



Episode 3-24: Importance of Church Community

Resources:

Books

[Formed for the Glory of God - Kyle Strobel](#)

[Church Membership - Jonathan Leeman](#)

[Life in the Father's House - Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely](#)

[What is a Healthy Church Member? - Thabiti Anyabwile](#)

[Community - Brad House](#)

[The Church of Irresistible Influence - Robert Lewis](#)

[Nine Marks of a Healthy Church - Mark Dever](#)

[What is a Healthy Church? - Mark Dever](#)

[Practicing Hospitality - Pat Ennis and Lisa Tatlock](#)

[The Peacemaker - Ken Sande](#)

[Unpacking Forgiveness - Chris Brawns](#)

[Putting Your Past in Its Place- Steve Viars](#)

[Communication and Conflict Resolution - Stuart Scott](#)

[Uprooting Anger - Robert Jones](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back. This is Janet here with Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hi friends.

Janet: And we're going to take some time today to discuss what ought to be an important part of our Christian lives, but I do think it's something that many of us take for granted.

Jocelyn: Interesting.



Janet: I think most of us, I would actually hope all of us, are involved in Christian community and part of a local church, but even if we are, do we understand why it's important? Do we understand what our involvement should look like?

Jocelyn: Great question. Great question.

Janet: So when I say Christian community or finding community, Christian or not, what do you think I even mean? What is that? Or what do others think it means?

Jocelyn: I would say, I think I know what you mean, but I think in general, the topic of community would mean a group of people that has my back, for one thing. Like,

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I'm your people. No matter what happens, I will be on your side. I'll be loyal.

Janet: I will hate whoever you hate.

Jocelyn: Yeah, we will go down together. I will be loyal to you. I will encourage you.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: You will always find me to be your cheerleader. And if you have community, it's a big group of people that are very focused on your success and really, really, really have your happiness in mind. And they really want you to feel like you have a place to belong. You're included, you're valuable. So I think in general, that's what community probably means. I think like in the work world, in just the secular world, community can have a really negative effect because it could be a bunch of people that are doing wrong things, just encouraging each other.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: We got your back. We're loyal to you. We'll keep you safe. Even if what you're doing is dumb and it will kill you or will give you diseases or permanently alter you like we are your people. So if no one else is your people, we are your people. We will always have your back.

Janet: So think about that. From your, and I think that's so accurate, from your definition of community, whether or not it's good community depends on how I feel about what you're doing for me.

Jocelyn: s I was saying it, like what was really impacting me was like, it's very incredibly me focused.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Like all of these people revolve around me, but they're doing it for everybody in the group.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: We all revolve around each individual person. Like you are constantly on our thoughts. We are constantly like doing things to our schedule for you. Like we're altering our schedule. We're showing up. We're not asking you to be available.

Janet: We're not asking you to change.

Jocelyn: We're not asking you to change. We're asking you to just be happy and satisfied with the status quo, like how you're doing keeping that up. But we're not necessarily challenging you to think about things differently or to evaluate whether this is righteous.

Janet: That wouldn't be accepting.

Jocelyn: That would be right.

Janet: That community.

Jocelyn: Right. That would not be accepting. That would not be loyal and what we're doing is really focusing on loyalty.

Janet: So thinking about that, imagine how in the Christian community, we take that same concept because I think we use that word and we say a lot of different things. And I hear that a lot, you know, about Christian community. And I would just challenge whoever's listening to this to at least go back to everything they heard Jocelyn say and say, is that how I'm interpreting community in my church? So what do I mean by that? And we'll get back to that part in a minute. But what do I mean by that word? So let me be clear when I talk about, I want to talk about Christian community in the local church. Well, the church is called a family and other believers are called my brothers and sisters. So we are a community of believers and God designed church intentionally. It's a blessing and it's a privilege to be part of a church community and as is true of all relationships, it's hard.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And it takes effort.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So community isn't primarily how do I feel? It's a family. And you know what? I love my family. I don't always feel the warm and fuzzies with my family. And it doesn't mean they're bad community.



Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: They're my family. But what it is. Is in, when I say Christian community, a family of believers in a local church, locking arms together with the same goals. And the local church has many goals. I'm just going to read some of the goals of the local church, that together corporately, we praise God. Acts 2:47 has three of these, we praise God, we are to have favor with others by our behavior, we're to evangelize. Matthew 28 were to make disciples. Ephesians 4, the local church is to equip the saints for the work of service and to build up the body of Christ. Acts 2, it's to be mutually helpful. There are many other things you could say, but those are some of the goals of the local church. And I can be in community and need to be in community with other believers to that end.

Jocelyn: Well, that's really interesting because if you look at that list of goals that a local church has there's not a lot of warm fuzzies in there, but you could definitely lock arms with other people who also have those goals and get a lot of stuff accomplished. And it looks a lot different than the explanation that I gave at the beginning. Like what do we people think of community like people who are loyal to each other, always have each other's backs. I will change my schedule to do what you need. Like none of that is really in line with what a local church's goals are.

Janet: And yet would we be loyal?

Jocelyn: As long as you were loyal to Christ.

Janet: Right. So if you and I, if our major goal is we want to build up the body of Christ. Well, part of that is I'll be loyal to you in that, but part of, you know, if we want to define loyalty, if you're walking away from Christ as a loyal friend, I got to challenge that. I don't need to say that's you.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: You be you. So anyway.

Jocelyn: You be you.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So one of the many jobs, one of the many priorities of the local church then has to be helping their members to mature in the Lord so that they can accomplish the goals. And because that's what it means to love someone is to help them mature in the Lord. In the church setting, it's done by teaching the scriptures. That's the only way that believers know how to live in Christ.



At the TGC conference I went to, there was one sermon on the Ten Commandments. It was so good, but he talked about the purpose of the Ten Commandments, it is not how I come to know Christ, but as a follower of God, it tells me how to live to love the one I want to please. So I need the scriptures to know how to live. It's also done in the local church setting by correcting sinful behavior in a disciplinary fashion. If a believer is going to begin to function in opposition to Christ, then we have to lovingly, because I'm first loyal to Christ and my loyalty to you, Jocelyn, is a function of my loyalty to Christ. I'm not going to watch you walk away.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: I'm going to say, come back.

Jocelyn: Yes. I was thinking about loyalty. Like in a family setting, it's easy to say, I have to choose which person I'm going to be loyal to because they can't be loyal to both because they're in opposition to each other.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: But if you're loyal to Christ, you can be loyal to both because you're helping people live for the Lord, which is the benefit of a group of believers working together. The underlying thing that binds us all is our love and our loyalty to God.

Janet: Now, if somebody is starting to walk away from Christ, they would not see that as loyalty, but it, but that doesn't change it. You're absolutely right. All of us need to function with the understanding that God wants us to grow and look more and more like Christ. That the goal is that I want to represent him more and more accurately in the world. Each individual believer is responsible to ensure that they're growing in their love for and their obedience to God. That's not primarily the church's responsibility. I can't make somebody want to grow. And a lot of that growth is going to take place in the private practice of your spiritual formations, your Bible study, your meditation, your praying. But a significant element of growth as a Christian takes place in the local church. Through public reading of scripture, singing hymns and spiritual music together, hearing the word of God preached, fellowship with other Christians, giving and receiving encouragement, receiving communion together, serving together, times of corporate prayer and confession. It's in that scripture says that believers are perfected. through the teaching of their leaders.

Jocelyn: That's cool. When we talk about this point in Mom2Mom, we always say you don't go to church to worship. You go worshipping to church.

Janet: Oh, I love that.

Jocelyn: Isn't that cool? You have already been worshipping the Lord in your own individual study at home and you, all of us, who are worshipping at home, come to worship together as a result of



the work that God has done in our life individually. And then all of us get together and it's like, well, this massive, awesome time of mutual worship.

Janet: Yes. And think about the encouragement and the community that you feel.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: So, I already said community is not a feeling . But let me tell you, when you're all.

Jocelyn: It does produce them.

Janet: It does produce them. So it's not that we're opposed to them and I love that. That's what that comes from. And while a lot of that happens at church, we do have to realize that the teaching of the leaders in church is not the only way believers are supposed to grow. Believers should be growing on their own at home through the use of their spiritual disciplines and then they should be using the teaching of the leaders at church to compliment or complete or perfect their own growth. We can see times in the New Testament where believers felt a responsibility for growing on their own and studying the Bible. After hearing the scriptures preached publicly, it says to ensure that what they were being taught was true. The Bereans, we talk about them. It's important that we don't accidentally replace our own private spiritual discipline times with attendance at church. Then we expect the pastor to do the spiritual work for us that we ought to be doing ourselves and then we will expect things of church that are not reasonable.

Jocelyn: And I think I can see applications of that as a parent too. Like, I am responsible for my own private growth, and I'm also, if I'm a parent, responsible for my children's growth. And I can't just rely on only the church to be the one that are teaching my children stuff about Jesus and how to live for Him.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: They're a partner in it, but they're not responsible the way that I am responsible for my own children's growth.

Janet: That's exactly right. And I think it's easy for believers to substitute church attendance for growth and they think they're growing because they're at church. And when I was reviewing, looking at this, I was thinking, okay, where else do I see that even in the Old Testament? Or should I be expecting that where I grow is primarily when I'm meeting corporately? And I think about Psalm 1: 1-3, where he talks about meditating on the word day and night. Even before most of them had access to the written word.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: They couldn't just go home and read their copy of a scroll. Most of them, I mean, their context, those corporate meetings would be where they heard the word and they were expected to be meditating on it all week long.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Just like us. But in contrast, I do think a lot of times when a believer begins attending a new church, especially if they're a newer believer, they're excited. about the depth of the sermons. They're excited about the way the words proclaim from the pulpit. Praise God, that is how it ought to be.

Jocelyn: That's a good thing.

Janet: And they begin to simply allow the pastor's teaching to be their primary source of growth. I've seen that at our church. And at some point, a believer who's not pursuing growth on their own, will start to get disillusioned with their church because they're not hearing anything new.

Jocelyn: Exciting from the pastor.

Janet: I mean, at this point they may know a lot of foundational truth and now they're like.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I've heard that before. Forgetting that their main source of personal growth should be in their own private time. They'll begin to get very self focused. I've heard all of this before. I hear this, I've outgrown that church. They're where I got saved. They're where I started growing. I've outgrown them. I don't feel very close to God anymore. I don't prefer the way that they run services. I'm not sure what that has to do with the purpose of the church and the goals that we've all said we're going to agree to. So I think a lot of those problems would be avoided if we as believers remember their primary source of growth is happening at home in their own quiet times. That's where fresh and exciting truths are discovered. That's where humility, selflessness can be sought. That's where serving others in love is going to be the priority. And then the family of God is where they get to live out those truths they're learning because they're going to come to church and they have opportunities.

Jocelyn: And they're going to be around a bunch of people who possibly might not handle their life perfectly. And we have to be patient with each other. Like we just learned about in the scripture at home, like here's an application area of it, or when you don't like how something happens, you can practice selflessness.

Janet: Yes. If I want to be humble and selfless, serving with others in church, I'll get a lot of opportunities.



Jocelyn: You will. You'll be around a bunch of other people who have their own issues.

Janet: But 2 Timothy 4:3 says, there's going to come a time when believers prefer to have their ears tickled by hearing things they want to hear instead of learning good sound doctrine. There's going to be tremendous loss of growth in those situations. So I think about, and you've already mentioned Jocelyn about parenting. The local church is designed to function similarly, which makes sense because it's called a family.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Like a parent and their child. A parent was given the job of helping their child grow up and be capable of functioning as adults.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Ephesians 6:4 says that parents are to do this job by teaching and by using discipline to correct their child when they're not listening and obeying. The local church is a body, a family of believers united by their love of Christ and their mutual passion to represent them accurately in their broader community and their goals to help each other grow up.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And they're going to teach and sometimes they're going to need to discipline.

Jocelyn: It's like, so the same.

Janet: Right. Yeah.

Jocelyn: It's like one family, a different family, same methods.

Janet: Operating the same way. Yep. Yep. So, many people will say I get my community outside the local church and I would just say God does not acknowledge believers that live and function outside the local church and outside its authority and its protection and its provision. The community of believers in a local church is necessary to help individuals process and absorb what they're learning spiritually. It's really easy to misunderstand scripture or to make an emphasis on something that God doesn't emphasize.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Having church leadership who knows the scripture, knows the languages, studies them appropriately, disseminates that information, it's going to help believers stay scripturally and theologically accurate.



Jocelyn: I think that's an important point because it's easy to have hobby horses and not even realize them. Or areas of emphasis like, this is really bugging me, so I'm going to make this my thing. And it's like, you have to. you have to evaluate what you're letting bug you if it's a primary issue in the scriptures. Like, if God doesn't make it a huge issue, then we might just need to relax a little bit and be more understanding of each other. But if God does make it a big issue, it should be a big issue in our life. And in church, I can't have crazy wacko theology very long without someone noticing it and being like, I'm not sure that that's in the scripture.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: You know, but if I'm not with other people, if I'm by myself, there's no one to challenge me.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I always think I'm right. Why would I challenge myself?

Janet: I mean, who sits around thinking something thinking they're wrong?

Jocelyn: Yeah. Let's continue thinking this stupid thing.

Janet: Yes. So now when we're together, we're learning how to point each other to Christ, bear each other's burdens, encourage love, be together, and yes, a lot of that it feels good, but not all of it.

Jocelyn: No.

Janet: Those are the one and others in scripture where the community of believers were given specific commands and ways of helping other believers grow. And I love that. I was told to think about you, but I was told even how to think about you. And when we think about community in general, whatever, whatever you think will make you happy I need to support. The scripture doesn't tell me that's how I'm to think about you.

Jocelyn: No, definitely not.

Janet: It tells me how to help you. It doesn't tell me to help you in the way I think is helpful. It says helping her is helping her look like Jesus.

Jocelyn: And I think we probably easily have this erroneous idea like hanging out with each other at church should be really pretty calm and easy and we should make each other feel really great when that's not actually accurate. Like and we sometimes have this expectation like there will not be awkward conversations. There will not be difficult things to address. Like if I'm in the



right church, everything will be smooth and you'll treat me kindly because we both want to obey the Bible and I'll treat you kindly and everything will just be calm.

Janet: Yep. Yep. And because we've said we're called a family. We need to think about how we should operate as a family. God says that salvation, we are adopted into His family. Jesus says that anyone who does the will of the Father is His family. So it's going to be important that we care for other believers like family. Functioning as a Christian community is going to take a lot of humility, a lot of willingness to grow as you're going to confront your own sinful tendencies and then fit into a community of other people who love God.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And are sinful.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: But we're told to give courage to each other when it says, encourage one another. Give courage to each other. Courage to do what? Live out your best you? No, fight sin. Look like Jesus. Be humble.

Jocelyn: Resist your selfishness.

Janet: Yes, and we don't judge each other because we're made of the same stuff. We encourage each other. We love each other with brotherly affection. We're devoted to each other in meeting the practical needs we have. We invest in each other's lives for spiritual maturity. Why? Because I believe that when you stand before the Lord, you're going to wish you had grown even more. So if I'm really going to love you, I'm thinking about you on that day. I'm not thinking about what you think of me today.

Jocelyn: How happy you are in this very moment.

Janet: And I'm not even thinking is Jocelyn upset with me? Well, I want to love Jocelyn. I'm going to make it easy for Jocelyn that on the day she stands before Jesus, she's like, I'm so glad that I worked on that because I do love you, which is different than I want to make you feel good today.

Jocelyn: One of the things that's been helpful that you have told me over the years is that I need to care more about your soul than I do about your happiness. And I did make the decisions that I make in our relationship in a way that I'm doing what's good for your soul. And I only know what's good for your soul from the scriptures.

Janet: Yes. Not what I think.



Jocelyn: And sometimes the conversations that I have with the people that I love are good for their soul and hard on their ears.

Janet: Oh, you know, yes.

Jocelyn: So it's a difficult conversation and honestly hard on my mouth because...

Janet: I don't want to do it.

Jocelyn: Don't enjoy irritating people. And I can, I'm not, you know, purposely being rude or anything, but sometimes when you have to say hard things, it's hard because it's not consistent with scripture and it's hard because someone is going to feel bad, but it will be harder if you don't do that.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: It will be harder because their soul will be diminished in some way. It'll be bad for their soul.

Janet: Yes. Yes. So, one of the books that I read back in the day, Kyle Strobel wrote a book and he talks about the important way the body of believers in the local church do help each other is by being available to talk through what's going on in each other's lives. And I think about, again, the early definition of community, that would mean that you would say, here's who I really believe I am and I would go, you go girl.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: That's us talking. But it's helping each other in a way that would help them process their spiritual growth in the context of reality.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: He has this book called, Formed for the Glory of God, and he talks about the Puritan's word was conferencing, which we don't use the word in that way.

Jocelyn: No.

Janet: But conferencing to talk about intentional conversations of an accountability nature where you talk about, here's what I'm reading in scripture, here's what I'm hearing in sermons, I'm reviewing what was happening in my heart as I contemplated God. They believe that conferencing was a living application of the one and others. And I love that. Conferencing is a specific application of Colossians 3:16, where believers are taught to let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. I mean, it's



important to know that we don't stand alone under God. We stand under God alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. So there is loyalty there. The loyalty that matters, not loyalty to your innate desires. It's loyalty to help you conform those desires to what's really best for your soul.

Jocelyn: Which is helpful because what Christ says in the scripture, how God addresses us in the scripture will never, ever change. But what I want has changed a lot of times over the decades that I've been alive. And so how do you know how to encourage me as a human? Well, it depends on what year it is. It depends on what I like.

Janet: If it is up to me.

Jocelyn: What I'm into.

Janet: Yes. Yes. We're not isolated. Even though, much of our initial growth may be alone while I'm working things out with God, but the scriptures say, Proverbs 27:17, iron sharpens iron. And, I'm assuming we all have the same goal, we want to represent God. We want to be those visible representatives of the invisible God to all of creation. We get to help each other with that goal. Freedom and joy in the Christian journey comes from being deeply known in a way that we're being profoundly encouraged and admonished by not only God, but by other believers who also love God.

Jocelyn: I think it's really interesting because there is so much freedom and joy that comes from being known for who you actually are and being loved biblically.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That's different than being known. And just fostered to keep on being what you are.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Because being known who you really are is very vulnerable. And in the community of church, we have the safety of a love of God and a love for each other that undergirds our knowing each other.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And there's a lot of danger in the community presentation that I gave earlier. Like there's a lot of danger in being really known for who you actually are because who we actually are is vile.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And selfish.



Janet: There's nothing attractive.

Jocelyn: There's nothing good about it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so it's just interesting to be able to say, I can be known profoundly and understood authentically, and I won't be rejected.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And I think...

Janet: Which isn't the same as they'll say, it's okay to be there.

Jocelyn: No, non godly community will say, I, you can be your real authentic self and I promise will never reject you. But you know what, there are things that you can do that would cause people to reject you. There are, you know, culturally unacceptable things. So you can't promise unquestionable loyalty and that you'll never reject someone because there will always be a reason to not want to be around someone else. But the Christian community can say, I can know the most vile thing about you and we still have the capacity for that sin to be forgiven and for us to have our relationship redeemed.

Janet: Yes. And my love for you won't change, but our unity will change if you're not willing to repent.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: And that's all part of it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: The Christian experience is really a journey and it was never intended to be a solitary journey.

Jocelyn: Aren't you so thankful about that?

Janet: I know.

Jocelyn: I'm so thankful for that.

Janet: And their term of conferencing is really just a spiritual practice that's designed to enhance all the others.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: By being in deep relationship with other Christians. All of your other spiritual disciplines will be challenged and deepened as you start having sometimes really meaningful conversations about what God's doing in your life. I would say for a lot of churches, and probably ours as well, most often those kinds of deep, purposeful conversations are going to happen in either small groups like Bible studies, accountability groups, adult Bible fellowships, biblical counseling appointments, mentoring matchups, all those things. That we specifically set up to provide a context for some of those more private conversations, which means you're going to have to be involved and regularly participating in fellowship groups outside of the main Sunday services in your church. Those deep relationships are going to be where you start sharing your heart and your struggles, and they're not going to happen, and they actually probably shouldn't happen in the context of larger groups of people.

Jocelyn: Oh, that would be so weird.

Janet: I know.

Jocelyn: Let me tell you about my struggles, Janet.

Janet: Exactly.

Jocelyn: Here in front of 200 people.

Janet: Yeah. Right here on the podcast with all of our best friends.

Jocelyn: That would be so weird.

Janet: I don't think so. And especially because you don't even know if all the people around are that grounded in scripture. We don't share for the sake of sharing. We share our hearts and our lives in order to grow and to grow deeply requires there's a level of safety and trust. Not perfect.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: The only perfectly safe and trusting place is Jesus. But because I have that one, I can risk in appropriate environments with others.

Jocelyn: I think that's one of the ways that church community is different, than the unsaved world is because you in the unsaved world. Authenticity for authenticity's sake is the goal.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Just be real. Be vulnerable. And that's the end. Well, what do people do with that vulnerability? Like, what if you say something vulnerable that's really wicked and it's dangerous?



Janet: Thank you for sharing. That's what we say.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Thank you for sharing. Next.

Janet: Exactly.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And we can offer more.

Jocelyn: And that's fake friendship. Like that's not crawling in the casket with someone, you know, working through difficulty. That's just being like, yeah, you can say anything you want to say.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: That's not helpful.

Janet: And those relationships to be meaningful are going to take time. And the more somebody knows the real me, the less I'm going to be able to fake it.

Jocelyn: That's true.

Janet: If you know me well, you'll know the signs. I need that in my life, but it's vulnerable and I understand that, but we need each other. There's going to be times of self examination where I can't see clearly what's in my own heart and I'm going to benefit from another Christian helping me to examine the situation.

Jocelyn: Yeah, we all have blind spots.

Janet: Yes. There's going to be times when I need help understanding scripture so I can meditate on it accurately or obey it precisely. You know, I have a precious friend who, given her background religiously has a bias when she reads scripture. Well, so do I. I just don't always know what mine is, but I need to be in community that exposes it. But it's fascinating. We will read the same passage of scripture and I'm like, what? But because she's been willing to, we do a lot of that together. She's seeing it differently.

Jocelyn: That's cool.

Janet: But left in her own head. That's all she knows. So we all need each of have that.

Jocelyn: All of us have biases. Yeah.



Janet: We all have that. We need each other. There's going to be instances when I'm unable to pray. I mean, I've been there. There's so much pain, there's so much grief, or the trial is so big, I don't even know how to think, much less pray. And I need other believers to help stand in the gap with me and pray for me, pray with me. It's a beautiful thing.

Jocelyn: I think especially with lament, don't you? Like when you're not in the middle of that raw emotion, sometimes you can see, oh, what that person needs is this. They are feeling this and they need to cry out to God for this kind of help. But when you're in the middle of it. You can't even barely breathe.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And so it's helpful to have someone else watching your grief and saying, I will lament with you and for you to help you understand how to do it.

Janet: I'm going to pray out loud and it'll be like, those are the things I didn't know to say.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: I love that. So living our lives in community. Close to our brothers and sisters is going to help ensure that we're growing in authenticity being transparent, not for the sake of transparency, but that we know we're being honest in our relationship with God. And that becomes evident. I've already said that we've mentioned the one and other passages. The scriptures really emphasize the importance of using our gifts and abilities that God gave us and that the first place we use it is in the family of God. And the motivation behind all of that. 1 Corinthians 13 is to be love for the good of the whole group of believers. Ephesians 2:10 says that all believers have been saved in order to do the good works that God already planned for them to complete.

Jocelyn: I love that passage.

Janet: I do too. That passage does not say it's part of salvation because it comes right after Ephesians 2:8 & 9 that we all love, but that the good works. We're part of the plan of what I was going to do after I was saved. And the local church functioning effectively in the local community has the capacity to provide many contexts to do those good works. And it can happen inside the church and outside the church.

Jocelyn: I think it's cool when you're able to collaborate your good works with a bunch of other people doing good works, you can produce a lot of benefit that you would not have been able to do on your own.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: The synergism of that. It is just exponential. And it's so cool to be able to lock arms with other people and say, let's go make a bigger impact because we're doing this together. We have a venue for it.

Janet: And when our goal is the glory of God, we get to see that. And the world gets to see us working.

Jocelyn: Collaborating. Right.

Janet: On Something that matters.

Jocelyn: Like that's the thing that I keep thinking about the word community. It's the common unity that we have because of our relationship with Christ. But we are unified. That's one of the major factors of. being in community.

Janet: Yes. But what unifies us is our love for Jesus, not our sameness.

Jocelyn: Right. And in this case, it's our service. Like,

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: We're doing service with each other to promote the glory of God.

Janet: Yes. Interestingly, God says in Hebrews 11:6, that He rewards those that diligently seek Him, which isn't that just.

Jocelyn: That's amazing.

Janet: It's awesome about God that He chooses to do that. When we focus on serving God and completing the good works He saved us to participate in, we're investing in our own future rewards, which is pretty amazing. And the local church, which is organized with different levels of accountability, are going to provide the best context to invest all of those efforts.

Unfortunately, believers often confuse this mandate to serve each other using the gifts God's given us and then we end up just putting too much priority on our own personal preference. I want to use my gifts in this way because that's easiest for me. Sometimes we forget that the basis of all of this service is supposed to be, you know, I love it. 1 Corinthians 12 talks about our spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 13 is all about love.

Jocelyn: Right. Use your gift in the context.

Janet: As a way to love.

Jocelyn: As a way of loving. Yeah.



Janet: Not love yourself.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: As a way to love. It's easy to get irritated or annoyed at someone's needs or the style of the worship service. And then I don't wanna participate anymore.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: And I would say in that case, the believer would be short changing and awesome opportunity for selfless love and growth, just to have a little more self-focused or self-centered comfort and preference, which some would say I'm not getting community. Because I'm not getting that comfort and preference.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: When I don't think that's what I see. And when I think about community, another way that God helps us grow in the context of Christian community in the local church is through understanding biblical authority and submission. We don't like those phrases, I get that, but they're beautiful and they're good. Scripture clearly states that God designed this world with order and structure. The Trinity works with clear authority.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: Jesus submitted to the Father. God's world on many levels operates with clear authority structures that are designed to provide leadership, provision, and protection. And we see that operating in the church as well. Scripture says there are two main positions of authority in the local church, pastors or elders and deacons. And God intends for the body of believers making up a church to fall in submission under them. And it's important to learn how to joyfully submit to leadership. And to enjoy the provision and the protection of those authorities.

Jocelyn: It's definitely a countercultural thought for sure to say like, wow, I love authority. It's a gift.

Janet: I know. I know.

Jocelyn: Protect me.

Janet: Yes. And I know that everybody, maybe, maybe that's unfair. Many people are probably thinking of examples where people abused it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And we'll talk about that. And that's wrong.



Jocelyn: It's a shame and it's evil.

Janet: That's right. But it doesn't change that the plan is good.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: You know, Romans 13 very beginning one and two makes it clear that all authorities established by God and to resist authority is to be opposing God. So bring Hebrew Hebrews 13:17 says, obey your leaders and submit to them. Why? For they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Think about that. Who's giving the account?

Jocelyn: They are.

Janet: Right. Let them do this with joy and not with grief. Why? Because that would be unprofitable for you, not just for them, which is why choose your church home carefully.

Jocelyn: Right. Let them do this with joy and not with grief. Why? Because that would be unprofitable for you, not just for them, which is why choose your church home carefully.

Janet: And then I understand if something comes out you didn't know about, we'll deal with it. But you are placing yourself under imperfect authority, but the authority of the leaders of that church. And first and foremost, all believers. are first in submission to God. And in any case that an authority would ask you to do something that would not be submissive to the values and heart of God, we have to respectfully maintain that we're not going to follow it.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: So that's true, but I'm not talking about the exception. For the most part, we just, we want to do that. And it's being in those flesh relationships that God's going to give opportunities for growth when problems arise that have to be solved. Just like any relationship think about your family when there's problems. Do you go? I think I'll have different children. Thank you

Jocelyn: Well, I mean, that's why a lot of people get divorced is because they don't solve problems when they're like, well maybe somebody different would work better with me.

Janet: Right. So then we do that here, too

Jocelyn: Right cut bait and fly off.

Janet: Because relationships within the church are made up of two or more people who are sinners and do make mistakes Just are flawed and not perfect and wicked.

Jocelyn: Right.



Janet: It's all there.

Jocelyn: A combination of all of that.

Janet: Yes. Scripture tells us that we're to solve problems quickly, communicate lovingly, and seek unity. And if I am in the word and growing and I'm saying, I'm going to grow in humility. Oh, there's your opportunity. I'm going to grow in selfless love. I'm going to grow in hesed love. I'm going to love to my own hurt. Then I'm going to talk to you about the truth, even if it makes you mad at me.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Like this.

Jocelyn: Even if it makes it really uncomfortable.

Janet: This is it. This is where I get to grow. Problems. This is not a whole session on problems, but we can acknowledge when there's problems in the church, they should be handled as privately as possible, but get help where you need it. And gradually it gets opened up to a wider circle of knowledge. If we need more and more help to solve the problem. And then there are times when, if it is publicly known, it's publicly addressed, which beautifully can prevent gossip and slander. It's dealt with.

Jocelyn: And also, it exalts the gospel because the problem was able to be dealt with.

Janet: Yes. Yes. So growth happens as we. Handle problems quickly, effectively, and humbly, facing them and not running away. And I really do think one of the ways Christians shortchange growth opportunities is they run away when things get hard. And you know what they say? It's not good community.

Jocelyn: Yeah. It wasn't working for me.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah. When authority in the church is hard to handle or there are interpersonal conflicts, it's easy to say, this church is just not a good fit for me. And I go somewhere else.

Jocelyn: Kind of makes you wonder what would be a good fit. Like, not being challenged would be a good fit. Not being confronted would be a good fit. Everyone liking me all the time would be a good fit. No one ever sinning against me would be a good fit. It just makes you wonder, what does good fit mean?

Janet: Years ago, I had somebody say that they were leaving our church because they said, I'm not calling it sinful, but the emphasis and priorities here are different than what I believe my gifts



are. And I said, so what you want to do is go somewhere where everybody already has your gift. Or is it maybe you have this gift in our body because we need that gift.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Isn't where we're weak and where you're gifted the perfect place to be. You would think so. But instead it's, I want to go where it's easy. I want to go where everybody thinks like me, like me.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And it's like, that's, well, we're not all the hand. We don't need to go somewhere where there's all hands.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: So, but thinking.

Jocelyn: And it is hard to feel like different than other people.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: But it's, you know, when you're, when you have an insulated group, you can often become focused on a certain area and not see that you're lacking something and new eyes and fresh blood will say, well, what are we doing about this?

Janet: How about this?

Jocelyn: We're missing this.

Janet: It's like, thank you. And now you've strengthened the body.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Your family. And I think people who move from church to church often leave behind a string of destroyed relationships and then they have to settle for shallow growth.

Jocelyn: That's sad.

Janet: Because I've even had people say, now that I'm at whatever church, I don't want to get involved anymore and see the inner workings because that disillusioned me. And I'm like, so you want to settle for shallow instead of get in the mess.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: And it, and it can be disillusioning if you think the church is perfect.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: But if you're in there to solve problems, it's very different.

Jocelyn: Well, that will limit you from ever really getting to know people because as soon as you know people, you're going to have problems.

Janet: You're going to have issues.

Jocelyn: Yeah. You're going to have to work through stuff.

Janet: So it's important to think carefully when problems come up in a church. Seek wise counsel. You may conclude that it would honor God more and it has to be honor God more, not what I think, if you chose to leave a church and unite with a different body of believers. But that should always be the last resort, not the first. And based on theological truths, not on personal preferences. So it's going to take time and a lot of sitting at the table with people to work through those things. I remember when I worked at Purdue, I was very, very upset with something that happened that really was unfair and unjust and affected other people. And I went to my pastor and said, I was single and I went to him and said, I can't keep working there. I can't work at a place that's like this. I'm going to quit. I can't be part of this. And he said, well, what you need to do right now is address all of it with those people and solve the problem. And here's what I said, well, if I do that, I won't need to go.

Jocelyn: There'll be no reason to leave.

Janet: And he's like, he just smiled. I'm like, I get it. Right.

Jocelyn: That's why you need a pastor.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: See?

Janet: Yes. I had done all that. And they said, we like being unethical and I might have to leave, but it's the last resort. That's not the first one.

Jocelyn: Not your first answer.

Janet: Yes. And if it comes to that, it comes to that because God's glory is worth it, but not, I don't like this. It's uncomfortable. I just want to bail. And that is our tendency. And we think it wasn't a good community fit when the reality is that's our culture telling us anything hard, you bail marriages or anything. And that's, God has a better way. So really all we're saying here is



it's crucial that you're pursuing your personal growth on your own through your own use of spiritual disciplines, and then you're using your participation in the local church to help perfect your growth, but it doesn't replace your work. And now you actively participate in the church, not first for yourself, but for the privilege of loving each other toward righteousness and achieving the God ordained mission of your church and realize it's the venue where your own heart's going to be surfaced. So it's going to be uncomfortable. You'll get to do lots of biblical problem solving, just like we do in our own nuclear family. So, you know, we like to have some practical, and I will have these in the show notes, but here are some questions that I would say, ask yourself as you think about your relationship with your church. Do you find that you've been substituting church attendance with personal growth?

Jocelyn: I think that's a really important question that we should just like pause on because as I talk to other people, when I ask them what their relationship with God looks like, it usually starts with how many times they go to church.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And I've been trying to figure out lately, how do I help you understand that's not what I mean?

Janet: Right. Though that's a factor.

Jocelyn: I'm glad you go to church.

Janet: And it is a factor. If you never go, that tells me something.

Jocelyn: But that does not equal your devotion to the Lord or your personal growth or the way that you're less like yourself and more like Christ today.

Janet: How is your life more oriented around Jesus than it was? Not perfectly. I get that. So is it possible that I've been thinking, I go to church and I listen and I take notes, therefore I must be growing. Maybe not. What are some ways that you've been challenged to grow as you fit into the community of believers in your local church?

Jocelyn: Which challenge to grow means uncomfortableness, which none of us prefer, but it is a part of community.

Janet: That's part of fitting because we think fitting. Means the.

Jocelyn: The body morphs around us. It's like the community morphs around what we already are, but this is saying fit into what Jesus wants you to be. That's gonna to require some shaving of stuff off of you.



Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Because we are not like Christ.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And the ways that we're not like Christ, they need to be changed.

Janet: So I think that's helpful. Instead of thinking, I'm having a hard time with community at church, whatever I mean by that, what are some ways you've been challenged to grow as you try to deal with that? And if you say, well, people don't really ask me about myself as much as I'd like. So it's forced me to have to think of them more.

Jocelyn: Oh.

Janet: Oh, that's great. Praise the Lord.

Jocelyn: Not a terrible thing.

Janet: Okay. So I think that can help reframe how you think about it. Have you ever before heard of the term conferencing? Probably not. In reference to having purposeful, accountability based conversations with another Christian about both of your spiritual growth.

Jocelyn: I think that's one of the things I love most about church is that for two people who are believers who are in the church community, it's so easy to start a conversation because you know you have a common baseline. Both of you love Christ and both of you love His word. And I feel like there's more potential for authentic friendships in church than anywhere else because you start with a common ground. Some of the people that I'm friends with at church, if I was not a part of Jesus's body, I would never run into them outside of church. They're just not in my circle.

Janet: You're a different person. Yep.

Jocelyn: Their interests are nothing like mine. And so one of the things that I love about church community is that our common denominator of Christ and our common denominator of love for His word and love for Christ makes me have a compatibility with others that I would never. And because of that compatibility, much more genuinely authentic and helpful conversations about real things can happen.

Janet: Yes. Yes. How about how must you be stretched to grow during opportunities to serve in your local church? Instead of it's hard. How can you be stretched to grow during those opportunities?

Jocelyn: Is that okay?



Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Is that okay?

Janet: That is good.

Jocelyn: Yeah. When someone says, hey, I was considering you for this special serving opportunity. If you hadn't been considering you for that serving opportunity, are you willing to see how who you are might be stretched to fit that need?

Janet: Yep. As you submit to authority in your local church and solve problems. What might be exposed in your heart?

Jocelyn: Probably my own selfishness.

Janet: Yep, and do I understand that might be why my knee jerk is change church?

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Instead of stay at the table, work through it. And then evaluate your personal participation in your local church. In what ways have you been fulfilling the one another passages in scripture? So just things to be thinking about. I have a long list of, I'm just going to share a list of potential resources if you're like, okay, that's nice, but I really need to think about that. Jonathan Leeman has a book on church membership called, Church Membership.

Jocelyn: Helpful.

Janet: Should be easy to find. That's good. Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely have a book called, Life in the Father's House, that we did the longest sermons, no, ABF Sunday School series on so many years ago that we called it, "Life and Death in the Father's House", but it wasn't because the book is that long, but our series was that long.

Jocelyn: I don't remember that.

Janet: Oh, I think it was probably before your time. It was cracking me up. We were like, "Life and Death in the Father's House". But it helps me remember the name of the book, Life in the Father's House. It's a good book.

Jocelyn: That's so funny.

Janet: I don't know how to say, Anyabwile, I think his name is, Thabiti, What is a Healthy Church Member, or a book called Community by Brad House, thinking about how do you relate in your church. If you want to think about how your church can be a light in the community, The Church of Irresistible Influence.



Jocelyn: That's a cool book.

Janet: Thinking about what church should I join and I'm considering the biblical issues around a church. Mark Dever has a couple of small books, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* and *What is a Healthy Church*.

Jocelyn: I think those are helpful resources because you genuinely don't just want to get connected with any church.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: Because there are some churches that are teaching things that are not biblical, or they're allowing things that are not biblical to go unresolved. Like, you should know what makes a really healthy church.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: You don't want to just find a church and start going there because it's a church.

Janet: And you don't want to go there because it feels comfortable.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Because the right church may not feel comfortable.

Jocelyn: It probably won't.

Janet: Yeah. And then to go, that's not how I'm making that decision. But if it's unbiblical in certain things, I want to know that.

Jocelyn: A warm and fuzzy church that doesn't have good teaching will not sustain what you need for a godly life.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: There's a lot of warm and fuzzy churches that when problems come are not equipped to help you. And warm and fuzzy will only go so far.

Janet: I remember when I was helping out in the college ministry before I was married. It was many, many years ago. And somebody was new to our area. And I can't remember now, but I believe a new believer. And they were, we were talking about church, they'd visited our church, and they were just honestly saying, I was very uncomfortable at church. And so I don't know if that's the church for me because it was very uncomfortable. So I was like, well, tell me about that. They came from a very ritualistic background church. So it was very uncomfortable. You



walk into that church, everybody whispers, they all sit, and you come to our church, it was like, this is uncomfortable. And so we talked about, I get that that's uncomfortable, but you understand that if you'd been in a different kind of church and came here, you'd have been comfortable. So are you going to make your decision based on here's what I used to do and it became comfortable?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Or are you going to say, if this is right, it will become comfortable in that aspect.

Jocelyn: Habits can be learned.

Janet: Yeah. But they didn't even recognize. It was just kind of like, I don't know. This is uncomfortable. And it was.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Totally.

Janet: But it was just different. So, and then a few books. We mentioned serving. We're believers that the scriptures are clear that that's really what we're called to do. Practicing Hospitality, a good book by Pat Ennis and Lisa Tatlock can give you some ways to do that and problem solving, The Peacemaker by Ken Sande is going to probably the gold standard by everybody.

Jocelyn: It is an excellent book.

Janet: I love the book Unpacking Forgiveness by Chris Bronze. I use that a lot in counseling. Putting Your Past in Its Place by Steve Viers, Communication and Conflict Resolution by Stuart Scott. Uprooting Anger by Robert Jones. We'll have a list of all these. Lots of ways that you can be growing and understanding and applying biblical problem solving that will really enhance your ability to benefit from and enjoy your church.

Jocelyn: Yeah. One of the things I love about church is that there is a huge commitment to each other that is born out of our commitment to Christ and commitment to each other means. Using some of the stuff that those different books present, like you're going to need to know how to practice hospitality. It's commanded in the scripture.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And because we have a commitment to each other, I'm willing to have people in my house and when in ways that are very uncomfortable to me, because I don't love having people in my house. I like my house to be my private sanctuary.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: But if God commands me in scripture to practice hospitality, it means it doesn't mean I'm just like opening my house up to every person that comes through and

Janet: I have to look at my biblical priorities.

Jocelyn: I have to look at my budget to be able to.

Janet: But it is a priority.

Jocelyn: But it is a priority. And I'm willing to be incredibly uncomfortable because sometimes that's what's required to practice hospitality.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Same thing with other things. The other books in that list, like I'm willing to practice making real peace, not faking peace.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I'm willing to be forgiving because I have a commitment to you. The reason why I'm like working through stuff with my husband that needs to be worked through is because I made a commitment to Him.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And one of the things that unifies the church, at least in our church, is that when you join the membership of our church, you make a commitment to each other. You're covenanting with the rest of the people in that church body. I care about you and I'm committed to loving and serving you. And so those resources just... I think many of them show the how, like, how do you be a community that is committed and not just be like a warm and fuzzy, like, I will love everyone and support everyone kind of church, come be who you are.

Janet: Right. Yes. Excellent. Well, thank you Jocelyn for talking about this subject. It is one that I think is really counter cultural, but dear to the heart of God and I'm glad we could talk about it together.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

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