

Series: Becoming like Jesus and Living for Others

Together is Better

Romans 12:9-13

Sermon by Youth Pastor Hanna Arata

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, January 25, 2026

A reading from Romans 12:9-13: “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality,” the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Hanna: All right, you may be seated. Awesome. Thanks, Maya. Let’s go ahead and start with prayer. Lord, thank you for today. God, thank you for these people that have decided to come on a snowy, wintry day, God, that they have taken time out of their schedules to be here. Lord, we just take a minute to pause and reflect, God, that it is a gift that we get to gather, God, that it is a gift that we get to do this together, that we are not in this faith journey alone, God, that we have you, and we also have one another, God, so would you keep our hearts soft this morning as we receive your word? God, if there are things that come up for us that are hard when it comes to things like community, would you meet us in that? Would you let us know that you are in control, that you love us, that you are not done with us yet, and God, would that lead us to greater trust in you and greater boldness as we move your kingdom forward, God? It is in Jesus’ name that I pray, amen.

All right, so if I were to ask you on a scale of one to ten, how connected you feel in your life, with one being the least connected, ten being the most connected, what would you say? Because I am a student pastor, I want you guys to write this stuff down. I want you to have it in your mind. Write it on your phone, write it on a piece of paper, maybe in your journal, write down, if you were honest with yourself, how connected you feel. What thoughts and feelings come to mind as you try to rate it? Do you smile, and does your heart get warm thinking about your friends and your family? Is there a pit in your stomach? Are you feeling anger or being reminded of an old wound? Do you feel an ache or a longing in your chest? Maybe a name came up for you. Does it bring up anxiety, reminding you of that one relationship that needs repentance and forgiveness? Does it remind you of a breakup or a friendship ending? Does it feel like something you used to have, but you do not have anymore? Is there grief there when you think of connection? On that same piece of paper, on that same note, I want you to write any thoughts or feelings that come up for you. I think the word “connected,” is really confusing for me, because in some ways, we are more connected than ever. We have talked about this before. I can FaceTime my family in Texas, who are watching online right now. I can talk to my friends who live in Sweden. I can keep up on my Instagram feed with all the people I went to college with that I have not talked to in six years, and I can know where they live, who they are married to, how many kids they have, and I can feel a sense of connection there, and so we have all these opportunities to connect with other people, but I think for a lot of us, we do not actually feel a deeper connection in our daily lives as we go to work and come home and spend time with friends, and so it is this weird thing where we are connected to people that are far away, but when they are right in front of us, we struggle a little bit.

Something I noticed in college was that in America, we have this really strange thing that we do, where you see someone you know, and you are walking past each other, in the hall, outside, in the parking lot, wherever, and you say, “How are you?” but it is like as you are walking past them. Has anyone else experienced this before? Yes, it is super normal. I am from the South too, so it is super prevalent in the South, and I noticed that we do that for the first time when I was in college, and there was a boy that lived on a different hall than me that I knew, and he would say that to me every day, but we never actually had a conversation. I would not say that we were friends. He just would always say, “How are you?” and then move on, and that is fine. We all do that, but I noticed for the first time when I was 18, I was like, “That is weird. Why on earth would we ask a question if we have literally zero intent of listening to the answer?” It is like, “how are you,” has become synonymous with “hello.” It is more of a greeting. It is not really a bid for connection with another person. I think if we are honest, if we were to do that, which happens, it is totally fine, but if that were to happen, and the person that you said, “How are you?” to were to stop and go, “Actually, my depression is super bad right now, and I have actually had the worst week of my life,” you would probably feel a little taken aback, because you are like, “That’s not what we are doing here. Oh no, you misread the situation,” and maybe you would say, “Oh, I’m sorry, my bad. I have to go, but I hope you have a better day,” and it is the most awkward thing in the entire world, but why is that? Why do we do that? I think in a lot of ways, casual, surface-level connection feels a little bit easier for us. We like being nice, even if it means that we are not honest, because that kind of honesty, that is vulnerable. No one wants to hear about that.

The fact of the matter is that we love our independence. We love friendly acquaintances. We love telling people, “I’m good” on the worst day ever when our lives are falling apart, because we do not want to burden anyone or make anyone uncomfortable. We do not know how they will respond, and so we just say, “I’m good,” and when we receive that answer from other people, we are fine with it, because it does not actually require anything of us to sit with that person, and to sit across from someone and look them in the eye feels really intimidating. To tell them how we’re actually doing is really strange and unfamiliar. So instead, we stay on the surface, because if we go and stay there instead of going deeper, then we can leave whenever we want. We can have minimal investment. If we feel a little bit too exposed, or something happens that we do not like, we can just say, “I am just going to cut and run. I will go somewhere else,” and in the church, we are totally on board with smiling at people, sitting next to them on a Sunday. We will even chat during greeting time, and those things are awesome. We want to do those things, but at the same time, we come late to service. We sit in the back, we hear the message, and then we leave before the final song ends so we can beat the brunch rush, when really, we just really hate mingling.

Trust me, mingling is hard for me too, even as an extrovert, and I want to be careful here, because I understand that we are an intergenerational church. Sometimes the kids are going crazy. Sometimes you overslept. Sometimes you have to leave early, because you have a big test tomorrow, which I understand. I am in seminary. Or you have a family commitment. Those things are all totally understandable and okay, and there is no shame in that, but I would venture to guess that sometimes we do that because we want to talk to as few people as possible. Have you ever felt that way? We are more comfortable being anonymous than being known, and we can actually live like that for a while, until life falls apart.

In this era of technological connection and simultaneous loneliness, we need Paul's message from Scripture more than ever, because the gospel wasn't just meant to reconcile us to God, but to each other. We were made to be with each other, because the church was never meant to be a crowd or an audience of consumers. In scripture, it was actually a family. That's why in scripture all over, they say, "brother, sister." It was a family, a community, a place where you could be known, cared for, challenged, prayed over, a place where you could disagree and reconcile, coming back together in forgiveness, a place where you could share meals and resources, and you knew the needs of the people around you, because you did real life together. That is what we were made for. We were never meant to go through this journey in faith alone, and we need the help of the Holy Spirit to live this real, honest, life-giving community God created us for, and so today, I want to walk us through the text that Maya read for us to show you how we can cultivate this kind of community in 2026 at Waterstone through three kinds of devotion, devotion to one another, devotion to faith, and devotion to hospitality, but first I want to give you some context.

So, today we are in Romans 12, which is the letter that Paul wrote to the Roman church, and this church was made-up of both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, and they had been operating together for a little while when Roman Emperor Claudius actually expelled the Jews and the Jewish Christians from Rome. They were not allowed to come back into Rome, and so they were exiled for a few years, and then five years after that, they were allowed to return, but when they returned, the Gentiles had been running the show for a bit, and so the church looked really different. It felt a lot less Jewish and a lot more unfamiliar, so by the time Paul was writing this letter to them, the Roman church was divided and constantly arguing about what it meant to be a Christian. Paul's goal with this last section of his letter, chapters 12 through 16, the last chunk of his letter, was meant to unify the church, to encourage them and us that the Christians in that time and now are not called to unity because it is easy, but to show the world a glimpse of the kingdom of God, a community united under one gospel, one Savior, one Lord.

So, what is that kingdom, that community, supposed to look like? Verses 9 and 10 of our passage today say this: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." As I was studying for this sermon today, I was looking in one of my seminary textbooks, and I really loved how the authors framed Romans 12:9 through 13:14. They wrote that this section begins with love, and it ends with loving in light of the nearness to the end. That means that this passage was written with urgency. We have to remember that when Paul wrote his letters, the church was convinced that Jesus was coming back any time now. They were just waiting, and it changed the way they lived. They understood that how they lived and loved and shared the gospel mattered, because Jesus could really come back tomorrow, and I want to draw our attention to this word, "devoted." What does it mean to be devoted? In the Greek, the word is *philostorgoi*, which means to love dearly, be tenderly affectionate. I absolutely love this definition of devotion. There's an intimacy there, isn't there? It feels really personal and close. It feels sincere and honest. It is that kind of love that is deeply rooted and is completely and utterly invested in the object of devotion.

Okay, who here has seen the Disney movie "Miracle on Ice?" Anyone, yeah, about the 1980 U.S. men's Olympic hockey team? Well, it stars Kurt Russell. It is a fantastic movie. You should all go watch it. That's your homework if you haven't seen it. It is so good, but so it is about the USA men's hockey team, and it is a true story of in 1980, when they had to band together, and then they wanted to defeat the

Soviet team. Everyone talks about the Miracle on Ice speech, like the big locker room moment of that movie, because it is super motivating and inspirational, but my favorite scene actually comes way before that. My favorite scene is near the beginning. All these people have been brought together from all these different teams to play for Team USA for the Olympics, and they have just lost a game, and the coach, Herb Brooks, has them stay on the ice. He will not let them go home and go rest. They have just played a full game of professional hockey. They are all exhausted, and he says, “Get on the goal line,” and he makes them do conditioning while people are still in the stands leaving. The fans are like, “What is going on over there?” and he says, “Get on the line. We are doing laps.” So, they run a lap and come back on the ice, and then every time they get back, he asks one of the people on the team to say their name and whom they play for. So, someone says, “I am Jim Smith, and I play for Boston University.” “Do another one,” so they run another lap, come back, and this repeats over and over and over again until it is late in the night. They are falling over, can’t breathe, exhausted, and the coach says, “again,” and the assistant coach is like, “I really do not want to blow this whistle. These guys are falling over. We have to stop,” and the coach says, “Again,” and right before the assistant coach blows the whistle, one of the players speaks up, and he says his name, and he says where he is from, and he says, “United States of America. That is who I play for,” and then the coach says, “You can all go home.” It was this really beautiful scene to me, and I think it relates to what we are talking about today, because the players had urgency. They wanted to win. They wanted to beat all of the teams. They wanted to get the gold medal, and they knew they had to play together, but it was only after they learned that they were united under the team of Team USA, that they had actually left behind their old identity, and they had taken on this new identity for such a time as this. It was only then that they learned that they are actually a community and that they need to be a real team that is united under one banner. When they became devoted to one another, it changed everything.

I believe that our God has called us to the hard work of devotion, of doing real life with other people, because we are a united community, not under the United States of America, but under Jesus Christ. When we as a church are called to be devoted to one another, it means that we have to get close enough to people to really see them and to let them see us. We have to know their stories. We have to know their past. We have to know their dreams, their fears, their anxieties, the things that keep them up at night, because when we actually let our faith collide with our real, lived lives and with other people around us, we can be sharpened and challenged and convicted and encouraged and prayed for and seen for who we are. When we are devoted to one another, we choose to step with not one, but both feet into the life of another person and say, “I am going to walk with you.”

The thing about devotion is that it is a two-way street, but many people struggle with either one side or the other. For some of us, being devoted to other people feels hard. Maybe your life is really chaotic, and you are just trying to keep things afloat, because the thing is, connection to other people in community is actually really inconvenient most of the time. We have to make space. It doesn’t just happen, and it interrupts our plans, and sometimes we have so much going on in our own lives that actually being connected to someone outside of that immediate urgency feels like too much, but for others of us, having someone show us devotion feels hard. From what I have observed in my short time here at Waterstone is that we love loving people. We love loving God. We are devoted in so many ways. We are happy to be here faithfully every Sunday to serve on a service team. We are happy to show up and be there for other

people, and so a lot of us, including me, struggle not to devote ourselves to others, but actually to receive devotion, and we struggle to let it go both ways and to be deeply known and deeply loved by another believer. C.S. Lewis has this really beautiful quote from his book, “The Four Loves.” It says, “To love at all is to be vulnerable.” C.S. Lewis hits on the part of love that feels the hardest for most of us, which is vulnerability, letting other people close enough so they can actually see past the parts of you that feel the most presentable, into what is underneath.

I want you guys to know that this is something that I am actively working through right now in my walk with the Lord. I have been here for two and a half years, which is a very important time frame for me, and it might seem random to you, but the Lord brought to my attention recently, I think about a month ago, that two and a half years is the longest I have ever been at a church since I graduated high school eleven years ago. Two and a half years, and then it will be two and a half years in February, next month for me, and that was a really interesting thing, because I felt like I have been at these places for so much longer, but what it brought to my attention was that for me, and maybe this timeline looks a little bit different for you, but in my first two years, at every church, I looked back, and this is true at every church, I would, in those first two years, it felt very easy to present and package myself as the most lovable version, the most palatable, the easiest to be friends with, the happiest version of me. I could just package it up and give it to people and show just enough vulnerability that no one thought anything about it. Unfortunately, I can do that pretty well, but what I realized is that it is after that two-year mark for me that I began to realize that every time I was at a church after the two years, I started to recognize that people actually perceived me. People not only knew my name, but they knew that I drank black coffee, that they knew that I was from Texas, that they knew what I looked like when I was stressed, or when I was having a really good day. They knew when to check on me, and I’ve been perceived by the staffs I’ve worked with.

Here at Waterstone, the staff has seen me through some really hard seasons, and they know when I am not okay. They have prayed with me, and we have been through a lot together, and when I have historically stayed only at one place for two and a half years, that is fine, because there is some part of me in the back of my mind that says, “I am actually on my way out, so it is okay. I can start over somewhere new. I do not have to go really in too deep with these people,” but now I am entering a new territory, because it will be two and a half years in February, and I am not planning on going anywhere, which is really nice. It feels good not to be moving again. At the same time, though, it is scary, because now the Lord is asking me to be known, because I love knowing other people. That is why I love student ministry. It is the best, but to be known, that is harder for me, and maybe again, this happens at a different timeline for you. Maybe it is six months, or maybe it is ten years, but at some point, the Lord will be prompting us, each of us, to move from acquaintance and nice hellos to actual deep community.

Being perceived feels scary, because we realize that we are actually not as good at hiding ourselves as we thought we were, and it can feel really intimidating, but being perceived is the first step of being truly known and experiencing the devotion that God offers to us, and I want you to know that it does not have to start with some big overhaul of your life. For me, devotion to one another looks like starting with letting my friends here at Waterstone know me, to know the messy parts of my story and not always have to be a pastor, but to just be Hanna.

The Lord has given me this little group of women here at Waterstone who I like to refer to, and we have a group chat name. It is the Brunch-Brunch, and it is named that because, you guessed it, we love brunch so much that we had to say it twice. We really love brunch, and we meet up once a month to gather together. We make food together, and we sit, and we pray, and it has been this really sweet space, to pray together, cry together, and do life, but I want to be realistic, too. Being known is not always just about being vulnerable. It is hard work, because it requires trust. It requires humility and forgiveness and disagreements and reconciliation when we mess up, or when someone breaks our trust. The thing about community and taking that courageous step forward is that you take your heart, and you give it to someone else, and you say, "Please do not break it. Please do not give me another reason to not do this again."

That is so real for so many of us, but even Jesus was hurt by his community. He had twelve best friends. One of them betrayed Him, and the other denied even knowing Him three times. It is the moment for us when we have to make a choice. We can either cut and run, start the process over some-where new, or we can pull back, and the third option is that we can try again, and trying again does not mean that you pretend that you were not hurt, that you do not need time to heal, but it means that you do not give up, because Jesus did not give up on the church, so neither can we. It means that you keep asking God to bring you the kind of community where you can be vulnerable, cared for, and prayed over, where you can be sanctified and ask for help and actually have people who will actually show up for you in your moment of need. Friends, I believe that the Lord wants to provide that for you today, if you do not have it.

The first step toward this kind of community that we are talking about is devotion to one another, and the second is faith. Let's read our next couple of verses. It says, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." So, we are going to try an activity together, and I want you to close your eyes, and I want you to think back to that moment when you first gave your life to Christ. Or maybe you have been in church for a long time, and it was the time that God actually revealed Himself to you in a fresh way, where you were saying, "It is not my family's faith. It is mine." Let it fill you up. Where were you? How old were you? What were you doing? Who were you with? How did you feel? Take a second.

Okay, you can open your eyes. Some of us have been in church for a long time, me included, and it can be easy for us to forget that first time, that first moment, but do you remember how free you felt? Do you remember the excitement you felt to share the gospel with other people? Paul's instruction here is to not just have spiritual fervor generally, but also to keep it, which means it takes work after the initial experience, but what is so beautiful about these things that Paul is asking of his church is that he did not give these to individual people. He gave them to a community, and so if you do not feel that same initial joy and zeal right now in your faith journey, I want you to know that you are not alone. Sometimes life beats you down, and it can be easy to believe that the spiritual fervor, being devoted to your faith is not worth it with how hard life is, and it can feel like this joke or impossible to-do list. Like, I can't do all of this, but I think a lot of that comes because we try to do verses 11 and 12 before we do 9 and 10. We try to do the joy and the zeal and the service and the patience without the community part, and that is when things get harder, and we burn out, because it turns out the order actually matters.

This week, as I was preparing for my message, it seemed like quite literally everything was keeping me from writing this sermon. I had approximately five million meetings, various friends and students in

need of care. We had 24-hour prayer last weekend and a student ministry to run, and all of that on top of writing a sermon, and as I was lamenting to my best friend, yesterday, or the day before, on Friday, about how a little time I had had to write my sermon, she said, “Well, it seems like instead the Lord just gave you a crash course on community in every possible way,” and that was humbling, to say the least. I was talking to her in the car, and so on my drive, I was talking to her, and I got to my friend’s house. We were getting together for a small get-together with our friends, who had not seen each other in a while. We ate dinner, we played games, we caught up about Christmas and the holidays and the New Year, and then at the end of the night, one of our friends asked if we could just pray together over each other, and there were a couple of people in particular we wanted to pray over who had really been struggling. One of them has been dealing with a lot of health issues that are really frustrating and have been keeping her from living her life, and she really is at the end of herself, and so one of our friends asked if we could lay hands on her, and she said, “Yeah, that is okay.” So, we all came around her, laid hands on her, and we prayed. We prayed and we wept. We were quiet. We lamented, and we held her right in the middle of a living room on a Friday night.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked his best friends to pray for Him as He pleaded with God about his coming crucifixion. He modeled for us what devotion to our faith looks like, and so here, Paul is telling the Roman church that in order to keep their devotion to their faith, they are going to need each other, because the reality is, sometimes you need to borrow faith from someone else when your faith feels frail. We cannot do this on our own. We need each other so that we can pray for one another in faith, that God will restore our zeal, our desire to serve, and our joy, and so once we have devotion to one another and devotion to our faith and community, it is only then that we can live for others through hospitality.

Our last verse of the day is, “Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” What you need to know is that hospitality in the ancient world meant a whole lot more than it does here in the U.S. in 2026. You can get a degree in hospitality. Some of us in this room might have one, and it means that you work for a hotel, you work at restaurants. Maybe that is what comes to mind for you. Maybe you think of frantically cleaning the house before you have friends over, which is true at my house for sure. Maybe it reminds you of this past Christmas, when your in-laws were staying with you for a little too long, and you wanted to rip your hair out, and you had to sleep for the next week after just to recover, but in the ancient world, hospitality was a little bit deeper than that, a lot deeper.

In ancient Israel, hospitality was not an option. It was actually your duty to the community. It was a way of life. It was not something you could just do when you had capacity or the money to do it. You just did it, and if you did not, it was actually a huge point of contention and conflict, because in that culture, that was unacceptable if you did not provide hospitality. When you hosted someone, you would have your servant wash the person’s feet as a sign of respect, and then you would feed, clothe, and protect that person as long as they were staying with you, and it was not just a couple of days. It was usually weeks or months at a time. People would house complete strangers and welcome them into the community, and when Jesus went into people’s homes, like He did with Zacchaeus or Mary and Martha, like we talked about last week, it was seen as an honor to the host, and they would prepare everything with intentionality and care, because someone of importance was seeking community with them, and in this space, they would do life together.

Strangers would become friends. They became part of the family. They shared what they had and trusted that they would have enough, or that their neighbors would provide for what they did not have, and everything would work out, and that was possible because of the culture they were in.

If you have not noticed, we are in a very different culture here in America in 2026. We run a million miles an hour. We are skeptical of strangers. Stranger danger is a very real thing, and for a good reason, I think, in a lot of ways, and going into homes is actually less and less common. We prefer a third space, like a coffee shop or the church or other places, and those things are fine, but for us, I think a lot of times hosting feels exhausting or only for special occasions. We do it once or twice a year, and it is inconvenient. It is not a way of life. It is actually a pause from your life, where then you host other people. The thing is, we as believers are called to be devoted to hospitality, and I will tell you right now, it is a radical thing to be devoted to hospitality, because it is costly, especially in our culture, but what we have been saying this whole time is that devotion takes work, so how can we be devoted to hospitality?

Last semester, after a Sunday morning, two of my high school students came up to me, and they shared the coolest story. They sat in the student section, as they do every week. They worshiped so beautifully, as they do every week, and at some point during the service, an older couple came up to them and said, “We saw you worshipping. Can you pray for us?” If that is not intergenerational church, I do not know what is, and so these two high school boys said, “Okay,” and they prayed over an older couple in our congregation. Friends, that is hospitality. Hospitality is not passive. It is how we can be on mission as a church. Hospitality is the piece of community building where we can provide the community that we crave by providing it for someone else.

So, I like to think of hospitality in terms of chairs, and that might seem a little odd, but I will explain. The first thing is that it is noticing where your chair is. Hospitality is coming into the worship center, looking around, and saying, “Who is around me? Do I know their name? Do I recognize the faces around me? Can I get to know them a little bit better?” It is pulling up a chair. It is coming to church a few minutes early, looking out for the people that are alone or that are new or look lost and do not know where to find the kids’ ministry or the bathroom, and saying, “Hey, are you new? Come sit next to me.” It is recognizing when people are missing from their chair. When you see somebody that you worship alongside that is not there, it is reaching out to them if you have their contact information, or the next time that they are in church, you say, “Hey, I missed you. I recognized that you were not here.” It is adding your chair. It is actually inviting people into your home to either start or join a small group, as we talked about earlier, in the announcements. It is getting out of your chair. Hospitality is joining a service team and contributing to the mission and vision of your local church. It is understanding that you have God-given gifts to offer the body of Christ.

God has given every single person in this room gifts. You might not know what they are yet, but you have them. It is finding belonging and cultivating an environment where people can come into our building and experience the love we have to offer in a beautiful, unique way, and it is praying for the courage to go out of this building and share the gospel with people who are not here and invite them in to be part of our community. When we have experienced community in this way that God designed for us, it motivates us to bring other people into it. Hospitality is the extension of love that we have experienced in community, from devotion to one another and devotion to our faith that then outpours into sharing it with

others. So, our value this week is, “together is better.” We choose relationships over results. We serve, suffer, celebrate, and dream together. We resist the pressure to perform and instead build a culture of belonging, where people are seen, known, and valued, not just for what they do, but for who they are.

If you have spent any more time than five minutes with me, that I have a favorite game, and it is called We Are not Really Strangers. If you are a student in our student ministry, you know that I love this game, and I love it because it has changed my life, and it was made by a young woman a few years ago who really was craving deeper connection with other people. She is not a believer, but she just made a list of intentional questions for people to use, and the goal of the game is that you could play with a complete stranger or your best friend, your spouse, your family, someone that you want to get to know better, and you, the goal of the game is that you play, and then you leave feeling closer to that person, because we are not really strangers. That is the goal, and when you get the game, inside there is a handwritten note from the creator that says, “I have found that there are two ways to play this game. One, play safe. Two, play to grow. The second is how you win.”

So, what if, what if in 2026, this was the year you started to seek community in a new way? What if you became the kind, what if we became the kind of church where people were not afraid of being known? What if this year you decided to show up on mission, to prove that together really was better? What if our Spirit-led, devoted community were what drew people in and showed the love of Jesus in such an overwhelming way that people could not help but be part of it? What if we were bold enough to go first in vulnerability and experience the healing that can only come from deep healing community that is rooted in Jesus Christ? So, I want you to take a moment and look at whatever number you wrote down at the beginning of the sermon, and if you are in those first few numbers, if you are on the low end, my challenge for you this week is this. How could you take one courageous step into community today? If you are in that higher range, maybe you have really good community right now. That is fantastic. How might God be inviting you to be on mission here to help others feel that community too? I can’t promise that this is going to be an easy process. I can actually guarantee that it will not be, but what I can tell you is that living this way will be worth it. Could you stand, and we will pray together?

Lord, I pray over your people. Thank you for the fact that you created us for community, for love, not to keep it to ourselves, but to give it to other people in the way you so willingly gave it to us. You are the ultimate example of community, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in perfect unity with one another. You showed us what costly, sacrificial love looked like through your Son, so that we might be reunited with you forever in perfect relationship. Would you give us courage today, Lord? We need your Holy Spirit to accomplish any of this. We need your power and your strength. We need your healing for the ways we have been wounded by others, and I pray that you would reveal to us that one step you want us to make. Would we not wait till tomorrow? Would we start today? Would you make Waterstone a church that is marked by your love and is so overwhelming that it flows into everything we do? We love you. Would you help us to live that love out in such powerful ways that push your kingdom forward? In the name of Jesus, I pray, amen.

Let’s worship together. I wanted to ask you guys to hold your hands out as a sign of receiving, to give you a benediction. May we as Waterstone Church be a church that is overwhelmed by the love of God, and with that overflow into our devotion to one another, to the faith, and to hospitality, God, would

you transform us? Would you help us to see you more clearly? Would you give us new eyes to see the ways that you want us to grow and receive love? God, we love you. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen. You may go in peace.

42:44 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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