



God's Plan for Christian Health: Healthy Community

5/18/25

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Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

18:56

So excited to be here and to share with you guys. So if you haven't been with us over the past several weeks. Just want to quickly catch you up on kind of where we've been. So over the last few weeks, we have been talking about what does it look like to be a healthy church? So a few weeks ago, we talked about answering the question simply, what is the church? We talked about how the church is described biblically as a family, as a building, and as a body. These, these different structures that God is building together that are reliant upon one another.

19:27

And then a couple of weeks ago, we talked about our foundation. We talked about the building blocks for how everything fits together and how the Bible is our foundation for everything that we believe, for everything that we do. And when the Bible speaks on an issue, that is our guiding directive. And then in spaces where the Bible isn't explicit about a topic, well, then that leaves us to make sure that we align ourselves as closely as we can to biblical principles. Right. If the Bible doesn't specifically address it, we need to just figure out, what does the Bible say and how can we fit our situation into biblical principles. Last week we looked at what a healthy part of the body looks like.

20:09

If we are a body, we need healthy individual members of a body in order for us to be healthy. So we asked the question, we asked you to consider the question, are you healthy? And we walked through an evaluation to kind of show us where we have room to grow and where we have weaknesses. And so if last week was as challenging for you as it was for me in writing it and preaching it, I'm glad you came back. Right. So I'm excited to be able to dive in this week. So this week we're going to talk about God's plan for growth. We have room for growth that we saw last week. We're going to talk this week about how God wants us to grow.

20:45

And that may not be exactly the way that you were expecting this week to look, because the message of Christianity, really, the message of this week, is not strength. I think most of us, we would look to, well, I need to be strong. I need to do better. I need to work harder. But the message of Christianity is not strength. It's rather, it's strength and weakness. It's realizing our failures, it's acknowledging our faults and that acknowledging our faults, that's the beginning of where God provides strength. Now, there are some really practical elements in all of this that we're going to get to in just a few minutes. But today we're going to focus on

how God created us for community, about how we need one another in this journey. How we are created to be codependent one another.

21:31

A building doesn't stand if you just start removing blocks, if blocks start crumbling, you have a problem. If a body just starts losing individual pieces of it, eventually you're going to have a problem, the body's going to bleed out, you're going to have flaws and issues, and that body is not going to be healthy. We are created to be codependent one another as Christians. And so this morning we're going to look at some of what the Bible says about that idea and how that might play out practically in our church. So before we get into that, I want to pray for us and then we will dive into God's word together. Would you pray with me, church? God, we. We pray that you would use this morning God, that you would speak God.

22:11

We as we desire so desperately to God to be a church that you would look at and that you would be pleased with God as we would be a healthy church. And as we consider all the ways of what that looks like, God, we pray that this morning, as we consider healthy community, what it looks like for us to be given to one another and committed to one another, God, we pray that you would give us ears to hear what your word has to say this morning. God, hide me behind your cross, get me out of the way. And God, use this time speak for your servants are listening. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. All right.

22:48

Well, as we dive in, I figure the first place for us to start this conversation would be for us to consider the Bible's description of what it looks like for us to be stronger together. I believe that there is an overwhelming message in the pages of the Bible that we are created for community. And so I wanted to just kind of simply as we get started, consider the Bible's comments on this before we go too far. So even all the way back at the very beginning, we're going to move through a whole bunch of verses. So just snap a picture of that. You can go back and you can follow along by reading in the coming days.

23:23

But at the very beginning of the Bible, in Genesis chapter 2, we see God declaring that it is not good that the man should be alone, but I will make a helper fit for him. The same message resounds throughout the pages of the Bible. Page after page, we see this message. It's not good for us to be alone. We need one another. We were created for one another. God had a plan and that plan was for us to be intimately connected to one another in community. There's several verses that talk about how, as Christians, we are to be united with one another. We started the service this morning by reading Psalm 133. It talks about how good it is for us when we live in community with one another.

24:06

Just verse 1, it says, behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. That verse doesn't sound familiar to you? You know, you need to pay better attention because throughout this series, every single week of this series, I asked Bill, I said, we need to sing that same song over and over again. Oh, how good it is, right? How good it is for us when brothers dwell in unity, when we belong to one another, when we fit together, when we play the roles that God wants for us to play. It is a beautiful, wonderful thing. Ecclesiastes chapter 4 talks about this as well, about how two are better than one. Ecclesiastes 4. Starting in verse 9, it says, Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil.

24:49

For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, and has not another there to lift him up again. If two lie together, they can keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will

withstand him. For a threefold cord is not quickly broken. 1 Peter, chapter 3 also talks about how we are bound together in family love. 1 Peter 3:8. Peter says, finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Be united together and tied together with that family love. There's other places where the Bible talks about a healthy co dependence on one another within the church. Galatians chapter 6.

25:38

It tells us to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Ephesians chapter 4. We've looked at this several times in our series already. It talks about how the body is built up as each part does its work, does its work. Ephesians 4:16, it says, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped. When each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Hebrews chapter 10 talks about how we're given to one another and how we encourage one another as we meet together.

26:15

Hebrews 10:24, it says, Let us consider how to stir one another up to love and to good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more, as you see the day drawing near. Last verse I want to read for you is from 1 Corinthians chapter 12 talks about how there can't be division inside of the body, because if one part suffers or is honored, whether things are good or bad for us, every part of the body either suffers or rejoices together. We're in this together. 1 Corinthians 12. It says there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. For if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27:02

I just took a small sampling of what the Bible has to say about this idea that we belong to one another, that we belong together, that this idea of community and fellowship, it is all through the pages of Scripture. You could pick a page in the Old Testament. You're going to see the people of Israel with this common idea of we have to look out for each other, we have to care for each other. They care for the community above themselves as individuals. Now, I know that may seem foreign to us in such an individualistic culture that we live in, but the message of the Bible, page after page, is we need each other, and we belong together. So now let's look at the application of stronger together at RockCC, something that I'm going to refer to as church membership.

27:50

Now I want to revisit something that I said a couple of weeks ago. I made the statement, we're Bible people. That means that our goal in everything that we do is to seek to be as biblical as possible. So when the Bible is explicit about something, we should, obviously we should decide to obey it. We should decisively and immediately obey and do what it says. But when the Bible isn't explicitly clear about a topic, we have to do a little bit of critical thinking, right? We have to slow down and consider the question, what does the Bible say about this? And we have to do our best to consider and apply the principles of Scripture. If the Bible doesn't specifically address something, we have to try to put the pieces together ourselves.

28:34

And so my goal in this series has been to present a clear representation of what the Bible says about community, what the Bible says about living in unity with one another, and just to kind of generally provide a summary of how we as Christians have to depend upon one another. The concept that we've been talking about, you may have noticed, it may be familiar with this, but throughout church History, this concept has often been referred to as church membership. Now, I want to acknowledge, kind of start with this whole idea. I want to start by acknowledging something because there is not a single chapter and verse that we

can point to in Scripture that lays out church membership in all of its detail, in all the explicit ideas, with all the necessary details and procedure manuals, right? We just don't have that.

29:26

And so for those that might say that the New Testament doesn't talk about church membership, though, I would disagree with that statement, because I've never met someone who would argue that the church is not referred to as a body in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. 1 Corinthians 12 is pretty clear. It's a commonly accepted teaching and picture for us to talk about the body of Christ, right? Brothers and sisters, we are members of one body. Paul talks about it at length in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. And in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to us as members of a body that are dependent upon one another. It talks about how we need one another.

30:07

It talks about how we are incomplete if we don't have one another and how we're disadvantaged if we don't work together to be and to do what we were created to be and do. I would even go so far as to say that we are disregarding what God has created and given us for our good. If we simply ignore. If we don't wrestle with this concept, if we don't wrestle with this idea that God has given us to one another and that we belong to one another, if we don't try to grasp what he has given us in church membership, I think we have an incomplete picture of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. Now, when we use the word membership, right, it's important for us to define what we mean with that word.

30:52

Now, this is a word that has been commandeered by group after group throughout our society and other places in the world today, right? When you hear the term membership, you probably think of Costco, right? You think of your gym. Well, I'm a member at Gold's Gym. Well, I'm a member at 24 Hour Fitness, whatever it might be. But membership at its core, at its origin, it's a body term, right? This isn't just talking about some club that you are a part of. Member at its core is a body term. Remember, I made this point a few weeks ago. But if I was to say that someone was dismembered and we had pictures of it, that were going to put on the screen this morning.

31:29

You would have a very different idea of what was coming in your mind than someone who had taken their Costco, had their Costco card taken away. Right? We wouldn't think of someone having their membership revoked, meaning that just some membership card was gone. We think of body parts being removed and dismembered from one another. So I want you to bear with me as we go through the rest of our time together. I want to take some time to describe what I believe membership looks like within a healthy church and what we want membership to look like here at the Rock. Now, we're going to give this process plenty of time to roll out. I want you to know that this isn't something that we've got just tomorrow. We've got everybody lined up and off we go and. And this is just happening. Right?

32:14

We've got plenty of steps in the process that we want to give this time to roll out and for God to lead us. But we do have a thorough plan of what this is going to look like. We are going to lovingly and gently lead you in having plenty of opportunities to ask questions, to kind of process through this, to learn to pray and to consider. Is this what God has clearly communicated in His Word? Is this what God has for you? And what does that look like? I want to remind you of what I said a few weeks ago. You are welcome to ask questions. The elders would welcome your questions. We would love to have an opportunity to talk with you about what this looks like in the life of the church and in your life.

32:57

And so I'm going to encourage you to call me, email me. I even stuck my...yep, there it is. So snap a picture. If you've got your questions, feel free to fire away. I've got nothing on my schedule tomorrow except for responding to your emails, so plan on sending your questions over. I'm here. Our other elders are here. We would love to walk with you and talk with you through this discussion. But when I use the term membership, let me just paint a picture for you of what I'm talking about because I believe that church membership is a commitment between individuals within a church that bonds them together in their united efforts toward a common goal. I put quotes around that in my notes because I wanted to say it exactly like that.

33:42

That's not a quote from anybody other than it's kind of how I see things playing out. But the goal of church membership, it's a commitment between individuals. This is not about an organization this is not about just some functioning body that we, as the church, would declare you are a member of our church. This is a commitment between individuals within a church that ties them together in their united effort towards a common goal. And that goal is glorifying God by walking in obedience.

34:13

If anybody was here with us last weekend and you felt just a little bit of disappointment in yourself that, you know, I didn't get to say I was crushing it on as many of those things as I would like to, well, the good news for you is that God has given us to one another so that we can encourage one another, so that we can challenge one another, so that we can push one another forward together, so that we might grow in this common goal of glorifying God by walking in obedience. Now, if you're a body part in just a physical body, if you're a finger or an eye or a kidney, the healthiest place for you to be is attached to the rest of the body. Body, right. You have to remain connected in order to be healthy.

34:56

And without that connection, you are in grave danger. A finger that has been severed from the rest of the hand or from the rest of a body, there's precious time before that finger is going to decay and die. It needs to be reattached as quickly as possible. Right? Throw it in the cooler, hurry up and take it to the hospital. You need to get that thing reattached as quickly as possible. Well, for a Christian, the exact same thing can be said. You are at risk, we are at risk of falling into a very dangerous place if we are not walking in community with brothers and sisters who want the same things in their life as I want in my life or that you want in your life. Let me give you analogy. Just try to paint a picture of this for just a minute.

35:40

So when you meet someone, you're out, you're single, you're dating around, you start dating somebody. You are introduced to them through a common connection, whatever it might be. You start talking and you start going out and you start to realize that you have similar values, that you have similar interests. You start to fall in love with this person. There comes a point in that relationship where you have to have the conversation. It's referred to in some circles as the DTR. You have to define the relationship. Are we boyfriend, girlfriend? What is this? Where are we planning on going with this? Right? Even one day. Eventually, there's a few more defining conversations in that relationship, and maybe you end up married. Maybe this is no longer Boyfriend/Girlfriend. This is husband/wife. In those conversations, there is value and beauty in the commitment.

36:35

We want the same things. We're in this together. We are committing to one another that we are serious about this relationship. It's a beautiful and a joyful thing when we get to witness the union of a man and a woman becoming a husband and a wife. When a man and woman

enter into that covenant with one another and with God in marriage. It's one of the joys of my life, one of the joys of my role, that I get to be the person that stands there and witnesses this time after time as a man and a woman look at each other and say, I belong to you forever. It's a joyful thing to be able to witness a man and woman entering into this covenant with one another in marriage. The significance and the weightiness of we belong to one another in marriage.

37:22

It brings a beauty and it brings a joy that is different than just a dating relationship. People may date for years. People may have connections in one way or another for years. Marriage changes things. Marriage brings a different beauty and a different element into that relationship than just dating does. So you're sitting here going, alright, Drew, what does marriage have to do with any of this? Why are you telling us this story? Well, it's because I see a very similar reality when it comes to the Christian community. I see a very similar connection. There's a parallel here, right? Because there are many in the world who view church like it's some casual dating relationship, right? I'm going to go have some fun with First Baptist on Friday night. And maybe on Saturday, you know, I'll go out on a date with Calvary Chapel.

38:12

And then on Sunday maybe I'll call up the Rock and we'll see what they're up to this weekend, right? We have this picture. Trust me, I've had more than a few conversations that sound something like that. Now don't hear what I'm not saying. It is wonderful for us to have Christian friendships outside of a church body, but body life, living out our faith in community, it's a difficult thing for us to do if you're just bouncing from casual Christian friendship to casual Christian friendship. Committing to a group of people for an extended period of time, it allows us to live out our faith differently. Being committed to a group of people for an extended period of time, it encourages meaningful discipleship and encourages accountability. It allows us to live out many of the one anothers that we see in scripture. Right?

39:07

Those one anothers we see dozens and dozens of them in the New Testament. It tells us to honor one another or to love one another, to encourage one another, to forgive one another, for us to rebuke one another. But if we just habitually float in and out of these relationships, in and out of these Christian friendships, you will never be forced to do the hard work of loving someone well. You will never truly understand the one anothers that God has given to us because you won't be around long enough. You won't have to forgive someone if you just casually float in and out of these Christian friendships because someone's going to harm you one day and the easier thing for you to do is just going to be, well, you know, we just drifted apart.

39:55

We had some irreconcilable differences and so it's easier for us to just go our separate ways. You won't have to forgive, you won't get to forgive because they'll just drift out of your life. You won't have to have the hard conversations that drive us deeper because it's easier to just move on. Husbands, wives. Have there ever been difficult seasons in your life, difficult seasons in your marriage that maybe you come out the other side of them and you go, oh no, no. I know how beneficial that season was for us because it forced us to fill in the blank, whatever it was. You had to learn to communicate, you had to learn to fight well. You had to learn to deal with that issue. You had to figure out how to proceed forward in your relationship.

40:37

And the difficulty made the relationship stronger over a period of time. When we walk

through difficulty with people, you hear the same thing. I wasn't given the opportunity to serve in our armed forces, but I hear stories. I hear people about guys, men and women who serve in our armed forces. They go and they experience the trauma of war together and they become lifelong friends. They live through that difficult time and it bonds them in a unique way that people that just meet each other on the sidewalk, they don't have that same level of connection. People who you grew up with, right? Your childhood friends that you've been there for them through thick and thin.

41:21

There's a different depth of relationship there than someone that you just met for a little while, maybe you were coworkers for a little bit and when things got hard, one of you left. There is beauty, there is value, there is benefit in committing to a group of people for an extended period of time. It allows us to live out our faith differently. You don't establish those family relationships without time and without shared experiences, especially the difficult ones, walking through those hard moments creates a level of intimacy and trust that simply doesn't happen casually. Belonging to a specific community of Christians with the depth of commitment and fellowship, it's a valuable treasure for us to be enjoyed. This isn't something for us to begrudgingly walk through. This is something to be enjoyed. It's a treasure that God has given to us.

42:14

Now, I want to come back to something that I said a minute ago. I want to acknowledge. There is no description of here's biblically, here's how a church should install membership in all of the specific elements of what that looks like in a church that doesn't show up anywhere in Scripture. But to be fair, the same absence of explicit description can be said of the Trinity. It can be said of the role of deacons. It can be said of several things. The Bible doesn't put all of it together in a chapter or two for us to go, hey guys, I found the manual here. Here's how we're going to do it. That doesn't mean that it's not biblical. That doesn't mean that it's not there. It just means that we have to do a little bit of work.

42:53

It means that we have to put the principles together. And when the Bible gives us the pieces of the puzzle, we have to do the hard work of putting it together. Because I believe there's little, there is little ambiguity in Scripture surrounding church membership. I believe that the Bible clearly, page after page communicates this message. We see evidence of membership, but we don't see a complete and clear description of it. So I want us, as we start this conversation, here's where this really starts to hit rubber to the road, right? I want us to be careful not to make assumptions or to take some previous experience that you might have in a church with membership as reflective of what we are talking about here at the Rock.

43:39

Because the most obvious thing in my mind as we think about, well, membership is not just explicitly said, here's A, B, C, D, here's what you need to know. Because the Bible doesn't give us that the same thing with deacons. There's a reality that different churches do this differently. The principle is abundantly biblical. The Bible talks about how we belong to one another and it talks about membership even in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. But we have to be careful not to assume that some previous experience that you had is reflective of what we're talking about here at the Rock because you may have some prior experience with membership that is nothing like what we are discussing here at RockCC.

44:29

You might even talk to someone who has some previous experience with membership, either good or bad, and they have no idea what we are talking about doing here in our church, how we see this playing out. So my first encouragement for you is simply let's take a

breath together. Let's digest this together. Let's pray about this together. Let's be good Bereans, right? We talked about that a week or two ago about how the Berean Christians were faithfully they were diligent to go back and to check and to examine the Scriptures to see if the things that they were receiving to see if those things were biblical. I would encourage you to have the same attitude, to simply ask the question, is this biblical? Do we see this in the Bible and how does this make sense in my life?

45:16

I'd encourage you simply to listen before you rush to judgment. Now, I want to just note a couple of places. While the New Testament doesn't give us an explicit manual on church membership. A few places that we see this all over the New Testament. Just a few things. Let me just breeze through and jot these references down if you want to go back and check them out. But In Acts chapter 2, verse 41, we see Acts says that the church was adding to their number daily, those who were being saved. Sounds like they were keeping track of who was a part of their community, who was a part of their fellowship. Acts chapter 4, verse 4. It talks about how the number that was among them.

45:54

It's talking about their membership role and how it blew up to over 5,000 men in the course of a very short period of time. In Acts chapter 5, verses 11 and 12, it's talking about this moment in church history where they were all gathered together. The church in Jerusalem assembled together at Solomon's Portico. Essentially what it's describing, there is a members meeting that they got all of the church from Jerusalem together and they had some things that they needed to talk about and digest together. In Acts chapter 6, we see a very similar message. In Acts 6, verses 1 and 2, it says the apostles summoned the full number of the disciples that were there in that town.

46:34

Essentially they held a church meeting with the local church, with the local Christians to discuss the problem that they were having with some widows feeling neglected in the daily distribution of food. 1 Peter, chapter 5 and Hebrews 13:17, we see two different places talking about how church leaders know who their sheep are and by the way, sheep know who their leader is as well. There's this relationship back and forth between the leader and the followers, and they know who belongs to them, and they know who they belong to, and they know that there's this responsibility connection that is made between these two groups in 1st Peter 5:2 and Hebrews 13:17. These gatherings of Christians in the New Testament, we see it over and over again. It's the Greek word ecclesia. We see this word and it's often referred to.

47:25

It's usually translated as the term the church in our English translations. But that word, the church, it refers to the specific gathering, the gathering of a specific local body. Over 70% of the times that word is used in the New Testament, it's talking about a specific group of people gathering in a specific local context. It seems to me like the common usage of the term church refers to a specific group of believers who are joined together. It's similar to what we have here in this room in our local church context. Jonathan Lehman, just one quote. I tried to abstain from giving you guys what everybody else said says about this morning, but one quote for you. Jonathan Lehman wrote a book titled Church Membership. All right?

48:15

He said in his book, he said, if you grab hold of how the Bible views church membership, it just might change the shape of your Christianity. I think that's the level of what we're talking about here. This is something that's significant. This will drastically change the way that you view your faith, the way that you view how you grow in your Christianity. When you realize

that this is not just, I'm gonna do my thing, you guys figure it out over there for yourselves. I'm just gonna go do me. That's not the picture that we have biblically. The Bible gives us this picture over and over again that we are a community, that we belong to one another, that we need one another, that there is no Lone Ranger Christian. We don't get to just run around and do this on our own.

49:01

We belong to one another. We need one another. It just might change the shape of your Christianity. So the practical question. Let me give you just a few minutes as we wrap up. How is membership going to roll out at RockCC? Now, I want to just say as I dive into this, there is a ton. Like, probably a ton. If I had written it all down on paper, you would have thousands of pounds worth of thoughts that I wanted to be able to include in today's message. But I realized and acknowledged pretty quickly. You would all be mad at me if I said everything that I wanted to say on the topic today. Cause it probably wouldn't still be today by the time I finished. Right? It'd be Thursday or something by the time we got everything in.

49:45

So here's what we've done for you. We have mapped out the next several months with a process that I believe is going to help us unfold all of what it means for us collectively, for us and for each of us individually, what this idea of church membership looks like for us. I wanted to finish up today, though, by giving you a snapshot of what the next few months are going to look like. So I hope that this is going to encourage you to just to take a breath, to sit tight, and to process through all of this with us over the summer and over the fall as we walk through these steps together. Because we want to...we want to give time for the Holy Spirit to guide and to instruct each of us. I've been praying about this.

50:27

This has been sitting in my belly for a long time at this point. This has been sitting with our elders that we've been talking about this and talking. I told you, this kind of really took root in me during my sabbatical, which, by the way, was about a year ago. This is something that it's taken us, as the elders of the church, some time to process through and to understand really all of what this means. I had some elders that were being really difficult about what this looks like and how do we fit all this together. We had to wrestle with this. Right?

50:58

And so I think it's important for you to know if we, as just a few, just a handful of men who all want the same things as elders of this church, if we had to sit with this and we had to pray about this, and we had to process through this, and we. It took us time for the Holy Spirit to work in us and for us to get to the point of saying, you know, this is good for our church. This is what we need to do. We need to give the church this picture of what meaningful Christian community inside of our church looks like. If it took us that much time, we want to give you some time to process through this as well. We don't want to just rush through this.

51:38

We want to give you time for you to sit with the Holy Spirit, for you to pray about this, for you to consider, what does the Bible say about this. For you to read some things about this. We want you to process through this and understand what does God have for us? And ask the question, is this what God has for me? So I'm going to answer one question right up front because I think it's the question that many of you are going to ask right at the beginning of all of this. And then we'll dive into the process. So first things first, nobody is grandfathered in to membership at RockCC, all right? That's because we believe that this is a beneficial process.

52:16

Whether you have been in the church for 20 years or whether this is your first weekend and you're sitting here going, I don't know any of these people. I don't know what this place is about. We believe that this is beneficial for all of us. I've been walking through this process. This has been a profoundly beneficial process for me to try to answer the question, what does God have fellowship inside of our church look like? What would God have us look like if we are tied together and bound together and belong to one another? What does that look like? What is expected of me? What is expected of you? How does this relationship work? All of those questions. This is beneficial for all of us. And so everybody is invited to walk through this process. But nobody is grandfathered in.

52:59

So here's how this process is going to kind of play out. Step one in this process was a sermon series that we've been working through in April and May. The idea was for us to paint the picture of what we're talking about, to give some scriptural support for the idea, to give purpose and significance to this idea of church membership, that we are better together than we are apart from one another. And essentially my goal in this series was to convince you to be curious and to convince you to keep walking through this process with us, to see what God has for us as we walk through this summer and fall together. The second step in this process that we included is simply time to process.

53:40

So in the months of June and July, we're going to finish up the sermon series next week at the end of May. And then June and July are an intentional pause in this process. And we want to encourage you during this time to pray about this. Please don't skip that part. Please, please don't just rush to the action items. That's my tendency and my own flesh and my own weakness. I'll just admit this to everybody this morning. My weakness is that my tendency is to skim through something and go, alright, what do I need to do? The first step in this process is not doing. Simply sitting with the Lord and saying, God, what do you have for me? Praying doesn't feel like you're doing enough, but praying is doing. Start this process with prayer. Sit with this information, digest this.

54:35

Set up a meeting. I think I told you a few weeks ago, if you buy me a taco or a cheeseburger, I will sit with you as long as you want to sit and talk, we will answer whatever questions you have in this whole process. You don't have to buy us food, right? Just come sit and talk with an elder. Come sit and talk with one of us if you've got questions. We would love to walk through this with you, but I want you to begin to consider what this might mean, what this might look like in your life and in the life of the church, of what membership might mean for us. The next step in this process is going to be in the month of August. We're going to have membership classes.

55:13

That's the process of someone becoming a member. It's going to officially start with our new membership class that we're going to offer. Now, this class doesn't obligate you to becoming a member, but this class is required for anyone who wants to become a member of RockCC. And these classes are going to lay some foundation for everyone who wants to become a member. We're going to address, in these classes, we're going to address several key areas of who we are of what we believe, of what we do at RockCC. And it's important for us to all be on the same page. As we cover topics like the gospel, as we cover topics like the foundations of our faith and our beliefs, as we talk about our church structure and the ministries of the church.

55:55

I think there's many people that are sitting in this room that if you've not been an active part

of some of the corners of our church, there are people who have been here for 20 years who don't know bits and pieces of what's going on here. We want you to know who we are. We want you to know what the DNA of our church is. Who are we as a church and what do we believe and what do we do? It's important for us to have those classes to share all of that information with everybody as they come into our church. And finally, we want those classes to talk about the expectations of a member. What does it look like for you to be a healthy part of the church?

56:31

What does it look like for you to be a healthy and contributing member of this body. So this is going to be a classroom setting where we're going to hear more about the church, where people are going to hear what it means to be a meaningful part of this community. And the goal in these classes is for us to give a clear picture of who we are and what it looks like to belong here, to belong to this fellowship, to this body of Christ in the local context. The next thing that we want to do is we're going to have pastor meetings in the months of September and October. Now, this is every member who wants to become a member of our church is going to have a pastor's meeting where you're going to meet with some combination of the elders.

57:11

It's probably just a couple of us. We don't want this to be an inquisition. That was a weird word for me to try to get out, an inquisition. We don't want this to feel like you're being grilled. But the goal of this meeting is to give us an opportunity for some personal contact in this process. Because when you come and you sit in a membership class, there's going to be 5, 10, 20, however many people it is in this class with you. That's not personal contact. That's you sitting and receiving passively information that's being given to you from the front of the room. But these member meetings, these pastor meetings, these are going to give us some personal contact so that we, as the elders, can get to know each member in our church.

57:51

But also it's important for you to get to know us on a personal level. We want to establish the relationship beyond the how's it going that we get to have out there in the hallway as you're walking in or walking out of church. We want to try touch base on some key areas. We want to get to know you a little bit. We want to make sure that you understand who we are as a church. We want to talk about how God is at work in your life and how we might be able to come alongside of that and support at what God is doing in your life at this point in time. We want to talk about what it looks like for you to be a healthy part of the church on a really practical level. How are you going to engage?

58:30

How are you going to contribute? How are you going to connect with this body in a really tangible way. We also want to be able to just answer any questions we're going to build in time to answer questions that you might have about the church, that you might have about the faith that you might have about whatever piece of this puzzle that just kind of doesn't fully make sense to you, doesn't necessarily seem like it's worth a phone call. But we want to have those conversations. This is going to allow us to get to know you personally. We want to know every person that's a part of our church. But we also, we think it's important for it to give you time to get to know us.

59:09

That relationship is essential if we're going to live out 1 Peter 5:2 and Hebrews 13:17, that we know you and that you know us, that we keep watch over those that God has given to us and you know and follow your leaders and support your leaders like God would have us to do that God has clearly described in his word, we have to know one another. This isn't just some passive thing that you can sit and passively, maybe I'll do it, maybe I won't. For us to

just be like, well, you know, I recognize that face, but I couldn't even tell you their name. That's not healthy. We want to get to know you and we want you to get to know us. And lastly, we're going to have a covenant ceremony.

59:52

Now, this is going to be a recurring process, but the first version of this is going to happen in October, November, wherever it is, however long it takes us to schedule all those meetings that I just talked about after that, we want to have a covenant ceremony. Now, we believe that there is beauty in giving weight and significance to this agreement, to all of what we're talking about. And so we're going to invite each prospective member to enter into a covenant with one another, not just with an organization, not just with an institution of the church, but with one another. That we belong to one another. That we want to reach, reinforce, and give weight to our commitment.

01:00:30

That when I look at you and say, I belong to you, and you look at me and say, I belong to you, right, you belong to me. A wedding ceremony is a weighty moment. When two souls look at one another in the sight of God and in the sight of their loved ones, they say, I am in this until the end. I belong to you belong to me. We are committing to one another in front of God and all these people. That wedding is a joyful occasion where that significance, the significance of the commitment is reinforced by the weight that is given to it.

01:01:04

You know, one time a few months ago, I was just having a kind of a general conversation, but one of our RockCC people made the comment to me one time it stuck out in my mind because I knew this was coming, right? But they made the comment, if I can sign 100 documents to buy a house that I'm going to sell in 5 or 10 years or whatever it is, shouldn't my commitment to my church be equally weighty? That rang in my head over and over again because it makes sense to me. Now, I'm not suggesting that you're going to sign 100 documents to close on becoming a member of the church, right? But we do want to give significance to this process. And so we're going to have some, this sort of covenant ceremony.

01:01:46

So if you've been around the church for any length of time, you've seen something similar to this. We do child dedication. We do something similar in our ordination of deacons. We did something similar. We want to give significance to these weighty commitments by giving formal and public time to the commitment that is being made between individuals and their church family. This is not just a commitment that you're going to pledged to support the organization of the Rock. This is a commitment between the individual church members. So when our church, when our members of the church receive new members in, there is a part that they will play in that process as well. They will be committing to the new members. We accept you. We take responsibility for you.

01:02:29

We are in this together as the new members pledge the same to the existing church members. Similar to a commitment between a man and woman in marriage. As a church member, we commit to one another to walk out our Christian faith together. And that's the process. And then we repeat the process. We repeat the cycle over and over again. Not with the sermon series, but with the classes and the meetings and the covenant ceremony. We're going to repeat it every few months that this just, this becomes a regular part of who we are as a church where we are regularly talking about our membership, our community, and welcoming new members into the fold. That's the process that becomes the DNA of our church.

01:03:12

That as we faithfully and consistently walk with one another, we try to spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Like Hebrews 10 talks about. The elders will do their best to support you and to walk alongside of you. Your fellow church members will be given the role of supporting you and challenging you in your walk as you do the same with them. This is not something that we're just going to do and then kind of bury it away in the archives. We want this to be who we are. We want this to be what we are about as a church. This is a DNA level thing at RockCC where we understand our role in the church and our commitment to one another. That we would press one another towards growth and depth, that we would partner and community with one another.

01:03:58

We would be strengthened by one another in that partnership, that we would keep our roles and our responsibilities and our commitments regularly in the front of our mind. So that this isn't just a sermon series that we talked about. And you go, you know, I think I vaguely remember him talking about how we should fill in the blank, whatever it is. Right. We have one more week of our Healthy Church sermon series before we dive into the Book of Acts. But we're going to give you a couple of months with this. Right. I want to encourage you to digest this, for you to sit with this and pray about this and formulate your questions.

01:04:35

And I look forward to being able to lead these classes in the fall and being able to answer any of the questions that many of you are going to have. I look forward even more to seeing how God is going to continue to shape this church into a meaningful community, like minded believers who are committed to one another and pursuing him together. I'm looking forward to walking through the remainder of this process over the next six months or so as we introduce covenant membership at the Rock.

01:05:05

So as we finish, there's not really a call to action this morning, but I just simply want to close our service by praying for you, by praying for our church, by praying that God would give us wisdom, that he would bless this as we try to step out in faith and to simply be obedient to what we believe he's given us in his word. But we want to pray for his blessing and his wisdom and for his continued direction in this process. And so I'm going to pray for you and then we're going to sing and we're going to close out the service. But can I pray for you now? God, we thank you for. God, we thank you for the blessing that you knew what we would need far before we knew that we needed it.

01:05:48

God, we thank you that, God, that in your perfect plan you knew that this life that you have called us to, that this path of obedience, that this task of putting to death what is earthly within us and walking in faith, walking in obedience, walking in the spirit, not in the flesh. God, you knew that was going to be profoundly difficult for all of us. God, you knew that when we sat and we talked honestly last week about the expectations that you have for us and how we're doing in those areas. You knew that were going to fail in so many of those areas. And you knew that were going to need help. You knew that were going to need support. You knew that were going to need one another in our lives. And that's why you gave us to one another.

01:06:37

It's why you gave us the church. It's why you have talked about the church as a building and a family and a body, that we would belong to one another, that we would be codependent and God, that we would belong in the community that you created us for. You looked at the first human, we made it one human in before you looked at us and said, it's not good for man

to be alone. God, help us to not be so foolish, to think that we are the exception to that. God, it is not good for us to be alone. You knew it. And if we're honest with ourselves, we know it. But it's easier to hide in the dark sometimes.

01:07:22

It's easier for us to sit in our own selfishness, to sit in our own pride, to think, I can't be honest with other people because they can't know my deep, dark secrets. I don't want to walk in the light with someone else because they're going to see my flaws. God, help us to be honest, to simply confess to one another that we need help, that we need one another as ultimately we need you. God, we pray for your wisdom as we walk this process out. God, that you would give us insight, that you would help us to seek what your word has to say about this.

01:07:59

And God, we might disagree on bits and pieces, little corners and sections of the puzzle, but God, help us not to disagree on the fact that you have called us to this, that you have instructed us and commanded us and told us you don't get to do this alone. You need brothers and sisters. You need the church. God, give us the wisdom to accept your truth. Give us the conviction to walk in obedience, to walk in the light that you invite us to. And God, we need you. We need you to guide us in all of this. God, we need you to guide us into a space that may be uncomfortable for many of us, but God, it is in this that the true blessing lies. It is walking in obedience, even when our flesh doesn't want to.

01:08:59

Walking in obedience is the blessed path. God, help us to walk in obedience. Help us to discern what you would have for us. Give us the wisdom to continue walking in the direction that you have laid out for us. God, I want to lay the church in your hands, God. This isn't my church. This isn't our church as elders or leaders or anybody else. God. This is your church. And we pray that you would lead your church as you see fit. God, hide us and get us out of the way and help us to simply walk in obedience to what you would have for us. We lay ourselves before you. For this is our spiritual act of worship. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.