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Thank you that you are so good to us and so wonderful and merciful and kind. Thank you that you know just what we are doing. Ask now that as we learn through your word, as we try to understand that you will speak to our hearts and teach us of us to hear the things you are really trying to say to us today. In Jesus name, Amen. I have been reading a book lately, just finished it up, from a famous Christian author. And he is a smart man and he has a lot of really good things to say. But I took issue with a couple of ideas in his book. And one of those things I would like to talk about today because I think it is something we should all consider. The thing that he said that I disagreed with was, if the church you are in right now is not the place where you can be most effective at making disciples, you need to find a different church. Carmel Friends is not the place where you are most effective at making disciples go somewhere else. That is what he said and that is what I disagree with. Now I can see how, I mean from a pastor, that might sound like some vain attempt to keep attendance up. But it is not that. We don't keep track which of you are here this week and who is missing next week. I write my messages based on what I sense God is telling you to say and not what I think is going to attract a big crowd or offend the fewest people. I also have no problem with the idea that he is telling us to make disciples. I believe that each of us have a different role to play in the disciple making process. But I also believe that nobody is exempt from it. On some form or another, we are to all be participating in the activity of bringing in and building up people into the body of Christ. You truly have faith in Jesus. You really believe he is Lord of heaven and earth. You are convinced of your sin and you comprehend how every human, even you, is undeserving of that mercy and yet still has access to it. You are going to want to carry that good news to others. How each person does that will look different, but every Christian will take part in that if their faith is genuine. So making disciples is good and necessary. But the problem I have with telling people to keep church shopping until they find the one that fits them best is because this is a very Machiavellian way of looking at what is supposed to be your family. Jesus didn't die to make a bunch of employees. He died to add us to his family. The love and the relationships we have for one another are of the greatest importance. It is more important than the work to which he has called us. I am not diminishing the work to which he has called us, but it is ridiculous to sacrifice the family for the mission of bringing people into the family. I have to kind of guard my heart whenever I think about people who go to a town to plant a church in a town full of churches because I start asking myself, "Why not just add these people to the churches that are there?" Because there is a problem with those churches. Why not work on fixing the churches that are there? Why create more division? Back to the topic. One of my favorite Christian teachers is a man named Tim Chadduck. He is the pastor of a church called Reality LA, which is in Los Angeles, California. As you can imagine, any church that opens up in Los Angeles is one of two things, crazy off the deep end or firmly planted on the truth of Jesus. He is definitely a ladder. I download and listen to the podcasts of their sermons. If you ever want some really good podcasts to listen to, just get on iTunes and look for Reality LA and you will be blessed. Anyway, he likes to tell the story of when he first became a Christian pastor to Tim Chadduck. He was in his 20s, if I remember correctly. He had been living a really bad life. But he got saved. The very next Sunday, he just showed up at the first church he could find. He had come from a punk rock music background. He walks into this church. It's not unlike ours. A lot of very not punk rock people. Sorry if I'm offending any of you, but you're not. And yet he walked in and he looked around the room and he just started crying because his heart was so full of love for these people because these were his brothers and sisters in Christ. No matter what differences he might have had with these people before, no matter how uncomfortable he might have been around them before, he now had the most important thing in common with them. He had all been saved by the same God washed by the same blood and filled with the same spirit. And that made them family by the deepest and truest definition of the word. He saw people who were just as filthy in their sin as he had been and who had acknowledged that filth and repented of it and cast themselves on the mercy of Christ. And they had received new life through Jesus. Just like him. It was exactly the same. And so no matter what their shallow materialistic worldly differences were, they now had this most important thing in common. And so he fit right in at that church, even though he was on the outside superficially, a completely different looking person, he fit right in. This is what our church is, our family. Those who have been saved by God, brothers and sisters. And that's why I can't stand the idea of shopping around for a church where we feel the best. That's the way the world does things. And we're not to be of the world, but we're citizens of heaven. We are to meet together across race, gender, age, culture, hobbies, education, whatever other barriers that exist in the world that say, oh, I'm not going to hang out with that person because those are supposed to be gone in the body of us. And we are to demonstrate that by crossing those lines, we have something more valuable than all of that. So if you're a part of this church, stick with it. Make this your family. Don't just make it that place you go on Sunday morning, make it family. See it through. And some of you, when I say make it family, for you, family, you see them on Christmas, you try not to talk about anything that would start a fight. You get out of there as fast as you can. That's not what the kind of family this is supposed to be. It's supposed to be real family, family of love where we care for one another. You see someone who is different, remember what makes them the same, most important. That being said, I also have to point out that even though I feel this love and unity and brotherhood for the people of Carmel Friends, I also feel this unity with every other Christian. We are supposed to feel that same Christian brotherhood with Methodists and connection church and persecuted Christians around the world. The family we've been brought into is not just Carmel Friends, it's all the believers everywhere. So I must speak up against any level of devotion to this group if it causes neglect or detriment of the other Christians out there. It's okay to have a primary place of worship, that in your heart don't feel exclusionary or superior to any other groups of Christians that are meeting in the world. Nominations shouldn't be that big a deal. You should be able to walk into any other church and look around and see family and be comfortable there and have fellowship with them. It would be healthy for all of us to be involved with non-Carmel Friends Christians doing Christian activities. That would be healthy for us. There's nothing biblical about Christians cornering themselves off into their own little group under their own name. The biblical example you'll see at the start of every letter in the New Testament is the Church of God in Corinth or the Saints in Ephesus. The only divisions that Paul put in his letters is just what city you live in. We are to be part of the Saints in Carmel. So let's work on that mindset that includes all the Christians in this as our brothers and sisters. Anyways, if you're not supposed to go church hopping, what you do when you look around your church and you see problems? The answer? Fix those problems. This shouldn't be revolutionary, but sometimes it kind of feels like it is. If God has brought to your attention a deficiency in this body of believers, then he must want you to address that deficiency. That's why he's brought it to your attention. This is what we've been talking about recently about how each one of us is a member of the body of Christ. And while we're all part of the same body, we're all different parts with different functions. The spiritual gifts he gives us are for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, for we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, perfect man, the measure of the stature of the homes of Christ. Ephesians 4, 12, and 13. He gives us gifts to edify each other and build each other up. When God looks at the church, when he looks at Carmel friends and he sees problems, his solution is to go to someone else in that church, in this church, who's capable of addressing that problem and giving them the gifts and the equipment to fix and address those problems. That's how God is building us up. If certain people here aren't getting the teaching they need, then teach them. It doesn't have to be official, it doesn't have to be, "There's something in school you can make it," but needed a coffee shop and just talk. For if certain people in this church are being neglected, then begin to care for them. Step out and care for them. If you see someone here caught up in sin, then go to them in love and take them by the hand and lead them out of that scene. In James 4, 17, it says, "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sinned." God opens our eyes to these problems because he wants us to take care of them. If you see something that needs to be done or fixed around here, you are on or bound to do something about it. I think it's fitting that God gave me this on the continuing Sunday. We are commanded by God to love each other and to love this body. If you ignore a problem and you don't deal with it, that's unloving. God opens our eyes to the opportunities he wants us to take advantage of. And to fix this problem doesn't mean to whine and complain and threaten about it until someone else takes care of it. He wants you to take care of it. And maybe you can't do it completely by yourself and that's okay. You can find some other people to get them to help you, get some people excited or involved or giving. But let's move beyond the place where we just voice our displeasure during monthly meeting and hope it gets taken care of. Okay, so here are some of the things that we should be doing as a body. These areas are reflected in your bulletin. So as I'm talking about them, if you think an area that could use improvement, just write down a note. We're not going to collect these because that's not the point of this message. You write down the note of the problems you see and then you start planning that away and you can help address those problems. First of all, this church and every church is called to worship. You're called to worship God individually and corporately. Now obviously when you think of worship, you think singing. But worship is not only singing and not all singing is worship. Worship is someone pouring their heart out to God. And I know that in times of my life I've been guilty of singing on Sunday morning and yet not my heart is just cold and still. Which is what I mean when I say not every song is worship. Psalm 424 says we worship in spirit and truth. Romans 12.1 says to offer your body as a living sacrifice is an act of worship. So worship is anything that pours out your heart to God. We do so individually and corporately. Do you see a deficiency in this church in how we are pouring our hearts out to God? Do you see an opportunity we're not taking advantage of? Do you know someone whose mouth is making all the right sounds but their heart has gone cold? Is there a different way we could be worshiping? Another area that this church and every church is called to is growth. Growth and maturity as Christmas. As we study the scriptures, as we listen to good teaching and as we follow the promptings of the voice spirit, we put all that into practice and we find ourselves becoming more like the people God wants us to be. Do you see people not growing? Do you see people who aren't learning something important that they ought to know? Is there a message God put on your heart that you feel like you need to share? Do you see people hearing good teaching but not putting it into practice? Is someone here robbing another person of their opportunity to grow? Have you read a good Christian book lately that you think others would benefit from reading? Finally, this church is called to evangelism, just like every church. In the Great Commission, Matthew 28, we are called to make disciples of all nations. God wants us not to hide our light under a bushel but to be a city on a hill, calling all the people to the good news we have to know. Is our church fulfilling that commission? Are there people here missing out on opportunities to share the good news with those around them? Can you help them learn how to share that good news? If you don't know how, can you do some research and find some books and then teach it to others? Do you see opportunities where our church is missing out on bringing others into the faith? Are people just being saved or are they actually becoming disciples, followers of Jesus? We just found out that there is an event coming up called National Back to Church Sunday on September 15th. Would you like to see your friends and neighbors in here with you? Everything I've been discussing up to now has been concerning the spiritual activities of the church, but there's plenty more than that. Maybe you look around the building and you see some construction work needs to be done. Maybe you feel led to represent our church at a community gathering like Carmel Fest at the Farmer's Market. Maybe you have a heart to establish stronger bonds between this church and other churches, or this church and local ministries. Maybe there's a better way we can serve the schools that meet here with connection. I'm not really concerned if you see a better way to organize the closet, but things that will ultimately make our church more effective in accomplishing the work God has put before us. Maybe all you have right now about this church is complaints. Maybe you see the problem but not the solution. That's okay. Write down your complaint and then take it home and pray about it. Ask God for inspiration and leading into new ideas and opportunities to address those complaints. Really take it home and think about it. And make this church your family. If you go church shopping until you find a church, every church has problems. So if you keep church hopping until you find the one that doesn't have problems, all you've really done is found the one where you're blind to the problems and you've made yourself useless. So rather than making yourself useless, make yourself useful right here. Find opportunities and plug in. Build up this body with pride. Heavenly Father, thank You that You have made us a part of Your work, Your plan for this church, Your plan for this city. Please fill us now with Your Holy Spirit to inspire us and instruct us and lead us into the opportunities You've placed right in front of us. Help us to be creative in how we deal with those problems and those issues until we become the perfect reflection of the church that You want us to be in this town. Just be inspired by Jesus.