

Book of Acts Series - Part 9 | Change in the Church

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon discusses the critical changes in the early church as it navigated challenges and the importance of unity and service among its members.

Duration: 35:33

Scripture: Acts 6:1

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of every member of the church finding their role and purpose. He uses the analogy of playing paddle ball to illustrate how each part of the body is necessary for the body to function effectively. The preacher challenges the idea that attending church once a week is enough and highlights the need for believers to actively engage in the work that God has called them to do. He also mentions the importance of racial reconciliation within the church and rejects the idea of teaching it through classes or seminars, emphasizing that it can only come through the love of God working through the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Some months ago now, we began a series in the book of Acts. We've been studying together about the formation and the early history of what is called the Christian church. The Old Testament is characterized by the law and by Moses and by centered on the people of Israel.

The New Testament now is focused on the church and the ministry of what Jesus did after he died, was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. His followers went out and began to spread the good news, which means gospel, and a church formed. Now, we've been taking snapshots from the book of Acts, even as the book of Acts has snapshots of what did the early church look like? Certainly, it's given to us as the model.

Listen, everyone, not what you saw growing up, not what I saw growing up, that's not the model, unless it models what the New Testament tells us is the way Jesus wanted his church to operate and to be like, in terms of mission and love and unity. And we're gonna talk today about one of the most critical passages in the book of Acts. It's when the church changed in more ways than one.

It's hard to get us to change. Change is a word we talk about. You hear people say, I need a change.

But to really change is very, very, very difficult. And now, a church changing, a breakthrough in the early Christian church, this is something we wanna read with carefulness and try to apply it to our own lives. So let's look at Acts chapter six.

In those days, this is early, now in the life of the church in Jerusalem, in those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the 12, who's the 12? Those are the 12 apostles. One had been kind of elected in to replace Judas who had betrayed the Lord.

So the 12 gathered all the disciples together and said, it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

This proposal pleased the whole group and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on them.

So the word of God spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Now Stephen, one of those seven, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. So we find out in Acts 6 that God begins to change the structure and functioning of the Christian church and he does it through a problem.

A problem arose. Wherever there's blessing and growth, problems come. In fact, problems is what characterizes all of our lives.

Am I correct? How many have at least one problem? If you have more than one, lift up another hand. We all have problems. So there's a problem because there's growth.

Where there's growth, there's problems. And God uses problems in our lives as channels of new blessings and changing things. God uses problems in our lives as channels of new blessings he wants to give us, but we wouldn't reach out for them unless we had the problem, and also to bring about change in us.

All I've ever known since I've gone in the ministry is problems, that's all I know. Every day I have a new problem. Every year I've been in as a pastor, I have a new problem.

Financial problems, personnel problems, counseling people and the complexity of their lives bring new problems. People out of work problems, people hurt, people abandoned, people sick, people discouraged. All you ever face in life, and this is a great thing to accept, otherwise you can get a wrong concept of Christianity.

All that life involves is solving problems. They come every day. Nobody's saying amen, I thought this was profound what I'm saying here.

You know, obviously you don't agree. Problems, come on, isn't that the truth? You get married, there's problems. I didn't mean it that way, I meant there's problems of adjustment.

There's financial problems. There's problems about making decisions. Then you have babies, new problems.

No sleep at night, there's problems. Who's gonna take care of the baby, babysitting. I mean, life is nothing else but problems and adjusting and finding answers and going on with God.

That's why young ministers or young Christians who think that when you serve the Lord like there's gonna be no more problems, that's not at all. How many have had maybe more problems since you became a Christian than before you were a Christian? Certainly those people had more problems in the early church. So all life is is just problems.

So when they come, you don't go, oh, alas, what am I gonna do? Where is God when I need him? The devil's coming in like a roaring lion. It's just another day of problems. But God says I will never leave you nor forsake you.

I'm gonna help you, I'm a problem solver. How many are happy Jesus is a problem solver? Problem solver. So they had a problem.

What was the problem? Because this is interesting for us. The problem was contention. Notice how the Bible tells it the way it is.

A disagreement arose in the early church. What was the disagreement about? Well, they had a food program. Because of a lot of poor people, they had gathered resources and they had a daily doling out of food for the widows.

People had no one to care for them. But there were two kinds of widows in the early church. There were, these were all converts to Christianity and they all were Jewish, okay? All the early Christians in the book of Acts were Jewish.

It was in Jerusalem, Jesus was Jewish, 12 apostles were Jewish. The Gentiles coming in the church hasn't happened yet as of Acts six. But among these widows, there were two kinds of Jewish Christian widows.

There were the ones who had grown up in and around Israel and spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, and they were Jewish Jewish. And then there were other women who lived in the dispersion where the Jews had been sent away from Israel hundreds of years before. And they spoke mostly Greek because that was the language of those areas.

So now they come to Jerusalem, they become Christians, so you have two different kinds of Jewish Christian widows. You've got the ones who are Jewish Jewish from the land and you got the ones who are from outside, more like immigrants. And sure enough, the ones who weren't really Hebrew Jewish, they started to feel they were being discriminated against because when they handed out the food, they favored the widows who came from the land rather than the immigrant widows.

Nothing new under the sun. That brings up the problem that we all face, which is that terrible xenophobia or us and them mentality. It was in the early church.

And even though God was blessing, this is a hard one to root out. Instead of seeing people the way God sees them and treating everyone fairly, we tend to look at people ethnically or racially or what island they

come from. And then we treat them differently and we favor some and not so favor some others.

Isn't that a problem? Civil War ended 1865, Lincoln was shot in 1865. And we still got race problems. The whites see themselves as whites, the blacks see themselves as black.

It's us against them, Latinos, Asians, everybody. And then it's even beyond that. Some black people say, no, I'm not American black, I'm West Indian black.

That's different. That's different, pastor. That's different.

Am I speaking the truth or not? Okay. So we judge people differently. We favor people based on their linkage to us.

What a proud, arrogant approach to life that is. We're gonna favor people because they seem most like us. I'm Korean, so I'm gonna favor the Koreans or the Asians.

That's what they had back then. Always remember this, brothers and sisters, God's will is that we treat everybody the same. God's will is that we love everybody.

Could I get a witness for that? We love everybody. And we never favor, James tells us never favor rich people. Don't favor rich people because of their influence and their money.

Don't give them special seats. Don't look the other way when they do something wrong. If rich people do something wrong, it is wrong.

Never favor poor people. Oh, it got quiet. Ah.

Never favor poor people because poor people can be just as wicked as rich people. And the Old Testament warns us, never show favoritism toward poor people. Help poor people because they're poor.

But if they do say something wrong and cut a corner, you say, no, that's wrong, but I'm poor. It's still wrong. Rich people are wrong, poor people are wrong.

Never favor someone because they're black. Never favor someone because they're white or West Indian or from your island or Asian or whatever because God is no respecter of persons. Come on, let's say amen to that.

That's good truth. Now, only the love of God through the Holy Spirit can give us that outlook on life. You can't teach that.

You can no more teach that. Minister said to me, who visited here recently, my dream has been, a well-known minister, who said, my dream has been to have a congregation like I see on your church where it seems like everybody is just everybody and there's all different people. So what do you, Pastor Sibley, you have race reconciliation classes that you teach? You have like seminars on how, like let's get along, can't we all get along or something like that? I said, never, we never have any racial reconciliation of any kind.

When the love of God fills you and you really meet the Lord, when you really meet the Lord, you start seeing people the way God sees them. They weren't doing that back then, which tells us that this is an ongoing problem, so we have to be patient and deal with it. Don't ever favor people because they're

young.

There's nothing great about being young. Never favor people and look the other way if they're old. Care for the elderly and all of that, but youth can be totally off the wall.

Young people, 20s, 30s, you can be off the wall at 50 or 60 or 70. You could be just off the wall at all ages. Am I right or wrong here? So never like have a banner for a certain group of any kind.

Our banner is Jesus Christ, Son of God. One more time, let's clap our hands. So now they had a problem, but God had given wisdom to the apostles and they said, wait a minute.

The Lord said, go into all the world. We have a ministry of preaching. We're called to preach and lead.

What are we gonna do? Wait on the tables where they hand out the food? And are we supposed to be distributing the food and fussing with widows and who are you, Hebrew, Greek widow, whatever, Greek-speaking widows? Is that what God called us to do? Very smart. They realized that even though something needs to be done, doesn't mean you're supposed to do it. This was a breakthrough in the church because the apostles were the leaders and they were like running the show in the early church because it was all new and formative.

But now they realize we can't do that, but it needs to be done. Something needs to be done, but we can't do it because if we do it, it's gonna take time. Time where we could be spending with God, studying his word, meditating, spending time with the Lord and then ministering the word, preaching, teaching, going because we were the ones with the Lord.

We're the ones with his calling. He laid his hands upon us, told us and sent us out, told us to be his witnesses. So they said, we gotta solve this through delegation of duties, delegation of duties.

It's not right for us to do that. Not that we're too big for it, but we gotta have other people involved. You know, when I was early in the ministry, I made a prayer to God that just came out of my heart and I prayed it hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times since then God knows it.

I prayed that whatever church the Lord would bless my wife and I with, which started with less than 15 people, that he would build a church through his presence and the people loving God more than the personality and the charisma of the pastor because I had seen that backfire. I'd once been in a church with a pastor, he was a good man, but he was used by the Lord and he took such a place of prominence in the people's minds that when he was on vacation and he wasn't there, it was like Jesus couldn't come to church. Jesus was gone, why? Well, pastor so and so is not here today.

What would the pastor have to do with Almighty God? How many happy the Lord is with us every time we gather, no matter who's conducting the meeting. But leadership, leadership can have that tendency where the church gets leader-centered instead of Christ-centered, that's what I wanna say. And I wanted the church, my dream has always been, Lord, let the people be Christ-centered and not Jim Symbola-centered or someone else-centered.

That's why leaders, it's very dangerous with leaders because God can use them and they can start thinking they're something themselves, right? Arrogance in the pulpit is a very horrible thing to see. Someone just sent me a recommendation of a speaker who they thought might come here and they included, unfortunately or fortunately for me, his little blur two-paragraph biography, a young man who the

Lord, I guess, is going around preaching and is popular. And it said, so and so, this name, is being used by God as hardly anyone else on the earth.

He's sought after by everyone to speak and he speaks in these different venues. He has written books, but his gift of preaching is not found bettered anywhere in the body of Christ. I didn't have to read too long to know that I wasn't gonna invite him here because anyone who could write that or permit that to be written obviously needs some help.

It's not about us, it's about Jesus. They say, here's what we're gonna do. Let's get seven men.

And notice the qualifications. Just to distribute the food. They've gotta be known to be wise, good men, and full of the Holy Spirit.

They've gotta be controlled by the Holy Spirit. You can't give positions in the church of any kind without thinking who are the people. Not are they just willing, but are they qualified and their gifting has to be spiritual because the church is not a university or a corporation.

The church of Jesus Christ can only be built by spiritual gifting. It's a spiritual organism. IQ is fine, but you can't build a church on IQ.

Talent is great, but good singing doesn't build a church. For it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. So people have to be sensitive to the Spirit of God and controlled by the Spirit of God, or they can't even wait on the tables.

So they choose seven men. Now, they're not called deacons, but some commentators believe these are the first deacons. You know what deacon means? It means to serve.

Deacons are not to walk around with fancy suits and turn around collars and wear white gloves, but what they're to do is just get low and serve everybody. And that's what pastors are supposed to do because Jesus took off his outer garment and washed the disciples' feet. Anytime you see any man of God or deacon or anyone acting like they're above everybody, they've missed the boat and problems are gonna come very soon.

And that is a law. How could you be greater than Jesus? If he washed the disciples' feet and was a friend of sinners, how could you and I be exclusive? That's impossible. So they chose seven men and said, you wait on the tables.

So isn't this so good? They gave themselves to their calling. They found seven who could do the other thing. And now the ministry went ahead.

Many were added to the Lord, including the conversion of Jewish priests. So now the church was rocking. Everybody finding their thing to do.

Because that's the way a body operates. Yesterday, I went out with some of the guys in the church and we played paddle ball right here in downtown Brooklyn. So when you play paddle ball, you hold the racket, the paddle, and you need your wrist, you need your hand, you need your shoulder, but you also need your legs.

Because even if your arm is strong, if the ball's over there, you need something to get over to where the ball is. If you just stand like a pole and just swing, you're gonna lose every game. But you not only need

your legs, and then when you get to the ball, you can hit it, you also need your eyes, because it's a hand-eye coordination sport.

Sometimes the ball comes off the wall on a fly. Sometimes it comes on a short hop. Sometimes it comes on a nice bounce into your hit zone and you can just whack it.

Some of the guys turn and hit it with their left hand when the ball comes on the left. So now it's not just your right hand and your eyes and all of this. Now you switch the racket and whack.

You hit it with your left. But you need your brain, because if you just hit the ball and don't think where you're hitting it, you're gonna lose. So you gotta know where am I hitting it, where's the other guy's weak spot so I can try to put it there.

You need your lungs, because you get tired. Out in that sun beating down on us. Because that's the way a body operates.

You can't just say, I've got a great right wrist. The rest of me is shot, but boy, I got a right wrist that just won't stop. No, the body doesn't function that way.

We need everything. And that's the way the body of Christ is. They found their thing to do because of that first need, but now that the church has proliferated and there's transitions ministry and buildings, they didn't have buildings that needed to be cleaned, and all these things have happened in the church as the church began to grow, the question now becomes, where are the volunteers and the workers to do all the things that the body needs to be done, the body of Christ needs to be done? For the church, the Bible teaches us, is just like a body, as we're gonna see in a second, you need all the members functioning or it's not gonna go well.

If you put it all on the people on the platform that are sitting here, then the church sinks. Why? Because we can only do what we're called to do. We can't do the other things.

We don't know people you know that you could invite to church. We can't pray all the prayers. We can't sing in the choir.

Imagine if the choir was just made up of the pastors. Nobody would ask the choir to sing here. I wanna ask you, when was the last time you gave thought to what your calling is in the body of Christ? Or are you into this American, Western concept of Christianity where you all just think it's great because you come to church on Sunday and you sit there and now you're gonna go home after the service and maybe you'll come to the prayer meeting, maybe not, but then you're gonna come back next Sunday and that's why God saved you, right? God saved you that once a week you would go into a building for a couple hours.

That makes a lot of sense. Christ gave his life so that you could go to a building once a week. And then you wonder why you don't feel fulfilled.

And you wonder why there's no spirit of God working in you. Working in you for what? The spirit was sent to work so we could do what God called us to do. But if you have nothing to do, why would the spirit work? I don't care if you don't say amen.

Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing here. You gotta say these things even though it's hard to say sometimes.

But it's the truth, isn't it? So look at, there's a lot more than preaching. Look at some of the ministries, the service gifts that God says exist. Just as each of us has one body, remember the paddle ball? With many members and these members do not all have the same function.

My eye cannot do what my elbow does. So in Christ, we who are many form one body. There's only one church.

There's only one church. We shouldn't have cliques in the church or groups in the church or racial distinctions in the church. So all the members belong to each other.

So these are my brothers. We belong to each other. We have to work together.

He doesn't have his thing going on. His thing relates to me. He can't operate apart from me.

I can't operate apart from them. Come on, we're together. We're one body.

We operate together. That's God's concept of the church. I don't care if you never saw it growing up.

I don't care if you and I just went to a church or let's go to church on Sunday and hear the preacher or the bishop preach. I don't care about that. That's irrelevant to me.

Maybe we grew up wrong. Have you ever been humble enough to admit, like myself, I've had to face it, I grew up wrong. I saw wrong stuff in church.

Listen, when you go by the tradition of your elders, my mom and dad used to drag me to a church in Bed-Stuy, all white, Eastern European church made up of mostly Polish, Ukrainian, some Russian, Slavic people and all of that, and they had holiness teaching and all 100,000 rules that you had to obey, but they wouldn't want a black person within 100 yards of that church. Should I follow the tradition of my elders? You think I would be here today if I followed that tradition? They were off. Yeah, but pastor, that's where you grew up.

I don't care I grew up there, they're off. Why do you have to defend what you grew up in? I'm not defending anything I grew up in. I only want to defend Jesus and the word of God.

That's all I want to defend. I want to defend Jesus and the word of God. Let's look at some of these gifts.

We have different gifts. We, who's the we in the church? Not the pastors. We have different gifts according to the grace given us.

Everyone has different gifting that God has graced them with. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it's serving, look at that.

Right next to prophesying is serving. What do servants do? Serve. That's a remarkable idea.

Just serve. Well, how? There's all kinds of ways to serve. You know, there's people right now serving on the other side of that wall.

Did you know they're waiting for the accessorize and they're making it possible for the people to come in and then go home? If we didn't have that, we couldn't minister to all those people. They're giving up a service. They're on a schedule.

They kill themselves over there just helping. They're serving. There's people who will clean this building during the week who don't work for the church.

There's just ways of serving. Food, serving, praying, whatever. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him pray.

If it's serving, let him serve. If it's teaching, let him teach. If it's encouraging, oh my goodness.

There's somebody who has the gift of encouragement. I wonder how many of you hear God's calling is on you to be an encourager and you don't even think 30 seconds of it the whole week. You don't, but it's a gift.

Am I right? Look, not everyone prophesies. Not everyone can encourage in that special way. If it's contributing to the needs of others, some have the ministry of giving.

Let him give generously. If it's leadership, someone's gotta lead all these ministries and all these different things. Let him govern diligently.

If it's showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Some people have the ministry of just taking people who've been beat down. They can show mercy and pick them up.

Maybe because they've been through so much. But that's their ministry. They were known for that in the church.

Oh, you know Sister Jones over there? She has the ministry of showing mercy. No, that person's crushed, can't go on. Let him get over there with Sister Jones.

Sister Jones will straighten that person out. She'll pray with them. This is totally different than what we're used to seeing in church, am I correct? What's the average church like, average? What's 99% of all the churches in America, which are in decline, by the way, in America, probably for one of the, this is one of the reasons why.

It's all based on the guy up there. Oh, what does Pastor so-and-so say? But what do I do? What does God call me to do? What's my ministry? How can I help transitions? How can I work in the prison ministry? How can I go to the shelters? How can I be in the prayer band? How can I serve downstairs serving food? How can I encourage someone? But leaders, look, get to know me. You can trust me.

I just want to encourage people. Could you give me some names so I can encourage some people? Almost unthinkable to most of us because it's all about us. When I'm going through and my children and I need a job and my baby's sick and I don't know what to do and I, I, I, I, I, I, but the body works to serve others.

And that's how we show our love to the Lord. There's a verse in the Bible, in Hebrews, says God is not unmindful of how you've shown love to him by ministering to his people. You know how you show love to God? You care for his people.

Anyone who says they love God a lot and doesn't give a hoot about other people, they're totally deceived. That's like you say you love me but you don't care about my children or my grandchildren. No, no, no, no, no.

I know people who really love me. I watch how they respond to my, my grandson Levi or Luke or Claire or whatever because why? They love me so it goes to them. Don't you think it's time for some of us? Look, life's not over yet.

Today's the first day of the rest of your life. Why don't you get to God today and say God, show me my gift, show me my calling. But I am not gonna sit there in that building every Sunday.

I will not do that. I'm not gonna just sit there and take up space. I am gonna find out what I am called to do and I'm gonna put my shoulder to the wheel.

Otherwise the body, most churches are deformed. Most churches, if you could see them spiritually, they're deformed. They can't walk, they can't move.

Why? Because all the members are out of whack. They're not flowing together and doing what God called them to do. And then there's other churches that are ready to just, let's roll.

That's true for ministries even within the church. Last thing, not only are there gifts and callings that we don't think of, here's another thing we don't think of. Did you see that last verse? Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs.

I'm gonna, wait a minute, wait a minute. I wanna ask something. Who told him to do that? Who ordained that guy? I thought he was just a deacon.

He was supposed to hand out food. What's he doing miracles for? What's he preaching and giving glory to Christ? How is the Holy Spirit using him? He wasn't ordained, he wasn't one of the 12. He's not a big time guy.

He's a guy serving, just picked him out, they said. Serves the food, just hand out the food. Stop the ladies from arguing and fussing.

But when you open yourself and you begin to do what God called you to do, then the Holy Spirit, wait. The Holy Spirit has a channel to begin to work and then see these are the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and outlined in 1 Corinthians 14. See, our concept is, no, if you're gonna pray for someone, call just, the pastor's symbol's gotta pray.

What line, can I get on his line? How do you think that makes us feel? Like God's on my line? I don't think so. Ah, but see, the early church, it was, wait a minute. The gifts of God, the power of God's available to everyone.

I'll pray for that sick person. I'll do, God, move through me. Why not move through me? How many of you are Christians, been washed in the blood and you're a child of God? Just lift up your hand.

Well then, I'm asking you now, what further qualification do you need for God to use you through the power of the Holy Spirit? Would you just tell me something? What, do you have to go to school? Is there a degree you have to get? Do you have to be ordained? Do I have to know you? Do I have to lay my hands on you? Is there some magic we gotta do with you? No, wind blows wherever it wants and the Spirit just moves. People start stepping out in faith and doing things. How do you think Bonita Afriani is in Haiti? She was in our prayer band.

She got converted under the ministry of hearing the gospel in this church. Got baptized, believe I know it right. She was in the prayer band.

The next thing I know, she's gonna retire early and start a work down in Haiti. And she checks with some of the pastors and then they bring her to me and I go, you go, girl, because obviously we knew God was in that. You think I told her to do it? God put it on her heart.

And right now she's got hundreds of people in her church feeding hundreds and hundreds of children in her church and who did that? You think that's the vision of the Brooklyn Tabernacle? No, it's the power of the Holy Spirit. How many believe God can still do those things? Put your hands together with me. So what do you need? You need faith to believe that this is so.

How many believe everything I've preached today is from the Bible? Just say amen. You need that faith and then you need openness to God. I'm talking to you, lady in the sweater there.

I'm talking to you there up in that orange shirt. I'm talking to you up in the right there with the white shirt on up there on the right in the balcony and you young people that are sitting there behind my mother. I'm asking you, why can't God use you? Just tell me why God can't use you.

Just give me some biblical reasons why it's gotta be the ordained clergy. Just tell me from the Bible why God can only use a select group of people. Flies in the face of everything in the Bible.

No, God is moving by his spirit. He's moving throughout the earth. But you know what he's looking for is just a few men or women, just somebody who will say, here am I, Lord, use me.

Whatever my calling is, my gifting is, I'll give myself to it. And then Holy Spirit, come according to the gifting that you've planned for me. Help me to operate in what you want.

But I'm gonna covet spiritual gifts. I wanna be used by God. I don't wanna try to get over just human cleverness or intelligence.

I wanna have something real from God. I know the Lord's talking to people today. I know that.

That's why it's quiet. Sometimes when we're the loudest, we're not really listening. And sometimes when it's quiet, close your eyes with me.

Lord, bless your word to our hearts. Let it find a deep place. Help us to meditate on this.

Help it to find a place where it can take root, produce change. I pray that there'll be people here who will say, I am no longer going to church like I used to go to church. I'm gonna find where God wants me, and then I'm gonna begin to operate in the gift that he's given me.

I'll serve, I'll clean, I'll visit, I'll teach, I'll care for children, I'll do something, but I'm gonna do something for my Jesus. I'm not gonna sit here and just be a sponge. I pray you'll do that, God.

But you have to do it by your spirit. You have to stir that up in us. Otherwise, we're given to selfish pursuits and self-focus.

I pray, God, that by your spirit, you will open us up to supernatural possibilities in you, that we will not think in that box of naturalism. I can only do what I can do, and will never think I can do all things through Christ

who strengthens me. What you call us to do, you will equip us to do.

You never send anyone on a job, on a mission, without empowering them to do it. Make us a body that functions together. Help us to love each other and serve one another.

Now let your face shine upon your people, Lord, and give us peace. Help us to love each other more, Lord. Get rid of all divisions, walls, factions, schisms.

Just make us one through your love flowing in our hearts. We pray this in Jesus' name. And everybody said? Everybody stand.

I want you to high-five at least five people right now. If you're visiting from the tri-state area for the first time, come up and see me. Some of the pastors and deacons will be up here with me.

Anybody visiting for the first time?

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