



A Good Example Part 4 – In Faith

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We've been in a series called *A Good Example* and we have been looking at what it means to be a good example to believers in speech, that was week one. Then we looked at in love, in conduct. Today we are in faith. Next week, we'll end with purity.

We get this from 1 Timothy 4:12. It's where we get the outline. It's an older pastor talking to a younger pastor at a young church dealing with young church issues and how you continue to lead in that, but I would argue not just young church issues, it's what all churches tend to deal with a lot of the time.

He says to Timothy, ***12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.*** In week one, we looked at this and we said that we all know examples in our lives. I'm looking around the room at a lot of young people. You want to be this young person that when you are in a group of your peers, whether it be in junior high or high school, college, in the workplace, you want people to look at you and say the words, "You're wise beyond your years. When I look at you, you are a good example for those around you in speech, in conduct, in faith, and in purity." But then we looked at the other side of that and said just because you're old doesn't mean you are mature. Can I get an amen on that one?

In Ecclesiastes 12, we get this great term of the *blossoming almond tree*. It's referring to gray hair and a sign of old age and maturity. I look around the room and I see a lot of blossoming almond trees among us in the 10:00. My father-in-law sitting over there, Denny, he's lost his leaves altogether, but we are glad he is here. I wanted you to meet my Norwegian friend from Minnesota to talk him into staying in Branson, Denny, but he was at the first service, and he's on to Naples because you weren't here at 8:30.

We've also looked at the fact that just because you are a senior adult, typically age... You look at someone with a blossoming almond tree and you should see someone that is a mature person. But it's not always true. Age is not guarantee of maturity. We want to be known as those and set good examples.

I did something a little bit different this week that I'm going to encourage you to do. I sat down and I started writing the names of people who have been a good example to me. A lot of times in this series, we can talk about it. I want to be a good example to my children, a good example to my spouse, a good example to fellow believers in this church and in this community. But who has been a good example for you? If I can encourage you, don't just write it down, journal it, spend some time thinking about it.

As we jump into this, we're going to introduce this with faith because if we talk about faith and talk about growing in maturity in our faith, it starts for us in Ephesians 2: 8-9 – **8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...** Today, we are not talking about how a weak faith, or a strong faith means you're saved or you're not saved. We're going to settle that up front and early on. **...and this is not from yourselves...** You are not the source of your salvation... period. There is nothing you can do; you can't add anything to your life. There's nothing you can stop doing. We don't believe in salvation by addition – start doing a bunch of great stuff and heaven is your home and Jesus is your savior. Stop doing all these bad things and Jesus is your savior and heaven is your home. We don't believe in salvation by subtraction either. Salvation comes by one name and that name is Jesus. We've been worshiping that name today. **...it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.** It's not a result of your works – what you're doing good or what you stopped doing that was bad – so you and I cannot boast about it.

Timothy Keller says it this way and I thought this was a beautiful way to settle this right up front before we talk about a growing faith, growing in our faith and strengthening our faith. *"It is not the strength of your faith but the object that actually saves you.* And all God's people said... Amen. *"Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally... Meaning goes nowhere ...inferior to a weak faith in a strong branch."* – Timothy Keller

Hebrews 11: 6 says, **6 And without faith it is impossible to please God...** Meaning we walk by faith, not by sight. **...because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

Colossians 2: 6 – 7 says, **6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him...** And that's what we're talking about today – continuing to live your life in him. Sanctification, becoming more like Christ, settling the salvation issue. **7 ...rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

And then Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4... This is when I really started writing down the names of older believers. A lot of people on my list are no longer with us. They went to be with the Lord years ago. Paul says, **7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race...** and at the end of it all, **...I have kept the faith.** I kept the faith all the way up until the end.

The first name I wrote on my list this week, after really meditating on this passage, was Jim Sedlacek. Anybody in here have the opportunity to spend time or know Jim personally? There are a few of us in here. There were a lot more in the 8:30. Jim was an elder at our church. He came to know the Lord late in life in his 40s. Everything changed for him because he was a business guy; he went after it. He spent a lot of time in his work, a lot of time traveling for his work. He was passionate about growing businesses, etc.

Jim came to know the Lord in his 40s and everything changed; his priorities changed. He went all in for Jesus and serving the bride of Christ, the church. He was an elder at our church. I was able to walk alongside Jim in his 70s. Jim had ailments as a lot of those in their 70s and 80s do. We'd be having coffee together or sharing a meal together or in a meeting and there were times he would move in the

chair or get up and kind of wince. It was very subtle, but I would call it out. I'd ask, "Jim are you okay? How are you feeling?" He hated, absolutely hated to talk about his feelings. He hated to talk about what was going on with him. Any stubborn people like that in here? You just don't want to talk about the way you're feeling.

Jim never liked to talk about his ailments. What most people don't know about him is he had shingles. How many have had shingles? A lot of people in our church. He had his shingles from his eyebrow up through his hair. Oh, yeah... I'm getting ready to turn 50 and I think I'm getting the shot. Don't anybody come after me with the vaccination talk because I don't want shingles. I've watched Jim go through it. Any time I'd call it out... You know what Jim referred to his shingles as, or any ailment, even the ailment that ultimately took him out? He referred to it as rust. That was his way of saying, "Just stop talking to me about it, Ted. It's just rust. You expect an 80-year-old person to be in tip top shape? No! Are you driving an 80-year-old car with no rust on it? No!" And after this week, we all better go get some washing done on our vehicles to get the salt off of them.

When I think about the person who has fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith... Jim was so sold out to Christ, and everything was about Jesus. He felt talking about himself or anything going on with him was a complete and total waste of time. I would tell him, "Jim, I'm trying to figure out which part of this is your faith in Christ and which part is just your stubborn personality."

Let me ask you this question. It's a question I've been asking myself all week. **When my faith is put to the test, where do I place my trust?** You have probably seen a lot of believers over the last couple of years with what we would call misplaced trust. Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Some trust in themselves. I'm not putting a lot of trust in myself. That's why we sing it here. I love when we tag songs in this service and in this church and in our gatherings with, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face..." When we go through the difficult seasons and our faith is put to the test... When we go through difficult seasons and stages of life, it's at that moment we turn to the object of our faith to strengthen our faith.

Remember Gary Smalley when he used to stand up here... Another man on my list as a good example for me who is now with the Lord. He would stand up here and often do this. He would go, "If you want more faith, this isn't how you get it." He would say, "It's not willing yourself. It doesn't work; you're just exhausted by the end of it. Don't try to will yourself to have more faith. Just look up. Turn your eyes upon Christ, the source, the object of your faith."

What shakes your faith? I think there are only two things that shake a person's faith, that shakes my faith. They are **trials and people**. Can you think of anything else that doesn't fit in those two categories? Difficult seasons, stages, or as we sang about, circumstances. We sang that the circumstances you're in would pass, but some of you know they've been with you a long time and they are going to stick with you. We're going to talk about that in just a moment.

Others of you have people in your life that suck the very life right out of you. You've been hurt by Christians, believers in the church. Some of you are at this church because of the way you were treated at another church.

People cause you to shake your faith. I think we've seen it in the last two years with the pandemic. We're all trying to figure out why people have drifted in their faith. Why have people drifted in their faith and drifted from gathering with other believers? Trials could be a pandemic. It could be people and the way people have responded to the trials. But let's be honest, sometimes you are in a trial... We're not going to talk about these trials today. The trials you bring on yourself from the decisions that you've made or the sin in your life. We're going to see today that's not always why trials come to us.

So, the question becomes **What if what's shaking our faith God actually wants to use to shape your faith?** When you study the scripture, trials and people are still gods plan for shaping our faith. Tommy Nelson, a pastor in Denton, says, "*Trials are God's divine curriculum in the faith.*" It's where we're tested, it's where we're tried, it's where the storms come and we see after the rain comes and the wind blows and it beats against the house, we find out pretty quick where our foundation is. What have you built your house, what have you built your life, what have you built your marriage, what have you built your family upon?

God uses people and trials to shape us. And we want to explore that a little bit today. Here's what I know about a good example too. I've had a lot of good examples in my life. I wish I could share a bunch of the stories with you and illustrations with you but I'm hoping you really process through your own someone who has been a good example to you in the faith. Some of you have had good examples in your life that you haven't listened to. I've had them. As a parent, we get this. You try to be a good example for your kids and tell them, "Hey, if you do this, this is going to happen," and they're like, "I'm doing it anyway." Let me try to express the inner feeling of a parent when you do that. You chuckle a little and back off, "Let's see how this works out for you."

There's a video going around this week that proves this point perfectly. Video plays... (a child that insists on tasting plain cocoa. Mom, finally agrees to let him taste it.)

That's the best thing you will see on the internet this week. Raise your hand if that kid deserves it. Raise your hand if you did that as a kid. That is not Hershey's syrup. But how many of you tried to make chocolate milk out of Hershey's Cocoa at some point in your life because mom refused to put sugar in the pantry for us. I'd call my mom at work and say, "Would it kill you to get some Swiss Cake Rolls in this house?"

Some of us have to learn the hard way. But don't let anyone look down on you because your young, but set an example. What's the point of an example? Scott talked about this last week. You follow an example. How many of us, as parents, have had to do that before?

Here's what we learn about hardships. I think it's a very important part of theology, it's very important to understand this in your Bible. Sometimes you'll hear people say the reason you're going through the suffering is because of sin. And true, there is suffering from sin, absolutely. Some will say the reason you're going through this trial is because you just don't have enough faith, your faith is weak. But we learn in the scripture that hardships, suffering, tribulation is part of life under the sun. *Under the sun* is this great word picture in Ecclesiastes of just life upon this earth. Life upon this earth is challenging, it's difficult, it's painful, it's grueling.

We read in Psalm 90: 10, the Psalm of Moses, a prayer of Moses. **10 Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures;** This isn't a guarantee but it's just speaking of everyday, ordinary lifespan. I love calling out the good examples when I do marriage events. I find out the couple married the longest, the couple married the least. It's always couple that have been married 50 plus years... I was in Iowa on Friday night. There was a couple married 62 years. I always like to call them out and talk to them throughout the whole time to get examples from them and try to mine that. This guy... I hope he's watching. He wasn't really into it. About my fourth question in, he just waves me off. He didn't get a free book; how about that? I gave him a 50% off coupon.

I love when I do events with Paul Harris because he tells that story of the couple married 70 years. He asks, "What does it take to have a marriage go 70 years?" The husband yelled up, "Don't die!" I thought that was beautiful.

It's not a guarantee of life, but just an ordinary lifespan. Look at this. This is throughout all of the scripture. **...yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass...** We get that in scripture. Life is brief, short, it's a mist, it's vapor. **...and we fly away.** But we often focus on how short life is, but we forget to add to it and in this short life, there will be hardship, there will be pain, there will be suffering, and it will be difficult.

As we talk today to the believer, right? "Set a good example for the believers." As we talk to believers today, please hear me. **A growing faith does not eliminate trials, it helps us endure them.** So, the trial you're going through right now because of just living life under the sun is part of God's divine curriculum. Timothy Keller talks about the object of our faith saving us. Here's what he says about it going through difficult times. *"It's not the quality of my faith (the strength of my faith) but the object (Jesus) of my faith that holds me up."*

If you have your Bibles, turn to Romans 5: 1-5. A lot of times when we read Romans, Verses 3-5 is a very common text for us to go to talk about trials and how they build character and endurance and lead us ultimately to hope. But you have got to start in context with Verses 1 and 2 because 1 and 2 are key for getting into Verses 3-5. Here's what we read - **Therefore, since we have been justified...** It's talking to believers. Justified means to be acquitted, it means to be declared righteous. **...through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...** This peace right here is not speaking of a warm, fuzzy, sentimental feeling. That's not what this is talking about here. This is peace with God, meaning the wall of hostility has been brought down because of Jesus. There is no longer hostility between God and the believer.

I'll take it even further. This is peace as we've been dealing with this week as we've turned our hearts and minds towards Ukraine. This is peace with God meaning we are no longer, believer in Christ Jesus, at war with God. You may wonder why we would be at war with God. Because before Christ, you are an enemy of God. It is Jesus that declares you righteous. It's the work of Jesus. It's not of you, it's not of me. This is very important. So, you've been saved, justified, acquitted, declared righteous because of Jesus and you are now at peace with God. But it doesn't stop there.

2 through whom (Jesus) we have gained access... So, we've been justified, we have peace, and now you and I get to go straight to the throne of God. Peace with God brings us access to him. For there is but one mediator between God and man. It is not a human pastor, it is not a human priest, it is the person of Jesus. Jesus is your High Priest, believer in Christ Jesus. He is the one that gives you access to the throne of God. And here it is. Justified by faith, obtains access **...by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.**

After Verses 1 and 2, you'd say that's enough. What else do I need? Look at what Verse 3 says.

3 Not only so... You should read these three words after reading Verses 1 and 2 and really digging into them, you should get to Verse 3 and read **Not only so** and go *Wait, there's more than that? What else do I need after I am no longer an enemy of God?* I have peace with God through Christ Jesus. I have access to the throne of God at any moment of any day throughout any trial or any difficult circumstance. I have complete and total access. Yes. Why do I need more?

It says, not only that, oh wait. This isn't a commercial; this is the scripture. But wait; there's more. **...but we also glory in our sufferings...** We rejoice in our tribulations. When was the last time you were online and heard someone talking about the difficult times they were having in their life and rejoicing in it? What do you see online more, rejoicing or whining? Before I go pointing a finger at other people, let take the gigantic log sticking out of my eye and go *I need to look back on my past posts.* A friend of mine told me that this morning after the first service. "I need to go back and look at some of my posts." We, because of peace with God, and access to God, rejoice in our sufferings. **...because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**

There's a great commentary I read this week on it that I think will encourage you and remind us of what not only Paul is teaching to the Romans, but we need to be reminded of throughout all of scripture. It's simply this. *"In the New Testament, suffering is viewed as the normal experience of a Christian."* It's not about escaping. Yes, I do pray that God removes you from the circumstance that you are in. we can pray that, but I find, especially in my work with couples wanting me to help them get out of the season or stage of life that they're in. I can't help them out of the season or stage of life. We just went through this pandemic together. I couldn't get us out of it. You couldn't get us out of the pandemic. I can do my part in it. But we went through that together. With stage of life, couple come in and want me to help. If you have a three, a five-, and seven-year-old, you're going to have them later today. You still have a three, a five, and a seven-year-old. You're going to be in this stage of life. So, I can't always help you out of the season or the stage.

But the suffering and the tribulations and the hardships that believers face, this was viewed as normative in the New Testament. *"New converts were warned that the kingdom of God could be entered only through many tribulations."* How many churches in the country today are giving that as their invitation? Come to Jesus and your life is going to get very difficult. Come give your life to Christ; there's going to be a lot of pain and hardship brought on you. Is that what we're hearing? Or are we hearing Come to Jesus and you'll be wealthy, healthy, and everything is going to be great. Your

problems will go away. We even hear preachers say things like, “Jesus doesn’t want that for you.”
“*Through many tribulations...*” (Acts 14: 22)

It goes on to say... This is F.F. Bruce – “*And when tribulation came their way, as it regularly did, they could not complain that they had not been prepared for it.*”

What a burden it puts on the church and on leaders, I would say even on parents, to remind those that we want to be a good example for, hey, it’s going to be difficult, it’s going to be challenging and instead of being that parent that creates environments for their children to succeed and never experience pain, loss, hurt, or difficulty, we are parents who prepare our children to make it in environments they can’t control, that are full of pain, loss, hurt, and difficult times. It is, if you're eyes are on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

“*But suffering was not only regarded as an inevitable feature of the Christian lot; it was looked upon as a token of true Christianity...*” Meaning when you were going through suffering for your faith, it was seen as a mark of your faith. “*...as a sign that God counted those who endured it worthy of his kingdom.*”
(2 Thessalonians 1: 5)

“*Besides, it had a salutary, moral effect on those who experienced it...*” So, a good benefit ...“*for it helped them to cultivate endurance and steadfastness of character, and when these were linked to Christian faith, Christian hope was the more stimulated.*”

So, I pondered that this week. I encourage you to meditate upon Romans 5: 1-5 this week. I came to this conclusion. **The Christians I look up to the most have suffered the most.** I went through my list of people... I don’t get to share them all with you today and all the men and women that are on this list that are good examples in growing in their faith and going all the way to the end of their life...

I have younger people on this list, but most of the people on this list are with the Lord now. They kept the faith all the way to the end. The Christians I look up to the most have suffered the most. Gary Smalley is on my list, I was reminded of a story he shares about another man on my list. He told me once... I don’t think he ever shared it in a talk; maybe he did. He said, “I was in a buffet line with Pastor Chuck Swindoll, and I asked him...” You know Gary always loved to ask questions out of the blue. Gary asked Chuck, “Why are you one of the leaders I most admire? Why do I look up to you so much and trust God at work in you so much?”

Dr. Swindoll was so taken aback by that question that he said, “Can you give me some time to think about it?”

I think that’s part of a blossoming almond tree too – not answering questions right away. Let me think about it. Let me ponder it. I want to give you a good answer.

Dr. Swindoll came back to him and said, “Gary, I have an answer to your question.

Gary said, "What is it?"

Dr. Swindoll said, "It's one word... Pain."

We admire people's strengths, but we really identify with and go with their weaknesses. That's why you love the movies that you love. When you see someone down, it looks like it's over... My wife has really been into these sports movies lately, any sports movie. I'm like, *alright we're becoming a sports family*. She loves the underdog that wins. We identify with that. We relate to that.

The author of Hebrews gives us a beautiful picture of how we grow our confidence in the faith and mature in the faith. We read this in Hebrews 10. Again, the encouragement always there is you've experienced the Gospel of Jesus, you've come to faith in Christ. Stick with Jesus. Don't revert back to Judaism. Stick with Jesus, where you started. Don't go back.

32 Remember those earlier days... The former tribulation, difficult times. *...after you had received the light...* After you were saved. After you came to faith in Christ. *...when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering.* **33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated.** Are we seeing this today? When you see someone going through a difficult time, maybe being falsely accused or allegations coming against them. We've seen this over the last couple of years with cancel culture and all that. *I don't want to get too close to this person because I don't want this trial on me. I don't want to be brought into this with you.* And the silence of our friends hurts way more than the pain that's brought on us by the allegations or accusations of our enemies.

We'll talk about that. Why are we moving away from it when as believers in Christ, we should be stepping toward one another? And as we studied Armor last year, Putting on the full armor of God that you can stand against the devil's evil schemes. We are called to go shoulder to shoulder with each other through battle. We're called to stand in the truth. We're called to enter battles standing against the devil's schemes, not retreating and not backing away.

But some of you have been partners with those who have been going through it. **34 You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property...** Let's repeat that one. You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Financial hardship came upon you and you joyfully received it. Because you have been saved, you've been justified, you have peace with God and access to God through Christ Jesus. *...because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.* **35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.**

I not only looked at my list of those who I've looked up to who have grown in the faith, who have been strong in the faith. I want their stories. And all of them have stories of pain. All of them have stories of difficult situations and times in their lives where they were hurting. And if you really dig into their stories, as you'll do as you think through those who have been a good example for you, you'll see others that have come alongside. And when I looked at this list, I realized, *Oh yeah, I remember when he or she went through that*, and then person down the list a little bit, *Oh, remember when he or she came alongside that person, what they said...* You're taking mental note of all of this.

But we've seen people drifting over the last couple of years, shaken in their faith rather than shaped in their faith. I know some of you are here because you have had great pain inflicted upon you by the church, by the family of God. Maybe you're coming from another church where you experienced the pain. I wrestled with it this week. I confessed before my father in heaven knowing that yeah, I've had hurt from the church brought upon me and we've heard the expression hurt people hurt people. A lot of us in here can admit we've been hurt by the church, but we've caused it. We need to wrestle with that as well. I've asked the Lord to bring to mind another list of people. Help me grow this list of people that I have hurt in the church, that I need to go back to and take every opportunity, make every effort at peace.

Here's what I know. As painful as the church can be because we are all sinners, saved by grace, as painful as the church can be, it's still God's plan for growing us in Christ. I can't encourage enough. If you are still drifting and gathering isn't important for you, please find your way back to a gathering. I know a lot of you are watching from around the country. Find a local church in your community that you can plug into.

I was thinking about it this week. The big C church online... I love people that kind of put down the local church and they do that by saying I'm part of the big C church. Yeah, we're all part of the big C Church, I get that. But let me tell you what I love about the local church that the big C church doesn't give me. And the big C church right now, if you get online a lot, you'll see a lot of the toxicity going at each other as speakers, preachers, leaders and other believers say a wrong thing at the wrong time and it is like sniper fire coming off the range.

Do you know what's great about a local church? We're here, doing life together, in community together. Every now and then I say something I probably shouldn't say. I get that we offer grace to one another. When you know people... That's something the local church brings you, the local community of believers brings you that you don't get in big C church. As painful as it can be, this is still God's plan for growing us up in Christ.

In Ephesians 2, we read, ***19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.***

This week, I heard one pastor say this. *It's quite common in church planting to galvanize people around a bond of bitterness towards their past church experiences. But in my experience, most of those church fall apart in a few years. They either turn in on each other or cannot energize people for the mission.* – Dan White

If I can just encourage you with a couple last thoughts to take away from today's message. **If mean, judgmental, hypocritical Christian shake your faith, then maybe others are your source of life.**

It's time to stop looking to other Christians to be your source of life and turn your eyes on the true and only source of life. The people gathered around you right now are limited supplies. And when you plug into limited supplies, it makes you desperate. Plug into the true and only source because it's unlimited, free refills. And if I can encourage you, **stop obsessing over Christians who harmed you and start spending time those who help you and speak words and build you up.**

This picture made me emotional yesterday. For a lot of reasons. When I saw this picture, I almost tore up all these notes and said we're doing a brand-new message. But then my fear was it would be unfiltered, I would say things, and it would be really bad. Stick with the outline. Katie needs the outline by Friday to put all these slides together, so the Lord has to be done speaking at noon on Friday.

This is leadership (President Zelensky of Ukraine). I'm not going back to the 80s conversation and the Cold War of how you bring peace. Is it peace through strength or peace through disarmament? I lean one way. I definitely believe in peace through strength, but that's not the conversation.

When President Zelensky said, "I don't need a ride; I need ammunition." I said, "Well guess what? In the Ozarks, we'll take in an offering of ammunition. We're going to bring your guns to the altar, send them to Ukraine. We probably would have 750 guns by the end of this morning in all three services.

What I saw was a guy saying, "I'm not abandoning my fellow citizens. I'm not abandoning people. I'm actually going to put on a vest."

You know I love wearing vests. I've just never worn one quite like this. He said, "I'm going to go stand shoulder to shoulder with them."

That's the church. When we go into battle, I'm not supposed to say, "Hey Ron, good luck. Get out there. I'll be in the bunker back here. Let me know how this goes." No, we're supposed to stand. We learned that and we have been talking about that a lot at this church. Don't forget for those who want to wing this thing as lone rangers, God's not called you to be a lone ranger. He's called you to be in a family of God, fighting against the devil's schemes, shoulder to shoulder, and not fearful of it.

What did he say? "If I die, I die." I know where I'm going. I know heaven's my home. This is the call for all of us today. If people and trials are meant to shape us, whose trial are you stepping to this week? You're like, "I don't have the emotional energy." Step up. Step up. Join someone. Build someone up with your words, encourage someone, pray with someone, step alongside them, not a *Oh I don't want to get involved. If somebody sees me with you then I'll probably be the next target.* So be it. Let God use you this week to be a good example in the faith as he has been a good example for the world. And that all the nations of the world would come around him to stop the evil aggression that's coming against Ukraine.

Father, in the name of Jesus we pray for the evil aggression to be halted today. We pray for more leaders around the world and in this nation to stand up for what is right and to stand up for truth. We know our role in the church, first and foremost, is to stand with one another against the devil's schemes, to put on the full armor of God so that when the battle comes, we are ready.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation that they would be justified, acquitted, declared righteous because of Jesus.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen