

# "The Bridge Between Two Worlds"

The Fellowship This Church Built Was Never Just for This Room  
Bible Study | John 13:35 · 1 John 4:12 · Ecclesiastes 4:12 | June, Week 1

## CORE TEXTS

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." — John 13:35

"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." — 1 John 4:12

"A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." — Ecclesiastes 4:12

## START OUTSIDE — BEFORE THE TOPIC

The sermon opened not inside the building but on the street in front of it — looking West and East at two distinct communities this church sits between.

<b>TO THE WEST</b> <i>Under-resourced</i> <i>Overlooked by systems</i> <i>Rich in resilience</i> <i>Needs presence not programs</i> <i>Waiting for a church that stays</i>	↔	<b>TO THE EAST</b> <i>Resource-rich</i> <i>Comfortable but searching</i> <i>Has everything — and still missing something</i> <i>Needs a wider table</i> <i>Waiting for community that's real</i>
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## What is this church called to be to both of those communities?

1. Before any theology — what do you actually know about the community to the West of this church? Not in general terms. Specifically. Names, needs, what daily life looks like. How deep does your knowledge go?
2. What do you actually know about the community to the East? Same question. What is the pressure they are carrying that does not get named out loud?

*The honest gap between how well I know my immediate community and how well I know the communities around this church:*

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THE MONTH AND THE QUESTION — DID YOU GO?

10 min

The sermon rehearsed the entire month in four paragraphs. Week one: we admitted most of what we call fellowship is a potluck. Week two: nobody is optional to this body. Week three: we named the wound of loneliness hiding behind fine. Week four: we counted the cost of bearing burdens — time, proximity to pain, the willingness to stay.

And then the sermon asked the question that determined what the finale was actually for:

## Did you go bear something this week?

1. Answer honestly — did you? Did you contact the person whose name you held in silence last week? Did you say the true thing to someone? Did you show up for a burden you did not cause? What happened?
2. If you didn't — not as guilt but as honest diagnosis — what got in the way? Which of the three costs stopped you: time, proximity to pain, or the willingness to stay?

#### THE THREE TEXTS AS A MAP

*John 13:35 — the watching world identifies the church by the quality of love between its members. Fellowship is not a private internal matter. It is the primary evidence to the outside world that the God this church claims is real.*

*1 John 4:12 — nobody has ever seen God directly. But when genuine love flows between members of this community, God becomes visible. The quality of fellowship in this church is a theological statement about whether God is present and active.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:12 — one strand is vulnerable, two are stronger, three woven together are not quickly broken. The church that weaves its diverse members together becomes structurally unbreakable — precisely because of the difference between the strands, not despite it.*

3. All three texts connect the quality of internal fellowship to external impact. How does that change the way you think about what happens inside this building? What is at stake in the room that goes beyond the room?
4. Ecclesiastes 4:12 describes strength that comes from diversity of strands. What different strands exist in this congregation — different backgrounds, experiences, economic realities — and how well are they actually woven together right now?

*The strand in this congregation I am least connected to — and what it would take to change that:*

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#### THE TURN — FELLOWSHIP FLOWS OUTWARD

10 min

The sermon made the defining move of the entire month: everything built inside these walls was never designed to stay here. The fellowship this month developed — the honesty, the burden-bearing, the refusal to let anyone be optional — is a capacity. It is the muscle built in preparation for the lifting the church is about to be asked to do in both directions.

*A church that has learned to bear each other's burdens is ready to bear the burdens of the community around it. A church that has stopped performing wellness with each other is ready to be honest with a world that is tired of performance. A church where no one is optional inside is ready to tell the community outside: you are not optional to us either.*

1. The sermon said: fellowship that stays inside the building is incomplete. Do you agree? What is the difference between a church that has healthy internal fellowship and a church that turns that fellowship outward? What does each one look like in practice?
2. The community to the West doesn't need another program — it needs presence. The community to the East doesn't need an invitation to a service — it needs a wider table. What is the difference between those two things and what most churches actually offer? Where does this church currently land?
3. The sermon said both communities are a bridge away from this room — and the bridge doesn't build itself. It is built by people who have done the interior work. What interior work from this month specifically equips you to be part of building that bridge?

*The specific thing this month built in me that I can now bring to the community outside these walls:*

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**FROM THE TRADITION**

*The Black church at its best was never a private institution. It was the center of community life — the place where the disenfranchised found legal counsel, where the hungry found food, where the unemployed found work through the network, where the grieving found dignity. It held the community in both directions — it was the resource for those who had nothing and the conscience for those who had plenty.*

*That is the bridge model. Not charity from one side to the other. A community that weaves its diverse strands together and becomes something neither side could produce alone. That tradition is not a memory. It is the standard this series is calling this congregation back to.*

**PERSONAL COMMITMENT + MONTH 6 LAUNCH**

*"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." — John 13:35*

The altar call this week commissioned the congregation in two directions — left side commits to presence to the West, right side commits to invitation to the East, both meet at the center as the bridge. The sermon's closing charge was not a summary. It was a sending:

**Go build the bridge.**

**MY COMMITMENT WEST**

*One specific act of presence I will bring to the community to the West this month:*



**MY COMMITMENT EAST**

*One specific act of invitation I will bring to the community to the East this month:*

*The strand I am personally adding to the cord this month — what I am bringing that was not here before:*

**MONTH 6: WHAT FELLOWSHIP PRODUCES — COMING NEXT**

<b>S5</b>	<b>'The World Will Know'</b>	<i>John 13:34–35</i>
<b>S6</b>	<b>'When the Cord Holds'</b>	<i>Ecclesiastes 4:9–12</i>
<b>S7</b>	<b>'The Table the World Can't Set'</b>	<i>Luke 14:12–24</i>
<b>S8</b>	<b>'We Are the Answer'</b>	<i>1 Corinthians 12:27</i>

**SCRIPTURES FOR THIS STUDY**

*John 13:35 | 1 John 4:12 | Ecclesiastes 4:12 | Acts 2:42–47 | Luke 14:12–24*