

Canceled
A Roadmap for Living in Exile
How To BE His Church
1 Peter 1:22-2:1

Intro: Very seldom, if ever, do people go through intense hard things together and relationally come out the same way they went in. Think about all the movies where a man and woman who didn't even really know each other, end up going through some crazy trial together and as a result fall in love and get married. The list of movies is a mile long!

However, the opposite is true as well. You rarely if ever see a movie where a man and woman go through a terrible situation together and end up hating one another, but all of us can likely share a story of people we know who ended up like that or possibly even a story of yourself.

Point is, in the crucible of trials or persecution people will end up divided and hating one another, or more deeply loving one another. Therefore, as Peter writes to these believers in Asia Minor, these followers of Christ who have been exiled as result; these lovers of Jesus who are going through various trials; it's no wonder he includes very specific things in his letter that have to do with how they love one another. The last thing Peter wants to hear is that these believers ended up turning away from one another as they served Christ! So Peter writes,

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (1 Peter 1:22-2:1)

"In vs 2 and 14 Peter has already spoken of the place of obedience in the Christian life. As a response to the proclamation and hearing of the truth, it has a twofold effect: it purifies the soul from the sins of the past and it develops a genuine love for other believers which is not a piece of play-acting. The reality of this love should be seen in its intensity and depth. Such love is prompted by the fact that Christians share a new birth made available by the *living and enduring word of God*. This regenerating word is declared when the gospel is preached."¹

Prop: 1 Peter 1:22-2:1 gives three commands to Christians on how they should love one another in the church.

¹ Wheaton, D. H. (1994). [1 Peter](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1375). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

The 1st command is in verse 22. Peter writes,

- A. **22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,**
- B. It's important to understand that the Bible doesn't say mankind is incapable of doing any good, but rather that mankind is born incapable of not staining any good he can produce! In the first chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul was explaining the condition of mankind. It's not an order of events but rather clarification of the depravity of the human heart that results from not living submitted to God!
- C. **28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:28-32)**
- D. We are all born into that reality and as such we stand before God, and each other, with filthy retched hearts! Even our greatest works of good are stained by the stench of selfish hearts; to such an extent that even the religious things we do to try and remove the stain and purify ourselves only results in smearing the stain to other corners of our life!
- E. Have you ever seen food on your shirt then reached to wipe it off with your hands, only to realize it was on your hand in the first place, therefore the more you wiped with your hand to clean the small food stain the more food got smeared across your shirt! This is the case of our religious efforts to "purify ourselves" and as such rid ourselves of the ugly depravity we see in our lives every time we look in the mirror.
- F. So how then did these people purify themselves?
- G. **Verse 22 has two foundational principles that "justify" the command, that is, provide their logical explanation and obligatory expectation.**

The 1st foundational principle is seen in this phrase,

- 1. **"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth"**
 - a. This phrase speaks to the condition of every believer this side of their salvation, which is literally the saved side of their regeneration.

- b. It's not pointing to an ability to "purify" us through some sort of religious action or statement, but rather, what happens when we surrender our lives to Christ (AKA faith in Christ)! God responds to our faith, as weak as it is, by applying the blood of Christ to our lives! Listen to the Scriptures,
- c. **5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, (Romans 1:5)**
- d. **26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26)**
- e. So, our obedience to Him is to live in faithful submission to Him. The phrases are doctrinally synonymous. It is this faith, that is always flawed, that God applies the blood of His son and purifies our souls!
- f. **19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)**
- g. **9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)**
- h. Be sure to understand, that our faith doesn't purify us, but rather God responds to our weak and flawed faith (which is our obedient response to the truth!) by setting us apart to Himself and purifying us of dead works (Hebrews 9:13-14). We are purified and as such made worthy of God because of Christ's work ("sprinkled with blood" – 1 Peter 1:2) through faith.

The second foundational principle is what this purification is, in part, for. Peter writes,

- 2. **22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love,**
 - a. The most obvious point being, because our hearts are being purified by the work of Christ in our life, we now can love all who in are in Christ as

brothers. It is both a natural product of His work and an obligatory expectation. But there is a deeper and very important point within this work that Kistemaker & Hendriksen noted,

- b. “Peter implies that the readers have accepted the teachings of the gospel in faith. In a different and earlier context, when he addressed the Council of Jerusalem, Peter spoke on behalf of Gentile Christians and said,”² 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)**
- c. So, what has brought us together is not being born as genetic descendants of Abraham, nor religious practices prescribed in the Old Testament, none of which purified any of us and made us worthy of God. But rather, what brought us together is the fact that the response of faith by a Jew to the person and work of Christ bears the same results as the response of faith by the pagan Gentile! Both are equally purified and made sons and daughters of God and as such brothers and sisters for all eternity! Paul explains it this way in his letter to the church at Ephesus,
- d. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:13-22)**
- e. It’s important to understand that under the Old Testament Law Gentiles who converted to Judaism were still not treated as brothers. They were very much second-class citizens in the life of Israel. But Christ fulfilled and replaced the Covenant God made with Moses with a new and

² Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude*](#) (Vol. 16, p. 71). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

greater Covenant, and this included bringing together all who are in Him, regardless of their ethnic background and previous religion, and made them an actual real and equal eternal family! There is now no reason to not sincerely love another Christian as a true equal in the family, a true brother or sister, because all of us have been equally purified, saved and adopted by the same blood, by the same work of regeneration, by the same sealing of the Spirit through the same response – faith!

3. Therefore, because we are purified and truly equally family, Peter then asserts this obvious command!

H. 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

1. First, you can't miss the phrase, "pure heart." Peter is saying you guys need to put every effort possible into loving one another and you don't need to be restrained by any sense of superiority over each other that leaves you holding back your effort, nor with any selfish desire that's motivated to not give and support life in each other but rather to receive it. You need to love from the pure hearts that God has given you!
2. But more importantly I want you to catch the effort of this love. Listen to what two commentators wrote concerning verse 22.
3. **"This love is to be expressed not shallowly but "deeply" ... "at full stretch" or "in an all-out manner, with an intense strain"."**³
4. **"It denotes supreme effort, lit. 'with every muscle strained'."**⁴

In other words, the 1st command Peter gives to the church is to ...

(1) Put significant effort into loving one another as family! (1:22)

- A. I can't help but pick on my middle daughter a little here. When Ada was little, we challenged her to do some sit ups. Now Ada has always been a small frame thin girl, the kind of person you would look at and assume could do a bunch of sit ups. But to our surprise and painful observation, when she tried to do a sit up, we thought her muscles had fallen asleep, you know, like your arm does if you sleep on it the wrong way. I literally don't have words to explain what we witnessed.

³ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Wheaton, D. H. (1994). [1 Peter](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1375). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

She couldn't do one sit up. Her body seemed to be shot full of Novocain or something! Now there was no way possible she wasn't strong enough, and we knew that, which made it more painful for us to try and coach her on how to do a sit up. The problem was not her strength, the problem was she had no concept of how to engage those muscles. She had no idea how to put forth the effort! We had to teach her how to strain her muscles to pull herself up off the floor! I will say she finally got it and ironically one of her favorite things to do now is tumbling, she's even shown some interest in working out.

- B. The point I'm making is this; what we were trying to teach Ada to do with her muscles that day is what Peter is telling us to do with our lives towards one another in the church. He is telling the people in these five churches to love each other with an intentionality and intensity that causes you to strain with effort to help one other grow up in the faith and live life! Peter is telling them to be "all in" which means to be unrestrained and fully engaged with every possible effort.
- C. Sadly, the way we love one another in the modern church resembles how Ada first tried to do a sit up. She just kind of lifted her head up and wondered when she would suddenly rise towards her knees. For far too many people in the American church, that's the extent of their involvement in lives of their eternal family! They lift their heads up just enough to see what's going on but then never put forth the effort and strain of actually loving others!
- D. This leads us to Peter's 2nd command.

The 2nd command Peter gives to the church is to

(2) Love each other with a heart that refuses to quit. - (1:23-24)

- A. Now this command is not stated directly, but rather its implied via the rationalization Peter gives on why we need to put forth every effort, and as such strain ourselves to love each other and do so with pure motives. Peter uses some massively inspiring imagery to make his point.
- B. **22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 SINCE you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.**
- C. He's saying to never stop loving each other earnestly and from a pure heart because you were literally reborn to be people who can't quit!
- D. Look at the metaphors he uses,

E. since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable,

1. The very substance that you were made out of when the Holy Spirit rebirthed you as a child of God is not something that dies, but something that never dies! Kistemaker and Hendriksen shed great light on this when they wrote,

2. "The seed is God's divine nature that resides within the child of God."⁵

3. But Peter then drives this truth even deeper with the next phrase. Peter writes,

F. 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God

1. "Living" – its real, productive and active.
2. "Abiding" – its relational, connected and residential.
3. "Word of God" – His promises, explanations, commandments, affirmations and most importantly the one who is the eternal Logos and eternal Son of God! The Word preached to us is the Good News not of a religious method but of the Divine Savior! Listen to what the Apostle John said of Jesus,
4. **1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ... 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)**
5. To illustrate this further Peter cites Isaiah 40:6-8. He writes,

G. 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1. Everything in this world perishes. Every glory and beauty in this world fades. Every success fades. Every empire fades. It is a fundamental law of the universe. Nothing can be sustained.

⁵ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Vol. 16, pp. 72–73). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

2. BUT we are not made of what this world is made of! We were reborn of what is not of this world! You were made of what doesn't perish and what can't quit! I can't help but read you the words of Charles Spurgeon on this passage.

3. **"The grass withers and the flower falls off." Such is mortal life. We are not living; we are dying. We begin to breathe, and we make the number of our breaths the less. Our pulse is "beating funeral marches to the grave." The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass, and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that you are mortal, for you are born of woman. Your first birth gave you life and death together."**⁶

4. **"But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now, the gospel is of use to us because it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is superhuman, divine, and spiritual. In its conception it was of God. Its great gift, even the Savior, is a divine gift, and all its teachings are full of deity. If you believe a gospel that you have thought out for yourself, or a philosophical gospel that comes from the brain of man, it is of the flesh, and will wither, and you will die and be lost through trusting in it. The only word that can bless you and be a seed in your soul must be the living and incorruptible word of the eternal Spirit."**⁷

- H. So, the substance and even the process that made us to be children of God is imperishable! Everything about what rebirths us, regenerates us, and adopts us into the household of God is imperishable and incorruptible because it's all Him!
- I. Therefore, because what brought you into God's family is eternal, the relationships you have in this family are eternal, and as such, you have literally no grounds for ever quitting on each other! You have no relational reason to jump tracks and not put this kind of effort into loving one another; not just in the general body of Christ, but specifically Peter is speaking about the people right there in their local church!
- J. Remember, in the New Testament era there was only one church per town, so we have certainly complicated this command at this point. But, nonetheless, the principle is certainly the same, wherever the Lord leads you to practically live out your life with the body of Christ (AKA Local Church), you are to love people in that church with everything you got until God calls you somewhere else! We don't quit on each other, we don't fade away, because we are not made to do so!

⁶ Spurgeon, C. (2014). [*Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*](#). (E. Ritzema & J. Strong, Eds.) (1 Pe 1:24). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁷ Spurgeon, C. (2014). [*Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*](#). (E. Ritzema & J. Strong, Eds.) (1 Pe 1:25). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

We have been reborn with a substance that doesn't fade away and it doesn't quit! Even when God called people like Peter and Paul away from one local church to go to another local church, they still loved them with every effort they could practically give them.

The 3rd command Peter gives to the church is to ...

(3) Make no room for sinful actions or attitudes towards others. (2:1)

A. **1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.**

B. **“Peter does not tell his readers to fight against these evils but to lay them aside as a garment and to get rid of them.”⁸**

C. He lists five things that need to be nowhere near our relationships. Five attitudes and actions that we should totally put away and as such make no allowance for them in our life whatsoever. To put away gives the picture of total repentance without looking back or leaving a way to go back! Because of who you are, what you're made of, who you belong to, how you were made, and the list goes on; because of all of this, you need to totally eliminate all of these things from your life!

D. Let me quickly define each of these for you.

1. **Malice is the desire for unjust things to happen to others.**

a. **“Malice (*kakian*) is wicked ill-will.”⁹**

b. **“In brief, malice is a desire to inflict pain, harm, or injury on our fellow man.”¹⁰**

2. **Deceit is when we knowingly mislead others.**

a. **“deceit (*dolon*) is deliberate dishonesty”¹¹**

⁸ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Vol. 16, p. 80). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁹ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Vol. 16, pp. 78–79). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹¹ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- b. “That is craftiness whereby men rob their fellow-creatures.”¹²
- c. “... in its verb form means “to catch with bait,” and in the noun which Peter uses means “craftiness.”¹³
- d. “All deceit.” Once again Peter uses the adjective *all* to include everything that is deceitful. He alludes to a number of actions that are covered by the phrase *all deceit*: falsehood, craft, seduction, slander, and treachery.”¹⁴

3. **Hypocrisy is when we act like somebody we are not.**

- a. It’s a form of deceit! I’m going to deceive others by acting as if I’m more important than I really am or that I’m more holy than I really am. In the context of this passage hypocrisy is specifically when we claim to love our fellow believers even though we don’t!
- b. “**hypocrisy** (*hypokriseis*), pretended piety and love;”¹⁵
- c. “The word “hypocrisies” is the transliteration of the Greek word *hypokriseis* (ὑποκρισεις) which means literally “to judge under,” as a person giving off his judgment from behind a screen or mask. The true identity of the person is covered up. It refers to acts of impersonation or deception. It was used of an actor on the Greek stage. Taken over into the New Testament, it referred to a person we call a hypocrite, one who assumes the mannerisms, speech, and character of someone else, thus hiding his true identity. Christianity requires that believers should be open and above-board. They should be themselves. Their lives should be like an open book, easily read.”¹⁶
- d. “The hypocritical person pretends to be what he is not; he is a man with a double heart and a lying tongue. For instance, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and teachers of the law for their hypocrisy when he said, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These

¹² Spurgeon, C. (2014). *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*. (E. Ritzema & J. Strong, Eds.) (1 Pe 2:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 11, p. 49). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

¹⁴ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (Vol. 16, p. 80). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹⁵ Raymer, R. M. (1985). *1 Peter*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁶ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 11, pp. 49–51). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me' ”
(Matt. 15:7-8; Isa. 29:13).”¹⁷

4. **Envy is when feel we are owed or entitled to what others have.**
 - a. Its rather irrational that any child of God who has inherited the Kingdom of God could be envious of anybody!
 - b. “**envy** (*phthonous*), resentful discontent”¹⁸
 - c. “Envy is an attitude expressed in a desire to possess what belongs to someone else. Envy often leads to holding a grudge.”¹⁹

5. **Slander is when we destroy the reputation of others with lies or information others didn't need to know.**
 - a. “**slander** (*katalalias*), backbiting lies”²⁰
 - b. “The word “evil speakings” are in the Greek text “speaking down” a person, referring to the act of defaming, slandering, speaking against another.”²¹

To wrap this up let me read you two passages of Scripture written by the Apostle John. First John quoted Jesus when he wrote,

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Elsewhere John writes,

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:19-21)

¹⁷ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, p. 80). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹⁸ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, p. 80). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

²⁰ Raymer, R. M. (1985). [1 Peter](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 844). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, p. 51). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Challenge: How we love people in the church is a reflection of how we actually love Christ. What does the effort you are making to love others in Venture say about your love for Christ?

It is irrational that you could strain to love everybody in Venture or any other church with more than a handful of people! This is why we encourage everybody to get in a life group. It's not to form cliques because we don't do closed groups and we mobilize others in the church to serve needs of people in other groups or of those not in a group. But I'm not talking about helping each other out when things go crazy, I'm talking about the day to day strain and effort of loving others, of living in community with others, of making time and emotional space to do life with others, support them, encourage them and to let them do that with you! You can't do that with more than a handful of people; think about it, Jesus only attempted it with twelve men and he was God and single!

But the bottom line is, for many Christians, if they looked at the effort they put into to relationships with anybody in their church I can promise you they wouldn't be excited about that kind of effort from their spouse, kids or parents towards them!

So pastorally. We are all human, and as such, at times, all of us will see our sin present itself in the very attitudes and actions that Peter said to totally get rid of. However, I don't think that is the pressing issue in our church. Our issue is learning to put effort into others. It shouldn't take being canceled by culture, persecution, or some horrific trial to tell us how much we need each other. Our daily struggle with sin and life is all we need to tell us we need to be loving and supporting others in our local church!

But we don't give effort to it. The last thing we put on our calendar is the opportunity to build relationships with others in the church. I'm not saying we shouldn't have life outside the church at all, I'm just saying if we had any inkling of our need for other believers in our life, if we had any inkling of the absolute incredible value and glory of the eternal family we have in Christ, then we wouldn't see so little effort by so many when it comes to making time, space and energy to build genuine loving community with others believers in our local church!

Over the decades of the American church existing in "Friendly" territory it has grown lazy in its sense of need for one another. However, those who live in areas where the church is persecuted learn to deeply value and protect the community they have with other believers. There is no concept of living their lives disconnected from one another in the classic American suburban way of driving home, hitting the garage door opener, pulling into the garage, and shutting the door before you get out of the car so that you don't have to interact with any of your neighbors. There is no concept of not building deep trusting relationships with some people in their local church because trust is essential in places where people are looking to expose those who love and follow Jesus.

So, to those living in true exile because of their faith in Christ, they know healthy, thriving, trusting, and truly connected community with other believers is not simply a bonus to their

life; it's an essential. What we have to get through our thick heads is that we desperately need it as well but it doesn't happen on accident!

So let me leave you by once again laying on us the weight of the Words of Jesus,

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)