



## UNIFIED IN CHRIST

ON PHILIPPIANS | 7.7.24

Steve Frissell

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Steve Frissell 0:00

Well, we have been in study through the book of Philippians. Now we think of Philippians. Because it as a book, because it's a book of the Bible. But it really is a letter. It originally was a letter that was written by someone to some other someone's, and the someone who wrote it is Paul and then went to the someone's, the Philippians people, the Philippians. And so that's why we call it the book of Philippians. It was a letter that Paul wrote to this church. And while the letter wasn't written to us, it was written to the flippin church, there was powerful truth for us. And that's what we've been taking some time to look at, starting last month, and and we will continue for the next couple of months as well. Now, if you're brand new, I would encourage you take the time to go back and listen to the previous messages as we started this out. So you have some context and some understanding in the journey of what we've been going down as we've been looking at this beautiful letter, and Philippians. Here's a little bit of a highlight. And a recap, if you're not aware or haven't been around for the book of Philippians. So far,

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Paul went on his second missionary journey. And on his second missionary journey, he finds himself in this place Philippi and a business woman who's this incredible leader and wealthy she comes to know Jesus, a prison guard comes to know Jesus, a woman is freed from demons, this poor young woman, and she is healed. And there's this little crew of people who now become these followers of Jesus as Paul's there in Philippi. And they become the foundation of the Philippian Church, Paul spends some time there. And then he goes on with his continued journeys and the things that he does. 10 years go by, Paul now finds himself under house arrest in Rome, and he's waiting to hear from Nero, what his future will be, well, the church and Philippi like all the other churches, they end up finding out that Paul is there. And because he was such a dear friend and brother, a spiritual father for them, they have deep care and concern for him. They're not a super wealthy church. So they do everything they can to try and put together a little care package for him. And they put together some resources and some money, and they give it to a man named Pafford. Itis who takes it to Paul. So Pafford itis makes a journey he gets to Rome, he's visits with Paul who's under house arrest, gives him the care package and spend some time with him a Pafford itis would have updated him on how the church in Philippi is doing and what's going on and how the people are. Then Paul writes this letter, the letter to the Philippians gives it to a Pafford itis. And he then makes the journey back to Philippi. And they would have heard this letter by it being read out loud to them. So I wonder what it might have been like for the Philippians. Like they send this care package with the Pafford itis. And he goes to care for Paul. And then they're waiting waiting for so long. And then all sudden Pafford itis kind of strolls makes his way back into Philippi. And they're so excited to hear how Paul's doing and that's this letter gives them an update on how he's doing. It's why it's so friendly and kind. But then in it he also addresses some different things as well, things that he found out from a Pafford itis that they need encouragement and and hoping one of the challenges for the flippy. And churches, there was a loss of unity. They weren't completely divided like the Corinthian church, but there was a loss of unity. There was some tension there. And Paul, this is a priority for him. And he addresses this loss of unity that the church is feeling there's stress cracks with all the external pressure, where there's tension among them. And there's conflict and this has to be addressed. It's such a high priority for Paul. In fact, I believe as a high priority for Paul and all the early church leaders because of things that Jesus said to them, the way he led them the way he called them to loving and to Unity. In fact, I think it must have stood out I think the disciples must have rethought about that night of the Last Supper over and over again. That last meal that they had with Jesus before He was crucified, he did the unthinkable where he stepped away from his respected place at the table, took his clothes off, and then went around and washed the dirty, callous gross feet of all those disciples.

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And then he went back to his respective place at the table and said to his disciples, this is the way you are to love supposed to be full of sacrifice and humility, meeting the needs of others and valuing people as more important than yourself. And Jesus said something to them. John recorded it because it just stood out so significantly to them. Jesus said, it's your love for one another that will prove to the world that your followers of me see it's not your doctrine. It's not the way you are stand up and are strong. It's not your confidence. It's your love, your service, your hospitality, your humility. So Jesus then calls his disciples to read really recognize that loving others is part

of the mission. It's the mission, we are on this kingdom moving mission where God is up to something incredible, where he's changing the hearts of people all through time all around the world. So the word discovering how loved we are in God, and the way this kingdom mission happens is through our unity, and our loving one another. So when Paul addresses this with the flipping church, he says, Hey, we need to address the break and unity. He's not doing it just for people to get along. While it's good for us all to get along. That's nice. We don't want all the tension and the stress and the all the drama that can like really be sideways energy in our lives and so much energy and heartache. He said, look, look, we need to address this Yes, because we want to get along. But there's something more important at stake. It's the mission, the mission of proving to the world that we're followers of Jesus in the way we love. That's what matters. And that's why we have to address this. So Paul now begins to address the break in Unity that's happening in the flippin church. And it happens in all churches, if you've been in church for any amount of time, you've probably experienced that either firsthand, or with by someone that you love, where you've seen a break in unity, and there's been paid. It's pretty evident and obvious, if you just take a look at the larger church, the American church, look at how divided the church can become over things. But it is in our unity, and our love for one another. And we prove to the world that we're followers of Jesus, we're gonna hop in, and we're gonna look at some truth that Paul had to share with the flippin church that I believe really has power for us. But before we do, I have one other disclaimer I need to make before we hop in the power. And the truth of this message applies for all of us in our lives. But it doesn't apply into the context of a relationship that is abusive. So if you find yourself in a relationship, that is an abusive relationship, if you aren't safe, as we take the time to pause and consider the way in which we defer or love, or submit to that does not apply in that type of relationship. And if you are not safe, here's what I want you to know. So we have pastors here, who would love to talk to you. Whether you are here online or in person, we would love to talk to you today you can talk to us by reaching out to one of us in person while you're here online. Or you can email us pastors at Big tree.org. And we'd love to listen, we'd love to pray, love to be there for you.

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Now let's hop into Philippians chapter two and see what Paul speaks to the flippy in church and what He has for us. He starts off by asking a series of questions and he's not asking questions that he's like, uncertain of. He's asking these questions to help them stop and consider it. If there is any encouragement in Christ, if any constellation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy he's inviting the Philippians and you and I to stop, pause and remember, consider and think about what we have that we have encouragement because we are in Christ. There is real encouragement for you and for me that we have because we are in Jesus, our union with Jesus emboldens us empowers us. It lifts us up and what Paul's inviting the Philippians to think about is the times that they've experienced that. Can you think of a moment in time in your life where someone spoke encouragement into you? And you walked a little bit taller? Like I don't get any taller? I wish I was taller and a baller but I am the height I am but after there's some encouragement, I feel like I can do it. You know those moments where someone speaks into you like I believe in you. Some of the best encouragement I've ever received is from my dear friend Joanne Hummel. Some of you who've been here at church for a while, you know, Joanne, she was a pastor on our separate 30 years, recently retired when I would be with her and I would walk away from a time with her she would spiritually encouraged me. She would say, Steve, just harness all that bald, bearded, weird steepness and you go let Jesus do something cool. I'd be like, Yeah, let's do it. You know, like, she's always been a sweet encourager. I talked about it last service. She sent me a text right after the sermon said great sermon, and your glasses add a needed maturity. So thank you. For that Joe. Joe. There is encouragement that comes from Christ. We're we're in Boldin not confident and arrogant in ourselves, but courageous because of Christ in us and us in Christ. And when we stop and think about the fact that we have consolation of love, Zephaniah 317 says it is with his love that he calms our fears, his love consoles and comfort. And you can probably think of a time where you were in life and things were uncertain, and scary, and you were afraid. But then the presence of God showed up in a way. And while the circumstances were the same, you were comforted with his love. And you took a breath, and you realize that you can rest because he loves you, and he has you. And Paul says, and there's fellowship with the spirit, the word that's used here, this Greek word for fellowship, it's this beautiful word called Koinonia. It's used 13 times in our New Testament three times by Paul, in this letter earlier, he talks about the Koinonia that we have with each other here, he's talking about how we have coin a NEO with a spirit. And this is a term that would be used if a father passes away, and there's inheritance given to the two sons, the two sons shared in the inheritance. There's Koinonia, it's a shared ownership and belonging and possession. And so what Paul is saying is that we actually have Karina Nia, we're in connection and a sharing with the Holy Spirit. Just beautiful to think about. Paul's doing something interesting here with this, this, in this letter in this section here, he's not coming right out and saying like the Trinity, but he's talking about the three parts of God. We have encouragement from Christ, comfort from the love of father. In fact, in Corinthians, he's has the same phrase that he's speaking to them and says, the same things. But he says then, and the love of the of God, but we have encouragement from Christ's love from the Father and fellowship with the spirit, our Triune God. Now, the word trinity is nowhere in our Bible, but it is an understanding of our God, that God is three and one, that there are three persons, but it's one essence and one being. And here's a part where we see Paul highlighting our Triune God now, if you have kids, I've got kids, and they ask questions all the time. Like when no one was younger, he asked me the question, why doesn't Darth Vader push the buttons on his chest? Great question. That's an unsearchable truth. We don't know. You kids may also ask you questions about the Bible like my kids have? And they're like, hey, what? Can you explain the Trinity? And have you ever tried to explain the Trinity to a kiddo? It's impossible. Like, you're like, Ah, I mean, it's like, and you're just like, you kind of feel like you're an idiot, when you're trying to explain it. All of a sudden, at least I do. Make Well, I'm a dad, and a husband and, and a friend, like those are three roles. And so I try to do illustrations to help my kids understand it. But that illustration breaks down because I'm one person with three roles. And that's not God, God's not one person. He's actually three distinct persons. So that breaks down the egg illustration breaks down, like the shell and the yolk, right? Like that breaks down to water, like water can be a gas or vapor or solid. Like, we come up

with all these illustrations to try and get our like, simple brains to understand this really hard concept of a Triune God. And all of them break down our early church leaders. They were trying to figure out how do you explain the Trinity and one of the things that is one of the best things that they could come up with is this Greek term. *perichoresis*, Rhesus parry, which is where we get the word perimeter. *Perichoresis*, this means to move or to make space for that even is where the word choreography comes from, for dance. So and you think about that the Greek style of dancing, I don't know if you've ever watched like videos of Greek dancing, or like a wedding, and you see all the people kind of line up and they put their arms around each other shoulders, and it's a whole lot of people, I would dance for you, but my hips lie. It's not worth me dancing, but it's this choreographed dance where a lot of people are all dancing together. A lot of cultures have these types of dances for you. And your culture might be the Electric Slide, right? Like you're at weddings and people were doing that whatever culture you're from, you can think of some sort of a dance that is a choreographed dance where multiple people are dancing together. And if you think of when you've seen professional dancers, who've put together a dance and they're doing it together, and it's all absolutely perfect, every step you see the way they're moving, and it's a bunch of individuals moving but they're all moving together as one. Like there's this perfect unity among them and it's this oneness but distinct, separate people. This is the idea and the concept that early church leaders had as they tried to think about this Triune God that you The Godhead is always in Unity always indwelling one another in a perfect harmony always moving together three distinct persons, one same core essence and being. And here's something interesting to think about. One of the commentaries that live in myself and the other teachers are using is by Lin ko Hakan. She's super brilliant, really smart. Her commentary on Philippians is amazing. And she throws out an idea that's just pretty neat to stop and think about. She talks about how there's this pair, *perichoresis*, this understanding of God. And if we are this in this coin and deal with the Spirit, what is it like for us that we get to share in the dance. And it's not so much that we're the ones who are doing the dancing is God doing the dancing, but it's kind of like a picture of like, what I can remember 27 years ago, when Lindsay and I had our oldest daughter, and she was just a little newborn. And it's so weird for me to think about because here now in these recent days, I've been able to hold her newborn, but I can vividly remember, Maddie, when she fit like right here, like all of her she fit right here. I remember being in her nursery holding her and dancing. And Lindsey, on the other side of Maddie, while Lindsey and I are the ones doing the dancing, Maddie is participating by simply resting in our arms. And this is what it's like for us that we're in the arms of of loving God. And we get to be in his dance. So before Paul addresses the break and unity, and what to do, he reminds the Philippians what they have, and what's true for them that they have encouragement in Christ, constellation of love, fellowship with a spirit. And he says if there's any affection and mercy and this is where Paul's a little unclear this affection or mercy that we have from God, I think so or it could be that this is we have affection and mercy among each other. But then he continues and goes on after this verse two, and he says, make my joy complete. And I think all the listeners the first time they heard this letter being read out loud, they couldn't wait to hear from Paul, when this part of the letter was read make my joy complete. I have to think their ears perked up because they loved Paul so much. How can we make his joy complete, he

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says you can make my joy complete by thinking the same way having the same love united in spirit and intent on one purpose. Now Paul's not calling us to think the same and that we always have to agree with all of our opinions. the Philippian church was made up of Jews, Greeks and Romans, they had a lot of different opinions, a lot of different thoughts. We don't always have to agree on everything. In fact, we have minor things of the faith that we can debate and have conversations around and disagree with. So I'm not saying that we have to all have absolute agreement in every opinion. But what we need to have is have the same mind when it comes to purpose, that we have to be in line with each other when it comes to our thinking of our purpose. So we don't have to agree on everything. But we have to be like minded and purpose. And we have to have the same love. And this was talking about the source of love, though Heavenly Father is our source of love. And in that that's what leads us to be united and spirit. And this isn't the same word spirit that talks about the holy spirit or the spirit in us. This has to be one sold, that we're one together and love and affection and our thoughts and actions that we are one sold with one purpose, verse three. Do nothing out of selfish ambition, or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others as more important than yourselves. If we could apply this verse to our lives. Everything would be different. Like if we did nothing, like I do almost everything with him selfish ambition or vain conceit, but he says, Hey, let's do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. We're not gonna do anything for our own advancement, our own agenda, our own name, our own title, our own anything. But instead we're going to in humility, reimagine ourselves and see others as more important than ourselves. Oh, it feels weird when we talk about this out loud. But what we actually do is we kind of rank ourselves with other people. Like if you think about it, you can remember a time you were with someone and you're like, wow, they're really important. Like they're super important. And you you can think of that time right where you were, whether it was you met a celebrity or someone that's a big deal, and you're like, oh, wow, I can't believe I get to be near that person. Like you think of them as higher than you in some way. Right? And we really do I'd like to say this out loud. But we also consider people less than us. Sometimes. They're here for me, they're to serve me. And what Paul's inviting us to do is to actually reimagine ourselves and see others as more important than us think about that time, when you were with someone that you really felt like was a big deal. They're super important, like you knew you were going to be with them or around them, and you're anxious and nervous, and had all the nervous energy before you met them. And they got to spend some time with them. When you were with them. Did you behave any different? Of course you did. If you're with somebody that you consider a really big deal, and they tell a joke, that's not funny. What do you do? You laugh at their joke. Of course you do. Because you want them to feel safe around you like some of it is maybe like bad intentions. But some of it just says like you want them to like being around you to feel safe with you to feel comfortable with you, you. Actually, if you think of it this way you're wanting to minister to them. So you laugh at their bad jokes. So they feel good. When it comes to making a decision as to where you're going to go to eat, if they pick a place that you don't want to go, are you going to

say that? No, you're just gonna go to the place and you don't like their food, you're going to suffer through it. Because you're deferring to the other person because you see them as more important. And what Paul is inviting us to, is to live our lives. While we're doing that all the time in all our relationships. Where as we go through life, we see people and we see them, we go, Hey, you matter more, I see you and I value you over me. And then you do the same for me. And I do it for you, and you do it for me. And we're all doing that for one another where we're valuing the other person is more important. And when a whole collective faith community is doing that, we're all looking out for the needs of others, no one is looked down upon and no one is left out. And this is what Paul invites the church to that we see everyone as worthy of our time, our attention, our service, we value them over ourselves. The next verse, this is what he says in verse, verse four, everyone should look out, not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. We go to other people, we see their wishes, their dreams, their desires, their needs as higher than ours. Then Paul, now talks about how you do this, because this is impossible, right? Like how do you live a life going through life? Doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but rather, and said in humility, valuing others as more important, how can we do that? We can, as we rest in Jesus, here's what Paul says, next, adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God did not consider equality with God, something to be exploited. Paul is now taking Jesus and letting us see that Jesus is not just an example to follow. But he's actually our source for humility. He's the source where we get to unity and he says, Hey, what we should do is take on this mind of Christ, and he wrote a letter to the Corinthians where he talks about how we already have the mind of Christ. So we can take on this mind this attitude that we already have in Jesus, and what his mindset is, what his attitude is, is that existing in the form of God did not consider equality with God, something to be exploited. When we think of form, we may misunderstand what this is saying a mannequin is in the form of a human, but it's not actually a human. Jesus wasn't just like a form of God, He is the essence of God, he is fully God. Jesus wasn't created like in Mary, and then was born in Bethlehem, like God, the sun always existed with God, the Father and God, the Spirit, they were always in the dance from the very beginning, experiencing perfect unity and harmony with each other mutually indwelling each other, loving each other. And they've always been. And so the Son, recognize that the equality of God being this fully God would have to come to earth and this equality of God could not be understood or grasp or exploited. So he gave up his, his privileges as God. Paul explains a little bit more here in the next verse says he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant taking on the likeness of humanity. Now Jesus when He emptied Himself, He didn't become less God. That isn't what happened. He was still fully God. What he did was he emptied himself by addition, an added humanity to his divinity. This is what Jesus did is he became human. This word assuming here, this isn't just a morphing or changing, it is actually an addition, he added on humanity to his divinity. And this is where we get to see what humility really is selfless. Such a big leap of humility, that the one who created all became part of physical creation by adding humanity to himself. For a long time, I really didn't understand humility for a lot of my life. And in my 20s, when I was a youth pastor, and early in ministry, I was like, I just want to be a humble servant leader. So I would teach and preach and after the sermon, I would have people who would come in this is just something that happens after you preach His people will come and talk to you about your sermon. And a lot of times people like, Hey, that was so good, what a great sermon. And I was trying to like not get prideful and arrogant and stay humble when I would get affirmation. So I didn't really know how to handle it. So people can be like, Man, your sermon was so powerful. And to try and handle that, well, I just be like, Nah, wasn't that good? Which is a weird interaction at that point, right? Like, you're coming to tell somebody what God was doing your life. And they're like, and I'm pathetic. Because my early years in youth ministry, or my early years where youth ministry, I would get really weird feedback from students afterwards, like, wheels off, I could write a book on it. But what would happen often is they would come up afterwards, they'd be like, Steve, you're so funny. Like, that's what students are thinking about. You're so funny. And me trying to be humble. I'd be like, Oh, I'm not funny. But that's not humility. That's lying. I'm hilarious. Are you saying funny stuff all the time? Right? So in that moment, that's, that's not humility. Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It's thinking about yourself less.

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Right? So it's not like thinking like, Oh, I'm pathetic, or I'm not. Humility isn't just me going, Oh, I'm no good humility, actually true humility as possible for us in Christ. Because when we see who we are in Jesus, you can't think too low of yourself. And you can't think to higher yourself, you can actually be the most self aware and recognize who you are in Jesus. And what Jesus shows us here is that real humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but it's actually about thinking of yourself less. He did the greatest sacrifice. I mean, think about what this is like. Jesus was always the most important person in the room. Like every room he went in, he was the most important person. No one else was better than him, or more than him. And he stooped every time. And it wasn't a chore for him. When he was with people, centers, tax collectors, religious leaders, it didn't matter who it was, when he was with them. He saw them as worthy of his time and his attention. He saw their needs as greater than his and he did everything he could to minister and love people. There are a few miracles that made it into all four of the Gospels. One of them is the transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus takes Peter, James and John, he goes up on the mountain and he listen, just get a little glimpse of the fact that he is glorious. And the miracle isn't the fact that they got to see it. The miracle is that that's who he always was. And he always contained it. He is the Creator of all in the sustainer of life, and he added humanity to his divinity, so that he could serve people and every where he went, he saw others valued them, greater than he did himself. And that's not all he, Paul is unpacking in this beautiful him, the layers and the depths of the humility of Jesus. Look what it says next. And when he had come as a man, He humbled Himself by coming, obedient to the point of death. So he was so humbled that he left humanity, he left the heavens and came to earth and he was so humble that he even went through a death he was obedient to point of death, but not just any death, a death on a cross. And Deuteronomy chapter 21, there's a passage there that talks about how if you die on a pole on a wooden pole, that you are cursed by God and the rabbi's at the time of Jesus took that and applied it to their current cultural contexts, and said that if you are crucified on a cross, it means you're cursed by God. So think about this just for a moment. In

the book of Acts, we see that what the religious leaders did when they went in Stephen dead as they just took them and stoned them and killed them. They didn't go through all the hours of working through all the different things to get him on a cross. But with Jesus, the religious leaders did all the negotiating all the working all the hours of stuff to get him on a cross, because they didn't want Jesus just to die. They wanted him crucified. Because anybody who was crucified on a cross was considered to be cursed by God. It's a shameful death. So the religious leaders were insistent on making sure that Jesus ended up on a cross because that is the most shameful way to die in their culture. And David Guzik introduces an interesting concept just to stop and think about and consider, and his commentary, he talks about how, in the Old Testament prophecies, they all could have been written by God in a way that led to a different moment for the Savior. Like Jesus didn't have to come as a baby. Maybe the Savior could have shown up as a man. Jesus didn't have to die of public death, and a shameful death on a cross. Why couldn't the Savior have just died a private death, with dignity, for the sins of humanity? Could it be that all the prophecy, and everything was done to show us the depths of the humility of Jesus?

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What Paul is doing in this letter is he's wanting us to see that unity matters. And unity happens through humility. And it's the humility of Jesus, in our life and through our life. And the powerful truth of what applied for the Philippians church and applies for us as well is that there is nothing greater than the humility of Jesus. Anything that could keep us from Unity is less than the humility of Jesus, Jesus. Another way to say is Jesus, humility is greater than anything that can keep us from unity. And wherever the break is, and the relationships of your life, whatever the circumstances are, I even think about just the challenges that we see in the church and America, the problems that we see the things that keep us divided, none of those are bigger than or greater than the humility of Jesus. Jesus is inviting all of us to rest in what's true of him, and what's true of us as we engage in our relationships. So when you may have maybe a break in a relationship with another sister or brother in the faith, maybe there's tension in your small group, maybe there's a weird dynamic that's happening in your family, the truth of what we can cling to and our relationships is that Jesus, His humility is greater than anything that can keep us from unity. And the way it changes me and the way it can change you as the way we engage in those conversations, we can engage in the conversation a different way. When I'm in conflict with someone and I'm operating in the flesh, I will go to places where I am in self preservation, where I'm wanting to preserve myself. What I will often do is try to prove to the other person why I and how I am the bigger victim than them. And if they're operating in the flesh, they're doing the same thing with me. And we get in this conflict where we're both just trying to out victim each other. No, I'm the bigger victim. No, I'm the bigger victim. No, I'm the bigger victim. And we're making our case for why that's true. When I'm in conflict with someone else, and I'm convinced that I am right, I will talk to them until they understand that I'm right. But when I am instead operating in a place of trusting in the spirit in the midst of tension and conflict, my goal isn't their understanding. My goal isn't to change them or their thinking. My goal, my hope, my desired outcome is unity. And that happens as we trust and lean into Jesus. So from a posture of humility, we can be open handed and when we're hoping handed with Jesus, he always shows up in beautiful ways. So in our relationships with each other. Yes, it's good for us to get along, but it's also for the sake of the mission of what God is doing. May we be a body of people who pursue unity by resting and the humility of Jesus, that's true for us and through us. You may be here today and you have a relationship in your life where there is stress, and there's tension like I'm gonna grab my Bible before you roll By the way, thank you, you may find yourself in a place where there's stress or tension. And here's what I'm gonna invite you to do is let's take that relationship, whatever the dynamic is, and let's pray together. If you're worshiping with us online, here's I'm gonna invite you to do is open up the chat. And if you want prayer for relationship in your life just right in the chat. I'd like some prayer for a relationship, you don't have to go into details, you don't have to share anything, just other than saying, I would like prayer. And for those of you who are in the room, here's what I'd like for you to do. I would like you to stand up. And for the rest of us, what we're going to do is we're going to pray. And we're going to actually live out what Philippians two talks about, and we're going to value the needs of the other person before us. And we're all going to pray collectively out loud. So our sisters and our brothers in the room can hear our prayers for them. So if you need prayer, for any reason, in a relationship in your life today, Stan see some of you standing already. And I'm just going to go quiet. And we're all going to pray. And then I'm going to close us in prayer. And if you're not sure what to pray, just open up your Bible. Turn to Philippians two and pray Philippians two over to the sisters and brothers that you see standing. Let's pray now