

Well again, good morning and happy new year. Hey, thanks for joining us whether you're in person or online. My name is George Davis and as we start this new year, if you've got a Bible, I'm going to ask you to join with me in turning to Ephesians chapter 1. Now I don't know about you, if you, I don't know how much media you consume. My guess is if you consume a lot of media, one of the things you've seen, blog posts, different stories or columnists or you know predictions about 2023. This is normally a year where people kind of make predictions about what the year is going to be like and so with that in mind, I want to start this year with a prediction about 2023. Now it's not, it's not about the economy. I have no idea what the stock market's going to do. I have no investment advice. I have no idea if we're going to go into a deep recession or not or what that entails. It's not a prediction about politics or foreign affairs. I have no idea what the, you know, what the next steps are going to be in the Ukrainian situation or which politicians may come to the surface and become popular in this year.

It's not a prediction about popular culture. I've got no idea what the next viral hit like Stranger Things is going to be online or that kind of thing. But my prediction is about what you, what we are going to experience in this year. And it's not about, it's not about the details. I have no idea what the specifics of your life or even the specifics of my life. Don't have all that. But you may have noticed there, there are three buckets up here. And here's the deal. My, my prediction for 2023 is simply this. That whatever your life looks like, much of what you experience over this upcoming year, you're going to be able to put into these three buckets.

First bucket is responsibilities. You're going to go into 2023, at least most of us, with certain types of responsibilities. Maybe you're a student, you know, it's been great to have this break for Christmas, but the truth is you're going to go back to class and the responsibilities that come with that. Maybe you're a stay-at-home parent and there are responsibilities that come with that. There are responsibilities if you're in the marketplace that come with your work. Maybe you're retired and yet you've gotten involved in different things and there are actually responsibilities in some of the things you do there. So one bucket for 2023 is responsibility.

Second bucket. In addition to those responsibilities, I think for most of us, and I don't know what this is going to look like, but I think for most of us, this year is also going to include some opportunities. Again, maybe you're a student and you know, there's, you're going to try out for a sports team or you're going to you're going to take some steps getting involved in new extracurricular activities. There's, you know, there's this group you want to be a part of or there's an opportunity there. For some of us, we're going to change jobs. For some of us, maybe you're going to be given some more responsibility or your company's restructuring and you're going to be moved into a different role and there's some opportunities there. Even for us in relationships, right, for those of us who are who are parents, all along the way, we're hopefully going to have opportunities to kind of invest in our kids. And now that my kids are scattered, I really cherish those opportunities and really seek to being intentional in them. So this this year is going to include some responsibilities that are ongoing. It's also going to include some opportunities and yet, of course, like most years for us, not only is going to include opportunities, the third bucket are challenges.

Maybe things have become more complicated for you at work. As one person told me this week in conversation, my workplace is becoming more bureaucratic. Maybe there's some complexity in your family. Maybe even over Christmas, some of those difficult dynamics were brought to the surface and there's just some ongoing challenges there in certain relationships. Maybe this is the

year where there's going to be some unexpected health news for you.

So again, I don't know the specifics, but I am confident that in a year from now, all of us in different ways are going to be able to look back and we're going to be able to put stuff in each of these buckets. That's true for us individually. I think it's also true for us as a church. Now, even as we go into the new year, my guess is most of us can even think about, you know, you can even think about some of what goes in these buckets for the new year. You understand your responsibilities. Some of you, there are going to be some opportunities that you're anticipating or maybe have already started. Likewise, for some of us, there's some challenges that maybe are already underway and we're just carrying them into the new year. So here's what I'd like you to do. Think about one, and I'm going to ask you to be intentional with this, but think about one or two items that go in these buckets for 2023. Just one or two.

Now, if you got that right, so just maybe one opportunity, one challenge or one responsibility, one opportunity, but just think about one or two things that go in these buckets. Now I want to ask you, what's it going to take for you to engage these well? The things you just put in those buckets, what's it going to take to really engage that well in 2023? What's your game plan? Now, here's where I'm going to lose some of you, maybe, but just stick with me. What if the key to engaging these buckets well in 2023, whatever that looks like for you, whatever goes in the bucket, and for some of us these buckets are going to be heavier, one's going to be heavier than the other. I get that, but what if the key for engaging these buckets well in 2023 was knowing God better? Now again, I realize this may be where I lose some of you. You're like, oh, come on, George. Of course you're going to say that. You're a pastor. This is Sunday morning. We pay you to say stuff like this, and I get that. But here's the reason I'm bringing this up. Over the next few months, we're going to be in a new series called Love This Book. It's actually Love This Book Part 4. If you've been with us over the last few years, Love This Book Parts 1 and 2 were in the Old Testament. Love This Book Part 3 was the life of Christ, and we're now to Love This Book Part 4. We're going to do really a survey of the letters of Paul, which really make up much of the New Testament. So over the next few weeks, next week I'm going to kind of introduce you to Paul a little more intentionally, and then we're going to launch into kind of surveying his letters, and we're going to spend one or two weeks in each of his letters. And what we're going to see is the way Paul really seeks to unpack the good news of Christ to early followers of Christ in very practical ways in dealing with practical issues. And in preparing for this journey through the letters of Paul, I have found myself resonating with a prayer that Paul prays in Ephesians chapter 1.

And to be honest with you, as we start this year, this prayer is really becoming my prayer for us, for us as a church community, for you. Just know that even as I become aware of different situations for some of you, over time I'm going to become aware of some of the things in these buckets. And as I pray for you, I want you to know this prayer in Ephesians chapter 1 is going to influence how I pray for you. And interestingly, it is a prayer where Paul prays that people might know God better. Now, before I actually read it, let me just kind of remind you what Paul is doing in this book of Ephesians. Paul is taking time in this book really to unpack the work of the gospel, right? The plan of renewal and restoration that's made possible through Jesus Christ. He kind of explains that in much of the first half of the book. Then in the second half of the book, he talks a lot about what it looks like to live this out. And he talks about things like relationships, handling conflict, communication. He talks about responsibilities in marriage, in family, in the workplace. He talks about using one's gifts and abilities for the benefit of others.

In other words, a lot of what Paul is doing in the second half of Ephesians is talking about stuff that we normally put in these buckets. But before he does that, in the earlier part, he actually prays twice for the Ephesians in this letter. And in the first prayer, what is fascinating is this. What does he pray for? Now again, he's going to get to the second part. He's going to give them all kinds of guidelines, directives about how do you deal with this stuff, right? How do you deal with conflict? How do you engage the opportunities that God is giving you with your gifts and abilities? What about relationships? He's dealing with all this stuff, but when he begins to pray, he doesn't simply start with, God give them wisdom in how they engage the workplace, or give them wisdom in understanding how to deal with communication and conflict. Before he gets to all this, ultimately his prayer is, God, my prayer for these people is that they would know you better. So let me now take you to that prayer in Ephesians chapter one.

So this is really picking up, I think, in verse 17. Paul has just acknowledged, you know, I hear some good things are happening for you. And so even as I hear the good things, I want you to know I'm continuing to pray for you. And here's what he says, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, and there it is: so that you may know him better. Now before we go on, let's just kind of unpack what I think Paul is saying here. When he says, I'm praying that God would give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation, you can even translate that that he would give you spiritual wisdom and revelation. There's kind of debate on what spirit actually refers to here. And so what I think Paul is praying is this. He's praying that they might have insight in dealing with the things in these buckets. He's praying that they might have wisdom in living out the directives that he's going to talk about in the second part of this book. But this is what he's also saying. Again, there's an assumption here that I want you to notice, and here's the assumption. I think for Paul the assumption is this, the journey of handling all this stuff well and wisely is also the journey of knowing God better. The journey of handling your responsibilities, your opportunities, your challenges wisely for Paul is also the journey of knowing God better. Paul sees these things as interrelated. And let me just highlight this because it's critical to understand. Because here's what can happen if you and I aren't careful. If you and I aren't careful, here's what can happen. On the one hand, you know, I'm fighting a cold as you hear. On the one hand, I come to church just like this. And look at us, we're here on January 1st. I come to church, I worship, I participate in different activities. But maybe then, you know, then I go to work Monday. And I enter the rest of the week and it's filled with this stuff. In a real sense, I kind of live my life like this, not like this. And maybe at times, maybe at times this gets complicated, right? Maybe at times this really gets complicated.

And so I kind of find myself praying to God to, you know, take away the challenge, help my boss be a better boss. And all that is fine. But the reality for some of us is we kind of go through life, it's like I have these things that are just part of my regular day. And then I have what I do on Sunday. And it just never comes together. And Paul is saying no to that approach. He's saying, I want you to have the wisdom to do this stuff. And he's going to talk about that in his various letters. But that wisdom to handle these things well is related to knowing God better. The two go hand in hand. It's the same journey.

So Paul says, look, I'm praying that you're going to have wisdom to deal with this. And with that, that you're going to know God better. And then he continues. And here he then kind of breaks down what he's praying for in terms of how they can know God better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Let's stop there for a moment. This idea of being enlightened, the term for being enlightened here kind of communicates the idea of I was in the dark about something, maybe

something I didn't even know about. But now I've moved into the light. It's even in English the idea of being enlightened. For instance, has this happened to you? Have you had someone show you a feature on your smartphone that you didn't know about? Has that ever happened to you? It happens all the time in our household. Usually the conversation goes like this. Dad, let me show you something, dad. And with a condescending voice, I'm instructed in a tool that has been on my phone all along that I did not know about. And it's great. Oh, my goodness. Of course, they regret showing me how to use emojis. But other than that, you know, I have been enlightened. And because I have been enlightened, there are things I know how to do and things I know how to experience that I didn't previously. I didn't even know they were on my phone. And Paul says, look, I'm praying you're going to have wisdom in doing this kind of stuff. But along with that, I'm praying that you're going to be enlightened. You're going to be brought into the light concerning certain things about who God is and what he's doing. And then he mentions three. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance and his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realm, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who feels everything in every way. Now, there's a lot in this paragraph. There's a lot going on here.

So let me outline it this way. Let me just kind of give you a thumbnail sketch of what Paul is saying. So here's what Paul is getting at, if we can get to the next slide. One more. Okay, keep going. Keep going. Here we go. So here's what Paul is saying. There really are two commands, they're related. The first is this. I'm praying that God's going to give you spiritual wisdom, right? And I'm praying he's going to give you wisdom and insight so that you know him better. And then he explains what the knowing him better looks like, and that leads to the second. Here's the second command. It's I'm praying that God will open your eyes to see that you'd be enlightened. And then he lists three things, and interestingly in Greek, they're parallel. Paul actually outlines this in the text. First of all, God needs to open your eyes to see the hope to which he has called you. Secondly, the inheritance he has in you, and then thirdly, the power at work for his followers.

So when Paul says this journey of wisdom is also the journey of knowing God better, here's how he unpacks what knowing God better looks like. Here's what he's praying for us to have a deeper understanding of, to come to a deeper knowledge of, to be enlightened. If I were to summarize it this way, I think we could use these terms. First of all, he's saying, look, I want you to understand the plot. I want you to understand the plot. I want you to understand the hope to which he has called you.

Now as I mentioned on Christmas Day, our sense of the future, right, and that can be a presence or absence of hope, but our sense of the future shapes how we engage the present. And you may not realize this, but I would argue even now, your sense of hope or the lack thereof will affect how you engage 2023. Your sense of hope or the lack thereof is going to affect how you engage the stuff in these buckets.

You know, during the upheaval of the last couple of years, I think we've experienced loss in different ways. At times it's been the loss of control, the loss of routines, and I think as a result, in some of our relationships, if we're honest, over the last couple of years we've just become more

disconnected. Likewise, I think that's true not only in our relationships with one another, but for some, their relationships with church and the church community, and even their relationship with God. And as a result, you may find yourself in a situation, in a place that you would describe as spiritual lethargy or apathy. And if you're there, trust me, you're not alone. It's interesting, a leading Christian magazine, Christianity Today, just recently released their book awards for 2022. And their book of the year was a book entitled Overcoming Apathy.

So here's what I think Paul is getting at. Look, he's saying, I want you to understand the hope that you have if you are a follower of Christ, the hope that he's at work, the hope that he will be faithful to his promises, the hope that he will finish what he has started in you and around you. Because Paul would argue, without this hope, you're not going to handle these buckets wisely. And I think here's one of the reasons Paul prays this way. If you read this prayer in light of the entire letter, you know, at times he's challenging us to live in light of the gospel. And he realizes in some situations that's going to demand hard choices. At times living wisely is not the path of least resistance. For instance, in chapter four, he talks about dealing with conflict in healthy ways. And he warns us if we don't deal with anger appropriately, we're actually giving Satan a foothold in our lives.

Yet isn't it the case when we've been hurt, when we've been wronged, don't you feel it could be pretty easy and natural just to sit in your anger? You know what I mean by that? Just to kind of mull over it. Maybe to figure out how you can get back. What snide remarks can you make? Isn't it easy at times to complain about them to other people? So let's be honest in those moments. I mean, to take Paul seriously, Paul, it's a lot easier for me to sit in my anger than to work through it in the way you describe. So why should I? And I think Paul would say because you live in hope. He understands there are going to be moment, situations where you won't make the right decision without hope. And so in essence, I think in the book he's saying, look, I don't want you to get stuck in things like despair, cynicism, anger, apathy. I'm praying that you're going to have a growing awareness of the hope to which you've been called, of the reality that God is at work and you can trust him in this moment.

Now with that in mind, let me just ask you a reflection question and you can just mull over this for a moment. Just ask yourself this question. What am I doing that I wouldn't be doing if I didn't have hope? What am I doing that I wouldn't be doing if I didn't have hope? See, Paul is praying that we would come to just a deepening understanding of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. And with that, I think in a related way he is praying that we would have a deepening understanding of our union with Christ or our personal identity, which is now found in that relationship. Now sometimes I think we can read through this without really grasping the gravity of what's being said. So just listen to these words again. Right, Paul says, you know, I pray that you be enlightened, that you know the hope to which he's called you. That's number one. And then the second thing, now listen to this carefully, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. Now early in the letter he talks about our inheritance in Christ. But in an unusual way, Paul now turns the tables and he says, and by the way, you are God's inheritance. Maybe no one's ever called you that before. But if you're a Christian, Paul says, you, you are God's inheritance.

One of the interesting conversations going on in our household now is at times when our sons are home, we have conversations about who wants what when we die. For me it can be a very sobering question because they're, don't get rid of me just yet, you know. And well, you know, dad, I would really like "x". And I'm afraid at some point I'm going to start roaming the house, there's just going to be little post-it notes on the back of stuff, you know. But, but notice my kids are having, we're

having, and it's in fun, we're having a lot of good fun with it, but part of what they're expressing is this is something which I really like. This is something which I really want. And Paul uses that same language to look at you and look at me and say, do you realize that God is in pursuit of you, that you, you are his inheritance?

If you follow television, you probably know one of the kind of the most talked about series of this year has been the Rings of Power, the latest in the Lord of the Rings franchise on Amazon Prime. It's building on the work of J.R.R. Tolkien. And my guess is whenever someone mentions Lord of the Rings to you or J.R.R. Tolkien, you probably think, wow, what a successful, what a successful author, right? I mean, his books have been made into blockbuster movies, seen around the world, everybody's heard of Tolkien. That may be the way we think of Tolkien, but that's not the way he thought of himself. Shortly before the Second World War, he hit really a dry spot in his life, a point of, I think, deep self-criticism and frustration with his own work. He'd been working on the Lord of the Rings for a number of years, and he wasn't nearly where he had hoped to be in completing the project. He was kind of, I think, dealing with some layers of depression and just self-criticism, wondering if he would ever actually complete all that he wanted to complete. And in his frustration, he writes a fascinating little short story. The short story is called Leaf by Niggle. And it's a story of a young guy, a niggle, who is, among other things, an aspiring artist. And Niggle has this grand vision of painting a massive tree on a big canvas and then painting the forest behind it. And so in seeking to fulfill his vision, he actually gets a canvas that's so large that he has to use a ladder to get to the top. But then life gets in the way. He's distracted by other people. In some ways, he's distracted by his own perfectionism, you know, he's just not that disciplined. And ultimately, he's only able to complete just one leaf on this canvas. And then he dies. He dies and he is forgotten. But as you read through the rest of the story, we come to what I think was Tolkien's vision of the new heavens and the new earth. And Niggle arrives by train. And what does he see? He sees his tree and the forest that he envisioned in real life. And he says, it's a gift. And in his own way, I think this was Tolkien's way of coming to grips with the manner in which his own feeble attempts at life were being brought into the much bigger story of what God is doing. It was Tolkien coming to grips with the fact that we are God's inheritance. We are deeply loved and deeply pursued by him.

And so Paul is saying, look, I want you to understand you're deeply loved, you're deeply valued, and perhaps particularly in those moments when you are frustrated with yourself and maybe over the course of this year, you know what, there's going to be stuff in these buckets that you don't handle well. Let's just kind of take that as a given. Maybe at times some of the challenges just become overwhelming. Maybe there really is an opportunity you don't step into. Maybe there's a responsibility you kind of let slide. There are going to be some ways in which perhaps at the end of this year we're going to look back and there's going to be perhaps a certain level of regret, grief, frustration on some of these issues. But I think Paul is praying, look, in those moments where a cloud of regret hangs over you, maybe even seems to follow you, and some of you know what I mean when I talk about that inner critic that doesn't go away, Paul is saying, remember that as a follower of Jesus, you are now God's inheritance.

So Paul prays, look, I want you to understand the plot. I want you to understand the hope that you have. I want you to understand this is what God has brought you into. Furthermore, I want you to understand that your identity is now rooted in this new relationship. You are God's inheritance. And finally, Paul says this, and I want you to understand the power that is now available to you, the power that is at work around you and in you. And ultimately, he's, I think, referring to the power of God's Spirit. Paul says, I'm praying that you would understand God's power, his power at work for

those who believe. It's the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him above all authorities. It's the power that made him head over everything for his church.

As you hear Paul's words, think for a moment about the first Christians to receive this letter. People walking around the city of Ephesus. To walk around a Roman city in the first century, among other things, you would have been reminded of two things. You would have been reminded of various pagan deities, particularly the deities that might have associations with that region or that city. Likewise you would have been reminded of the imperial authority of the Roman Empire. Rome was a master of political propaganda, and you could never get away from it.

So here's this handful of Christians, probably, you know, 30 to 50 people who received this letter, and they're walking around the city that constantly reminds them of other gods and other powers. And it is easy in that moment to say, wow, we're just this fledgling little movement. Let's just huddle together. Let's keep to ourselves. How do we play it safe? And Paul says, no, don't be deceived. God's power is already at work. His power is at work in calling you and bringing you into relationship with himself. His power is at work bringing you into his community, his church, and relationship with other Christians. And his power is now at work bringing you into the mission of his church, his people. So don't simply shrink your life down to that which you can control, right? Open your life to his power.

Now very quickly, in thinking about that, I think it leads to this question. So how do we do that, right? How do we open our lives to his power? Because in a real sense, as Paul prays for us to live in hope, for us to understand our identity, for us to understand the work of the Spirit, all of that is related to the Spirit's work.

So how do we engage that? Well here are just two very practical things I'm going to invite you to do. First as I've already mentioned, we're starting Love This Book 4. And I want to encourage you, if you haven't already, to grab one of the devotional guides and kind of work through this with us over the next few weeks. If you grab a guide, you can actually start a week from Sunday, next week's kind of an introduction to who Paul is, and then we'll start the journey through the letters of Paul and the guide will really lead you through the letters of Paul. So I want to encourage you, if you haven't picked this up, to go ahead and do so. And in picking this up, I also just want you to just walk through this with us. Because we're going to go week by week and look at different ways Paul is unpacking the good news of Christ. And in doing that, I think we're kind of opening ourselves to this deepening understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ, this deepening enlightenment that Paul is praying for. And as we go through it each week, there will be several devotional days, actually three each week, that will give you a devotional guide for you to kind of do several things, to read through Scripture, to respond to what you read, to reflect, and to pray.

I'll talk again about this next week, but I just want to just journey through this with us. Because even as Paul is praying for us to kind of grow in our wisdom and grow in our relationship with Christ, as we go through the letters we're going to see how he unpacks that and how he gives us different kinds of guidance for different situations. And encouraging you to do that and actually to use the prayer prompts. Secondly, I just want you to encourage you that maybe there are things you can learn from Paul's prayer in how you pray. What if you allowed Paul's prayer to affect the way you pray? And I would say this particularly to those of us maybe we're kind of just in the habit of, you know, okay, I pray for certain needs and people that are sick and bless these people, help them, and we kind of go through that. But maybe there are things from Paul's prayer that we can begin

incorporating into our own prayers. Even as we go through this series, there are different ways we are going to incorporate prayer in our corporate worship Sunday by Sunday. But maybe there are ways you can learn from Paul's prayer as you pray for yourself, as you pray for others, and pray for your families.

For instance, in times of frustration or complexity, and we pray not simply, okay, God, you know, help this situation, etc., etc., but God can in the midst of this, you deepen my sense of the hope that we have as followers of Jesus. Maybe in times of self-criticism and regret and frustration, particularly with yourself, the part of your prayer becomes, Father, just remind me of my identity. Maybe in ways you've really felt beaten up over the last few months in some situation or relationship, so Father, remind me that I am yours. And finally, in those times, maybe when you're tempted just to shrink your life back to that which you can control, right? Just I don't need to live life as an adventure. I can, you know, I kind of got it the way I want it, and I want to keep it that way because I can control that. Would you be willing to say, Father, may I just be attuned to the reality that your Spirit is at work? And maybe there's some things you're calling me into that I've been hesitant to do, but help me to see that I'm not going to engage them alone, that the arena of obedience is also the arena in which your Spirit is at work.

So what if, what if this year, as you engage your responsibilities, your opportunities, and your challenges, what if in the course of this year as these buckets start to fill up, what if this were also a year in which you knew God better? Because Paul wants us to see that the journey of living wisely, the journey of responding to these things wisely is also the journey of knowing him better.

Now with that in mind, what I want to do right now is I just want, I just want to pray this passage for us as a church community. So would you join me? Let's just pray right now. Gracious God, here we are at the start of the new year, and even though I think sometimes it's just the turning of one page, there can still be a certain sense of excitement, just the freedom of starting on a fresh page and what that entails. But Father, even as we think about a fresh year, we also know there are certain things we're bringing into this year. We already know some of the things in these buckets, and the buckets are going to get heavier and fill up with more stuff in the course of this year. Father, I pray that as we seek to engage these things wisely that we would also see that that's the same journey of growing in our relationship with you. And so Father, I pray for us individually, I pray for us as a church community that you would just open the eyes of our heart. I pray for your Spirit to do his work, and I pray that we would be willing to, in different ways, kind of make room for you to work. Through things like going through Love This Book and things just being attuned to how we pray. Father, as I pray for us, I do, I know some of us, maybe some of the challenges that we are facing, some of the things that we have gone through, it's just, maybe it's just worn us down. The truth is for some of us, we're entering a new year, but we're already tired. So Father, I pray, particularly in those cases, that we might know the hope that we have in you. I pray that in concrete and profound ways we could experience your faithfulness. Father, I pray for some that we could just be that church community that just knows how to love on people. I pray that in an ongoing way this could be a place where you just realize I'm in this with other people and they've got my back. And Father, that means for some of us, we've just got, we've got to be more attuned to the people around us and where they're at. So I pray, I pray for that wisdom because we need to live in the hope that we have. And Father, I also pray for some of us, maybe, maybe there were some mistakes we made this year, there are things that just are kind of lingering. There's a certain sense of regret and disappointment, perhaps even most profoundly in ourselves. And Father, for some of us, as we start this new year, we need to be reminded that we are your inheritance. And again, I pray your Spirit would just kind



of do his work in us to remind us that we are deeply loved and we are deeply cherished. And all that you're doing is to bring us into relationship with you. And finally, Father, I pray that through the course of this year we would just have a growing awareness of your power. Father, some of us have just gotten too comfortable in following you. We know the answers, we know kind of, we know how to act in church context, but we really, we're just kind of living in a way that we've shrunk our lives down to that which we can control. And yet you're calling us into your bigger story. And so Father, for some of us, we just need to be reminded of your power. We need to be convicted by your Spirit, perhaps in areas where we need to be obedient, but it's going to be hard. And I pray we would just be open to your work, open to the reality that for some of us this path is going to be challenging, but it's the path you promised to walk with us. So Father, for us individually, for us as the Hershey Free Church family, my prayer is this is a year where we come to know you better. And I pray that in Jesus' name, amen.