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Oh God, wonderful precious father of love. Thank you so much for this love that you offer to us freely. We just need to accept and don't have to earn. Thank you that you look upon us with a father's heart and a father's eyes. And love us as dear children. Please help us to trust you as you guide us. Towards the place you're calling us to go. Towards maturity in love and in faith. In love and in faith. Fill our hearts with faith and trust as we follow you like precious children. We ask in Jesus name, Amen. [Silence] Well, sorry. So this week I will be talking about last week. Last week I spoke on making provision for the flesh versus walking in the spirit. Our verse for that was Romans chapter 13 verse 14. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. I gave some examples of what walking in the flesh looks like versus walking in the spirit. Some of my examples ruffled some feathers. So to begin with I'm going to clear up some misunderstandings. Some of you have expressed concern over what I meant when I said this or that. So I'm going to clarify right now. First of all, I think that our incoming pastor, Keith, is an answer to prayer. That he is a miracle. I'm super excited about him coming. And I'm positive that God will use him to lead us into new areas of growth and maturity. I can't wait to see where he takes us once he takes the reigns. The second thing I want to make clear about last week was that I was not considering any of you when I gave examples. I was not attacking anyone. Any examples I have were from my own life and experiences only. I was not accusing or blaming anyone of anything. I was just doing the same thing I do every week, which is to congratulate us on our victories, but to spur us on and encourage us in our weaknesses. It's funny how when you start preaching against the flesh, people's flesh starts overreacting and hearing things I didn't say. But the truth is that I have so much love for this church. It's the reason I'm here and not off in California making video games. God wants me here. He has work for me to do here. To use my gifts to minister to this church during this season. But my gifts are not to make you comfortable and happy, but they are to edify you and build you up and spur you on to maturity and growth. So I apologize if there was a misunderstanding, but I will not apologize for what I said because I meant every word. The truth is none of us has been perfected yet. We all have room to grow. God has called me here to be a coach that blows the whistle and says, "Give me five more." You will be uncomfortable because anything else would be from the devil. And the new pastor we've chosen also will be someone who won't be content to just pat you on the head, but he will challenge you to walk and grow. If you want a feel-good church, you better start shopping now because that's not the direction we're headed. I ended my message with the idea for Home Church Sunday. Some of you thought this idea was fantastic. Others thought it was terrible. And that's fine. My reason for suggesting Home Church Sunday was not to punish anyone. Christian fellowship is important, and I will not deny it to anyone who wants it. And if you want to experience Christian fellowship here at this building, then that's fine. We will have Home Church Sunday, but we will also have this building open and the lights on, and at least me here. I can't promise we'll have a worship team or anything, but if you just got to be here, I will make sure you can be here. And if any of you who are thinking, "Oh, goody, I can skip church that day." Well, sorry, church will be open, so you have no excuse. It's your flesh that looks for an opportunity to skip church, and you need to squash that thinking. There should be no bribe big enough, no opportunity promising enough, and no sleep sweet enough to get you away from fellowshipping with other Christians. I'd like to just move on from this subject, but I must address this dangerous thinking. You are the church. You. Wherever you are is Carmel Friends Church. This building is just a meeting house. If I wanted to start my own Quaker fellowship, we would be the church in whomever's house we are meeting in. If you're worried that closing this building might hurt our image or convince people that Carmel Friends is gone, then you need a paradigm shift. As long as you and I have breath in our lungs and we continue to meet together, then Carmel Friends Church still exists. It doesn't matter what happens to this building. Carmel Friends Church will still be here because we are Carmel Friends Church. This morning, Carmel Friends has one building. On Home Church Sunday, you will have 10 buildings. Talk about church growth. I don't want to sell or lose this building. It is such a blessing to us and to all the people we share it with. But, you know, not as many people come here and our attendance is low and some of you are worried about that. I'm not worried. If I was worried about attendance numbers, I'd get rid of the cross and the organ and I'd put a popcorn machine out there and I'd charge 10 bucks ahead to watch movies in here. I'd tend to skyrocket. But then people would be coming for the wrong reason. That's why all this new paint and lighting is nice. But I don't care if it increases our numbers because it would still be for the wrong reason. What's the right reason? To live in intimate relationships with God and with each other. In other words, to be the church. That's what people are hungry for. To become the people they were created to be. And that's why I think that the Home Church Sunday thing is a great idea because it will stretch us out of our comfort zones and challenge us to become the church God wants us to be. Christ's beautiful bride. Our church participates in some fantastic ministries. Our food bank feeds the hungry. Our Easter baskets bless. Easter baskets bless the poor. We have our mitten tree at Christmas. You guys financially support whatever crazy thing the youth is up to. We pay to keep this building open so that we can use it to bless other churches and schools and scouts. We support missionaries around the world. We support Quaker Haven. We send care packages, eyeglasses, shoe boxes full of presents, school supplies, Bibles. So many things. And this is fantastic. This is a list to be proud of. But I've noticed that a lot of those things could be put onto a list called Spending Money on Others. And that's a fantastic list and I'm proud we have so much on there. Let's keep doing that. But let's branch out as well. Let's work on building up our list called Getting Involved in People's Messy Lives. Christian or non-Christian. It's not an empty list. But I think it might be a shorter list. And that makes sense because it's easier to send money to support someone than it is to get involved with a person. I've previously spoken about a human's limited capacity to care for others. I'm referred to it as our monkey sphere. It's the idea that a human only has the capacity to really concern themselves with about 120 people. Those can be family members or those can be the Kardashians. But human mind appears to only really be able to be concerned with about 120 people. Getting involved with other people's lives is difficult. But it's the model Jesus used to establish and spread his kingdom. And it is a skill essential for us to master if we want to increase our usefulness and effectiveness in this generation. Since this year has started, 2013, how many of you have seen a hurting person you know next to nothing about and just walked up to him and said, "Can I pray for you?" and then stopped and prayed for them right there? I had that experience this year. It was for the first time I think in my life. And it was for the first time I think in my life. And it was such a blessing. And I wish all of you had the opportunity to raise your hand with me just then. It was such a blessing to be Christ's ambassador and to help carry the burdens of another person in the name of Jesus. We are Christ's ambassadors to the world. We are his hands and feet. The reason that I'm so eager to do this Home Church Sunday thing is because we are so uncomfortable in intimate situations. It's the flesh. It says, "Don't speak up. Don't say anything. Don't embarrass yourself." And Jesus says, "Don't waste your life giving in to the fear in your flesh. Do you believe that I hear and answer your prayers? Pray for that person." There's one adjective that should leap to people's mind when they consider your Christian life. Radical. Are you radical? Do people say, "He's sold out for Christ. What an amazing example of a Christian. I want to know that Jesus, that person knows." Is that what they say about you? Radical is not, "Well, he doesn't gamble. He doesn't drink." Radical is, "He gave how much to the poor? He adopted how many children? He lets homeless and criminals stay in his house?" Radical. This is why I'm not worried about what people will think if they see our church closed one Sunday out of the year, because unless we become radical, we will be closed every Sunday out of the year. There is a smorgasbord of brick and mortar buildings with stained glass pews, hymnals, organs, and the whole nine yards. We cannot hope to compete on that playing field. But I also see in us a true hunger and passion for God. A love for Him. A love to share His heart with the world. I see that in the things we do. And if we could get over our hang-ups and become really radical, then there's nothing we could do to keep people out of this building. We could paint polka dots on a wall, shine the lights right in your eyes. People would still come. We're not going to do that. If we were radical, we wouldn't need to worry that closing our doors just one Sunday might cause them to be closed forever. And that's why I really wanted to do this Home Church Sunday thing. I am trying to disrupt. I am applying discomfort to our preconceptions. I may not be able to change you before you leave today, but at least I can get you thinking about change. And by the grace of God, as you go through this week, the Holy Spirit will keep bringing it back. Am I radical? How would a radical handle this situation? Here's a person who needs prayer. Here's a person who needs my time and money and service. Business can wait. Duty can wait. Eternity is on the line for that person. And the love that I share with them right now might be the last chance they have to come to Christ. Will I let this pass me by? Will I get hung up on things like reputation? On the cover of your bulletin today is a picture of a woman. Does anybody know who that is? Kind of a famous picture. You get like a hundred bonus points if you can guess. [pause] It's okay. I hadn't heard about her until this year. What's that? It's not Joan of Arc. It's Mary Dyer. Yeah, oh, yeah, oh, Mary Dyer. She was one of the Boston Martyrs, in case you haven't heard of her. The Boston Martyrs were the first people in America executed for their faith. They were executed for being Quaker. You see, it was illegal to be Quaker in Massachusetts. In protest of that law, Mary Dyer traveled to Massachusetts and was put to death. She was radical. [pause] I suggested Home Church Sunday because I want this church to grow, both in maturity and in numbers. And I think that that truly will take us in that direction. That shouldn't offend you, it should excite you. For years, we tried all sorts of things to make us grow. And making sure we're here with the lights on every Sunday is a tactic that has brought us to where we are today. So I prayed and came up with this idea, and it seems logical, it seems scriptural. And for those of you who want to participate, we'll do it. And if you don't want to participate, not only are we not going to force you, we're going to be here to make sure you have a traditional Sunday service. Although it'll probably be open worship. [pause] Some of what I said here today might sound like I was attacking you, but nothing could be further from the truth. I just wanted to make sure you understood the reasons why we're doing this. And I hope you see the heart of this matter is not to offend or exclude, but because I, your interim pastor, feel like it would be a healthy exercise for our congregation. As far as I know, there's at least three people here who don't like the idea, but only one of them has actually come and told me to my face. Ironically, this inability to just tell me to my face is the very thing I'm trying to destroy through Home Church Sunday. If you have a problem with something I said, if you disagree with me, you should come to me and be telling me. I'm not talking about it behind my back and then sulking and saying, "Well, I just won't participate." That's mature. Let's learn how to have real relationships with one another, where we can talk about the things we disagree on without hurt feelings. The fact that people don't like my idea and still haven't said anything to me about it just proves it's something we need to work on. We need to get comfortable around each other. We need to learn to speak from the heart to one another, even if we disagree. We need to practice giving grace and forgiveness to those who put their foot in their mouth. We need to demand the same from others when we are the one eating foot. There are some valid concerns. What do we do with Sunday school? Do they meet here and then split up to the home churches or do they cancel for the week? My instinct says leave that up to the Sunday school teacher. There's also a question about what to do with the kids. Maybe the parents will all want to do their home church Sunday together so that all the kids can play together out in the yard. Or maybe the parents will engage in the forgotten art of teaching their kids to participate in worship time. Maybe someone wants to be here and provide drop-off children's church. These are things to discuss, but nothing that should stop us from proceeding. Christians all around the world, for the past 2000 years, have had to make the same decisions I'm sure we can manage. So we've rescheduled home search Sunday for the first Sunday of April. That's the Sunday after Easter. That gives us five weeks to prepare. If you want to host a home church, come let me know. There's a sign-up sheet out in the back. I want to be able to post the list of homes next week so that we can put next to it how many people they can hold, like how much parking they have, so that you can find a place big enough for you and your family. The host does not need to provide anything other than an open door and a place to sit. They don't need to provide snacks. They definitely shouldn't plan the service because we're going to let God do that. I'll be writing up a list on do's and don'ts so everyone participating knows what to expect and can come ready to participate. So if you've got extra chairs and an open heart, just come let me know or sign up on a table. Sometimes it's hard to let go of our old wine skins, but it's the only way God can fill us with his new wine. When we learn to let go of our safety nets and trust God, that's when he will make us radical, and that's when we will grow. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a God who loves us exactly how we are, and that we do not need to perform. We do not need to change to earn your love, that you just love us immediately when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We thank you and we bless you for that. But we also are so fortunate that you are a God who does not want us to stay in our situation, that you are a God who wants us to grow and to mature and to become more and to become everything that you created us to be. So God, please teach us to humbly listen to your spirit and to step out in faith and to live a life that proudly shines the glory of your Son Jesus into our workplaces and into our neighborhoods and into our families. Teach us how to be radical for you as we go throughout this week and through our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.