank God and I thank you all for being committed to the cause of Jesus Christ. And we're also called to be disciples to train disciples. That's also why we're here and what we're doing right now. It's why we're learning we're growing, not only here in, in during the part of the homily or the sermon, but through our small groups that are going right going on right now, our Bible studies or our Sabbath schools. These all are why we are here. And so our purpose as a church is to uplift Christ in our local community, whether it's here in Downey, I know some of us travel, some a little bit of ways, and we thank you for making that commitment to be here. But wherever we are in our work, our school, our our homes, our neighborhoods, we're called to uplift Christ and how we can do that as either through word or deed, how we can be a blessing to others.

Now in the early life of the church, in the book of Acts, Dr. David, Jeremiah says, evangelism was not a program in the Jerusalem church, it was a way of life. Okay. Let me rephrase, let me emphasize that it was a way of life. The believers lives and behaviors created such favour with the population of Jerusalem, that people were drawn out to the Lord, that we've studied the book of Acts already a bit. But, you know, we found that when Pentecost happened, and Peter stood up, and he started to preach and teach, the church just explodes. In fact, it says that 1000s were being added daily, can you imagine that? Can you imagine 1000s of people being baptized into the church?

I think we sometimes say we want to see these miracles, I've been able to experience at one point, for instance, some years ago, about, we went to this lake and hundreds of people were baptized, and I got a little sliver of what that meant to see 1000s being baptized, given their lives for Christ. And it was a time that was not easy either. To say that you're a believer in Jesus Christ went against the narrative of Rome, if you were in Rome, because any idea of anything less than full allegiance to Rome, was questioned. And not only that, they had to band together, they had to live together. And as Acts says, they prayed together, they studied, they ate together, and they fellowshiped. This was their life. They based their whole life on sharing others about Jesus. And so we realized that the early church was course rooted in relationships is something we've kind of talked about. And it's just they had to band together. They worked together. And so, as we journey together, we're realizing, especially in the small groups, that relationships are important, not just your family, but you need to be able to also have friends. And today as we start this week, we're going to focus on our relationships with our fellow church members.

So you know, we've had a lot of high points, but let me ask you this. You ever disagreed with somebody? Okay, we got some very adamant people saying yes, we've disagreed. Oh, I don't want to start any fights. Let me ask you this. So is the church immune to conflict? No, okay. It's pretty resounding right? Is all conflict bad though? No. Without conflict, is there any growth? It's like when you're working out, you're conflicted. You don't want to go work out. Yeah, man. I've been saying this joke. I made a horrible decision about two and a half weeks ago, I decided to get healthy and it's tongue in cheek. But you know, my doctor informed me, you need to make some better positive decisions in your life and one of that is, is my health and so I've been trying to eat better trying to the hard part is, you know, cutting out all of that good sugary stuff. And, and you know, what's even more difficult. I'm choosing or I'm being not forced, but it's more have chosen to do it during the best time for food in the year. Oh, Thanksgiving, Christmas, you know how much sugar is in Thanksgiving and

Christmas? So I know you're feeling me right. And I've been good for I think this is day 19. But it's getting hard. But friends, it's getting hard. One of the things, I'll just give you a little bit, so I'm trying to eat 800 grams of fruits and vegetables that just that was the big thing. Okay, I didn't want to try to do anything super hard and specific. I don't want to try to do any elimination other than sugar because that's the obvious one. You know how hard it is sometimes to eat 800 grams of vegetables, and fruit and primarily vegetables. Some of you are thinking, Pastor, you're being lazy. It's hard. But I'll tell you what, I feel a bit better already in the 19 days. I've also committed to drinking 128 ounces of water, you know how much that is? A gallon. It's a lot. And I realized that if you want to get if you want to get all of that in the water and food, you can't start late. You can't start at two o'clock. I mean, you can. But you're going to struggle. And so being intentional.

Well, conflict. Conflicted because I wake up and I don't want to do some of this stuff. I don't want to work out. I don't want to eat vegetables sometimes. But I know it's good for my health. You know, sometimes in church we are we do run into conflict. And it's not always bad. Conflict is good, because conflict forces you to look at your values, your ideas, and is it possible I may be wrong. But growth can happen from conflict? If we all thought the same way. Would we grow? Because certainly affirm each other. Yeah, that's right. I believe that too. That's not really where true growth comes from. In fact, you'll find that even in the early church, let's go to Acts 15. Let's go to Acts 15. Believe it or not, even the early church had a little conflict. There was a disagreement. And we find that in Antioch. It kind of came to a head there are some who believe that this is the way that we should go forth and others are thinking No, we need to keep to the old ways. And on the other sides thinking look that didn't work at all. So let's just improve and let's go with what God has shown us.

All right, Acts 15. Are we there? All right. Acts 15 verse one. It says, certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and we're teaching the believers unless you're circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved. And this brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp disputes and debate with them. I love that. Whoa. sounds intense, right. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed along with some others, believers to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this situation. The church sent them on their way and as they traveled through Phoenicia in some area, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. Alright, so Paul and Barnabas, they were they were going out into the countryside. So we're sharing that the people who were not necessarily growing up of what they consider their church or the temple in their case, people who had no idea Gentiles, they were ministering to them, and it says, They were sharing that how the Gentiles had been converted. Everybody's stoked. When they came to Jerusalem. They were welcomed by the church and the apostles, the elders, to whom they reported everything that God had done through them. So they're all in having a good moment together. But then, in verse five, then some of the Pharisees who belong to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said these Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the Law of Moses and the apostles the elders met to consider this question. After much discussion. Peter got up and address some brothers You know that some time ago God made a choice among you that Gentiles might hear from my lips, the message of the gospel, and what I believe, God who knows the heart, show that he accept them, accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now, then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No. We believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus, that we are saved, just

as they are. Very point out, dude, it didn't work the first couple 1000s of years. Why are you trying to keep this going? Okay, Pharisees, they just couldn't let their teachings they're going. They couldn't quite just change. They had to keep that part of them because they wanted to keep strict observance. And then in verse 12, it says the whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas, and Paul telling them about the signs and the wonders God had done among the Gentiles to them. So Paul, and Barnabas, they testify about all the good things that God is doing through them to reach the Gentiles. Everybody's just listening. They're quiet. And when they finished, James speaks up, he says, Brothers listened to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for His name from the Gentiles. So he can continue on. Now the purpose of this passage that I want to bring here forth was early church, they weren't perfect as well. They have their own disagreements. And I actually take hope from this because even though we sometimes may not always agree on perhaps how we necessarily do ministry, maybe we prefer to do it this way, or that we're all united by one purpose. And that is to uplift Christ, like I mentioned before, okay, we're all called to uplift Christ. And, you know, based on our upbringing, in our growing, we're gonna have differences of opinion, we're gonna be, we're not always gonna think the same way. I think one of the challenges that I think sometimes members having especially even new members and new believers is we, they kind of sometimes get bummed out when we may disagree. Now, I'm thankful that here like, we don't have I mean, we disagree. But it's not like to the level I've seen before, praise the Lord. And First Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the body we've talked about this, where, you know, you have the ligaments, you have the the feet, you have the head, Christ is the head, and yet, we're all made up of different parts of the body. Some are called the eyes. Some are called to be the bones. Some are called to be the skin, the hair, you name it, the guts.

Now, you know, I have a book here, okay. And on it has the name of the book. And if you look over, you got the contents. You have a what do you call it a index in the back? And a book, you obviously have to have paper, you have to have words, for it to be complete, you have to be able to read it. All right. What if I just did this? Let's go to page 65. And just tear it out. Now, can I read this book and be whole? No. Now I could try to put it back together. But is it ever going to be the same? No. Got your attention, don't I? You know, part of the body. We may disagree. But I pray we don't come to the point where we tear each other apart. Because when we tear each other apart, when we say things that maybe we do mean because unfortunately let's just be honest, some people say some nasty things intentionally. We can rip this book apart. And you can't take words back. You can apologize and hopefully you can you can mend the relationship to a degree. But will it ever be the same again? No, it won't. You know, over the years I've seen conflict in the church. You know, what was the most? Do you know? What was the the driving force of the conflict? Besides people? I've seen that disagreement too! Carpet colors one of them. Oh, yeah. Music. Thank you, Ben. The need to be right. Who just said that. Thank you, Von. Another way we could say that is pride, or power. Pride or power is what draws us apart. I've had seen several incidents where people would rather be right in their own eyes than listen. And it doesn't take hard to listen. Does it cost anything to listen? It doesn't. And I've learned over the years to I may vehemently disagree with somebody. But I've found that if I simply just even listen to them and acknowledge their ideas, or their pain or their frustration of why they're having a hard time understanding something. I'm much better able and capable, being able to make better decisions and understanding where they're coming from. But if we're a church that chooses to want to try to be right, rather than listen first. It's a potent bad combination. Amen.

And so my plea and understand and in everything is this and I'm not saying that we're like this, okay. But it's easy to forget, and commit the same things that people did in the past if we don't learn from our past. So how do we go forth? How can we be a church, let's go to Ephesians chapter four Ephesians chapter four. Oops, I'm in Galatians. That's not going to work. Now, Ephesians, four, you can read, we're not going to read this whole thing. But maybe later today, maybe even as a family, or as a couple, go through this passage together and reflect upon how we can continue to be a faithful Body of Christ. All right, we all there. Okay, excuse me, as a prisoner for the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. That's an interesting statement, right? Live a life worthy of the calling. We've all been called to share Jesus, right. And so Paul emphasizes, Hey, guys, as he's writing to the Ephesians, he says, Be completely humble and what? Gentle, kinda like carrying a baby, right? You're not gonna throw that baby around, you're gonna carefully carry that baby, be gentle, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope. You were called to one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, whose overall and through all and in all, but to each of us, Grace has been given as Christ has a portion of it. So, especially these first five or six verses, were called to share Jesus, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, are things that Paul is saying, look to be a United Church. These are some of the key ingredients that you must have. Now, let's go let's go to verse 29. It says, Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only that which is helped for helpful for building others up according to their needs. That it may be a benefit to those who listen.

So when we talk about other people, let's speak positively And if there's any issues that you got going on, what should we do? As follow Matthew 18, let's go to that person and discuss, hey, maybe you said this, or look, I've got an issue. Let's talk about amongst each other. And if we can't find a solution, bring a mediator bring a third person that you both trust and respect to help resolve these issues. And it says here in verse 30, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you. That little part on the end is kind of like, Jesus loves you, but God's also calling to love you just as Jesus loved you. I need a lot of grace. But when I think about, okay, the fact that I need a lot of grace, which means I also need to be a lot more graceful to those around me. Like when I'm standing in the supermarket, or at the post office box down the street, and there's somebody two people ahead of me, and they're done. And yet she still wants to keep talking to the clerk. And the lady behind me, literally says, Okay, that's enough. Maybe you're at Costco, you know, about a month ago, I couldn't get gas, unless there was a line out to the street at 9:15. That's my time. All right, I go to God's Costco at 9:15 to get gas. Or maybe 5:45. In the morning, when nobody's supposed to be there. I went at 6:30 and it was full in the morning. Forget it, I'll pay 20 cents more. Patience. Patience is a virtue, they say.

No church is immune to conflict. Those who experience conflict, conflict, either grow or separate apart. You know, when you've experienced struggle, like you know, we we've had challenges over the years, I feel like our church is closer than ever. And, and so when you go through hardship, that's what builds people together. Now, my question here is, what would the church look like if we prayed for each other? A prayerful church is known as a necessary component for a healthy congregation, to be able to

positively share the good news of Jesus Christ. What does prayer do? What brings us together? Were more cognizance of our fellow brothers and sisters challenges that they're facing. Somebody says, Hey, I got cancer. I need to pray. How many times have we done that where we've sat here, and we've anointed several of our friends, Lordous, Erlinda, Tomas, Bill that brought us together. Many other challenges. If we can accept and grow together and realize as a family, we can overcome this we can grow. But when we want to have it our way, that's when things start to fracture.

So we want to have one purpose to be bonded and united when it says bonded, and it kind of sounds like oh, gotta be enslaved to one another. That doesn't sound very positive, right. But I think Paul was onto something. When we're in the trenches together, and there were many times Paul was bonded, either with Silas or some of the other disciples and what did they do? They rejoiced together. They did ministry together. And it's important that we recognize that we don't just come to church, and just listen to a sermon and go, we need to be a part of the body of Christ, to not only listen but to learn and to grow, but to do ministry together, to fellowship together to be in relationship with one another. And that's why it's so important that we have various relationships of those perhaps who are either younger or older than I. Because we can learn so much from those of us who are who've had a few more trips around the sun than us. And yet, we also want to be able to make a difference for those who are younger.

There's so much wisdom that can be gained if we just talk to one another and reach out but also importantly, to know that There's a stable structure and family here at church, especially when you are the only believer in your own home. So, my friends, as a church I plead mainly be you're bonded and united together and serve as one family not only in Downey but wherever you live wherever you work, wherever you go. May you uplift Christ. Love your family, pray for one another. And if you disagree with one another, let's follow Matthew 18. And let us work our differences out that may we may be one body.

Father in heaven, thank you, for your love. And I thank you for this church, Lord. I pray that you will help us to be faithful group to share you with others in the community. May we be the ambassadors that you've called us to be? Father, you are great, God, forgive us, Lord of our shortcomings. Even when we don't know all of the answers, Lord, we know that you can provide them and regardless, Lord, if anything, may we always default to how you impress upon us and changed us. And we will all the things that are on our hearts, Lord, the things that keep us up at night. Please, Lord, help us to overcome them. And thank you for all that you have done for us that you're doing now and you will do in the future. In Jesus name. everybody said, Amen. Grace and peace, everybody.