Abraham

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Preacher: Andrew Lawrence

[0:00] What love is this Father? What amazing love. He brought Jesus to the cross.

! Son of God. To die as a sacrifice for our sins.! How can we respond to say, oh God, you be Lord. You be our God. We want you to be in control of our lives. We want to surrender ourselves to you. You be glorified, Lord.
Oh God, we worship you with, not just in song, but we want to worship you with the entirety of our lives. Help us, Lord. Help us to give ourselves in that way.
Thank you, Father. Thank you. You don't leave us, but you give us your spirit to equip us, to empower us to do just that. We get the complete package. How wonderful, how amazing is the love of God?
[1:22] We worship you. We worship you. We worship you above everything and everyone else.

Hallelujah. Amen. Amen. Please take your seats. Band, fantastic. Thank you for how you've led us. Well, hi, everyone.
My name's Andrew, if we've not yet met. I'm one of the leaders in Harvest Church, part of the leadership team here in Harvest Church. Look forward to meeting you if we've not yet met. We've been doing a series in the Book of Acts for the best part of the last year, really since the beginning of this year.
But today we're going to take a break from that and we're going to dive into Hebrews chapter 11. Now, Hebrews chapter 11, if you don't know it, is often sort of thought of as a bit of a hall of fame of people of faith.
And it tells lots of different stories. It starts with this. Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. And the whole of this chapter is written to encourage us and to inspire us that just as these people, which we're going to read about, had faith and trusted God, we too can do the same.
[2:43] And it concludes, in one sense, with the wrapping up at the beginning of Hebrews 12, which we'll also turn to in a moment. For me, I particularly want to focus, though, just on three verses.

They're on the screen. Well, they will be once when we get to verse 10, but we're starting in verse 8 of Hebrews chapter 11. And it says this, By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
By faith, he made his home in the promised land. Like a stranger in a foreign country, he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.
For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, who architect and builder is God.
Wonderful, wonderful passage here.
I just want to share a few thoughts from this passage, because for me, I find Hebrews 11 so encouraging, because while it is a story of people's faith, it's also a story of real people who got things wrong.
[3:54] I don't know about you, but when I want to be inspired by somebody's faith, knowing that they actually also got things wrong at times, is pretty helpful. Because I feel like, oh, maybe there's hope for me then too.

Maybe you feel the same. So, a few simple thoughts from Hebrews chapter 11, verses 8 to 10. The first one is this. It says, When called to go, obeyed and went.
I mean, that's just, it's so simple, isn't it? And yet it sums up so many, many challenges. He was leaving the land of his fathers.

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He was leaving a safe place, a place where he was known, where there was generations, where there was history. And yet, so often we may struggle just to go to our neighbours, our work colleagues, our family, our friends, to the poor, neglected, the abused.
We actually go, can also be, go to another nation, like Vinnie and Diana did, who we sent a few months ago to Portugal. Please be praying for them. It could be starting a new ministry, starting a new job.
[5:08] developing something new within the role of a life of Harvest Church. It could just be, saying, I'm going to trust you, God, with this aspect of my life.

Or it could be the whole. Simple steps of obedience. I guess for me, when I think about simple steps of obedience, it starts with those simple steps of taking hold of God's word and applying it.
Baptism in water. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Developing a relationship with God. Having a living relation, vibrant relationship with God through his word, through worship, through prayer.
By being filled with his spirit on an ongoing basis. Walking with his spirit. spirit. Loving the lost and the hurting. Servanthood. Those can all be expressions of our faith being outworked in obedience to God.
And actually, ultimately, whether it's another nation, another town, another city, another place, or all of those things I've just mentioned, it requires the same faith heart response.
[6:32] Which is, Lord, I'll be obedient to what you say. When you say go, I'll go. There was a word recently brought as an encounter from Isaiah 6.

Built around that verse where Isaiah sees God and goes, here am I, send me, Lord. What a great example for us to also think about.
Am I prepared to go where God says go? Am I prepared to take steps of faith? Am I prepared to even pioneer some things? I won't necessarily be for all of us. We've all got different characters and gifts.
As we go, though, we also see a couple of other things in this passage. He went and he made his new place a home. But it was a weird home because he lived in tents, we're told. So he settled, yet we stayed a stranger.
And sometimes the whole thing of going can feel a bit unsettling. It's not necessarily easy. It's not necessarily comfortable. And for Abraham, he didn't adopt the ways of the people around him.
[7:43] He stayed true to God. He even stayed in a tent saying, hey, I'm ready to move on, God, when you're ready to move me on. He speaks so much of an attitude dependent on God, knowing there's more to come, that this world even is just a temporary thing.

And of course, that's the thing which drives him. Why? Well, he got a vision of God's plans. God's plans for him, yes, on this earth, but also recognizing there's an architect who's building a city which we're all going to end up in if you're a believer one day.
This is not the end. This is just a shadow of what's to come. There's something far more glorious, far more wonderful, which we all get to enjoy at that point where we get called home to a wonderful city who's architect and builder is God with great foundations.
And so I guess the first thing I really want to ask from this first passage is this. How will we, how will you, how will I respond as God directs our lives?
Because he will. Will I take simple steps of faith, simple steps of obedience? Will I follow what he asks me to do?
[9:14] Or will I hold back and go, oh, I can't do that, Lord. You can't in your own natural ability. We can't. But we can in God.

This is why this Hebrews 11 is so important. Because these are all stories of people who couldn't do it in their own strength. And when they did try doing it in their own strength, got it wrong.
But we trusted God. Faith is a simple thing. It's trusting God. Believing God for who he is. Trusting him. So, from Hebrews 11 we get to Hebrews 12.
Funny that. And at the beginning of Hebrews 12 we read this. Therefore, verse 1, therefore, he's summing up what he's just written about in chapter 11. Therefore, since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.
let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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[10:40] This is our glorious saviour who we've just been singing about what he did. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful man so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.

I wonder whether the author of Hebrews when they're talking about being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses or martyrs, perhaps it was a picture of somebody running a race in an amphitheatre surrounded by people looking on, watching, waiting to see who's going to win that race.
We don't know but maybe that was what was going on. But he's fundamentally saying the same thing, be inspired by these people's stories, by their journeys of faith. Gaze on them, consider them, the power of testimony is so important.
Do share your testimonies, testimonies of salvation, testimonies of God's grace and suffering and hardship. They're all really important. They point to Jesus.
And he says throw off, literally get rid of anything which hinders us in running this race. Sin that so easily entangles, goodness me, don't we know that?
[11:58] Sin that wants to, just waiting to catch hold of us and snare us, stop us running that race. So often that can be our own personal agendas, our own desires, ultimately selfishness, that's the heart of sin.

I want to put myself above God. He's saying, hey no, surrender. Remember, God provides all of our needs. He'll provide all of our needs in each of our settings.
We can always trust him. He knows what he's about, he's totally trustworthy. So we don't need to allow sin to come and entangle and ensnare us and hinder us.
He says run with perseverance. Run with perseverance. Wow. Keep running. The race God gives us. Everybody's race will be different.
Run your race. Don't look at the neighbour. Don't look at your friend, your family. Run the race he's given you. Can I encourage us though? Run to win the prize.
[13:05] I'm not getting into some competitive thing here, but let's give ourselves all of ourselves to win the prize. How do we do that? Well, we fix our eyes on Jesus like the finishing line of the race. We gaze on Jesus who we're going to meet face to face one day.

The author and perfecter of our faith. In other words, he's fully competent to look after us. Let's gaze on him. Let's not allow our eyes to go anywhere else. Our place of greatest security and safety is when we're gazing on Jesus.
When we're fixing our eyes on him. when we're giving ourselves to him. God is sovereign. That's what you said, wasn't it, Karen?
Yeah? God is sovereign. God's sovereign. God is sovereign. Hey, can you turn to your neighbor and just say that to them? God is sovereign.
It's important we remind ourselves of that. We can forget it too easily. God is sovereign. Or if you want to put it in a less technical word, you can say God's in control.
[14:17] That works too. He's above all things. He's all, yeah. And so he says, don't lose heart. Don't grow weary. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Remind ourselves who Jesus is, of the glory of God as we gaze on the majesty and glory of God. We remind ourselves who he is. we are more inclined to say, hey, I'm going to keep running this race.
As we're strengthened by his Holy Spirit, as we give him grace through each set of circumstances, we can give ourselves more and more to see his kingdom come, that bit of his kingdom which we see come on earth, and to give ourselves for that glorious end time, bride of Christ.
Christ. Because that's what we're called to be. His church is going to be the bride of Christ. Jesus is coming back for his bride. A pure and spotless bride. Wow.
And we get to be part of that. So I want to move on now to a personal application from what I've just read.
[15:21] How I've found God's spoken to me. And I guess for me it started in my twenties. I was being discipled.

I was a new believer. I got saved when I was 18. And I was being discipled by a man called Paul. And he had a picture one day for me. Prophetic picture.
He said, I feel like God's saying to you, you're going to be an Abraham. You're going to father a multitude. You're going to father people. But also there's that aspect of going not knowing.
And I guess I sort of logged it away. I don't know about you, I tend to write down prophetic words because often they take years to be fulfilled. And so it's good to have a record of them and go back

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to them and pray over them.
Then in my very late twenties, early thirties, somebody gave me almost the identical word. Now, when Paul gave me this word, it was just him and I in a room. There was nobody else there to hear it. And I hadn't talked about it at all.
[16:22] Because I felt like it was something precious to hold tight. But then this next person picked me out of a crowd and said virtually the same thing. Different person, different setting, but saying virtually the same thing.

And then again in my late forties. And so I've lived with this sort of sense of not really understanding it fully, but just that I'm called to father people and to be a father and to serve people in that way. And I didn't have a drink. I guess part of that is saying, hey God, I'm prepared to go wherever you want me to go, wherever you lead us, I'll give myself to seeing your kingdom come.
And in fact, that's part of the story of why we came to Harvest Church, because God spoke to us. Back in 2016, I was coming to preach here because the church didn't have a lead elder at the time, and within our commission family of churches, a number of us were asked to come and preach here.
And I knew the situation of what was going on because we'd been praying for the church in the UK team, and driving in, down the butts, January 2016, and God says, this is where you're to be.
[17:37] Oh, wow. Good, it's me. And I have to admit, prior to that, I'd known that we were praying for a leader, but I never thought it was me.

Orsford, we want to come to Walton. We'd been a couple of times on the train from Orsford, and we hadn't had great experiences at Walton, with young children coming off the train trying to find somewhere to eat and all that sort of stuff, and I didn't really want to come.
And yet God said, hey, this is where you're coming. Sometimes simple steps of obedience can lead to phenomenal blessing.
I can just say, for Emma and I, we aim to respect, to weigh, to honour and apply how God speaks to us prophetically. That's been part of our culture.
I hope it is for all of us. You may need to think about how that happens, but recording prophetic words, praying them back to God, taking steps of obedience from within there. That's all part of it.
[18:44] So, autumn 2018 comes round, and I get an email from Martin Flood, who leads our church over in Basingstoke, and he says, he's got a guy in his church called Ian, who is a guy who's been recognised with having a clearly prophetic gift, and he's had a word for the bloke who leads that church over in autumn.

I'm not even sure he knew my name necessarily, maybe he did, I can't remember. Could he forward this prophetic picture and words to me? So, Martin forwards this email to me, and it was an interesting one because I read it and thought, well, maybe, yeah, maybe that's ringing true, and then one line in it referred to Abraham.
I was like, ah, that's got my attention. And so we weighed it, Emma and I, we felt, that could be right, and for a season we just held on to it before talking to the elders, I'll come back to that in a moment.
The gist of the word was this, that God had called me to harvest church for a particular season to lead the eldership team to relay the foundations of harvest church.
Now, I don't know if you know, but my background is Almas of Ava, so foundations, looking down holes is part of my background. And getting foundations right is really important because it shapes the whole of a building, shapes how big it is, how tall it is, what it can be used for, the load structures.
[20:15] If you don't get the foundations right, it's disaster. And sometimes you're going to have to dig out wrong, bad foundations and relay foundations. And this word said, lay them strong and deep.

Make sure you lay them really, really, really well because God wants to do something wonderful in and through us, Harvest Church, for the good of our town and the district.
And the image particularly he had was of those simple houses being built in a street in Edinburgh which is now called the Royal Mile. And of course these simple houses are now a World Heritage site and the most amazing structures.
And the essence was this, it would be home for many. Harvest Church will be home for many. But the world went on and said, but once you've finished laying them, Andrew, that God was raising up

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for Harvest Church someone who would then build on them.
Now I think that's a really encouraging word for us as a church. God's about a work in us. He's relayed our foundations but we're not stopping there because to be honest you can stick foundations aground and they don't do much unless you do something with them.
[21:35] You've got to build on them. They say hey he's preparing somebody else to come alongside, to come in to then build on those foundations. foundations. And I think it's fair to say that over the last nine years since I've been part of Harvest Church we've worked a lot on those foundations and we've made great progress in being the people God has called us to be.

And Emma and I have loved being part of Harvest Church. In 2020 as elders we discussed this word, recognised it was from God but also had a sense it was not for the immediate.
However after Nathan's departure to two and a half years ago from the eldership team, he was one of our elders, in case you didn't know him, he and his wife and family moved out to the States to get involved in a church plant out there.
We felt that when we replaced Nathan we should look for somebody who could take on overall leadership responsibility of Harvest Church, in other words be the eldership team leader that is currently my role.
And that a time of transition from me to them would come about in due course. So when we were recruiting and we found Tim, we were very intentional to look at his character, his gift mix, in light of his call and ability to lead the eldership team.
[22:57] I actually commented on this back in November 2024 at a church meeting when we were announcing our plan to add him to the staff and even hinted at a transition to come. as elders and the deacons who have more recently been involved in this process plus trustees and also those who serve us within our commission family of churches, we are convinced that Tim has the right character, calling and gifts to now build on those foundations that we have laid over the last nine years.

I love Tim's strong passion for our church, his pastoral gift, both in teaching but so many other ways, and his amazing strategic gifts which are so important for a church of our size.
Joining the dots together, let me be very clear, this means we believe my time is Tim. So today we are announcing that we are formally starting a process where the role of eldership team leader will be transitioning to Tim and we expect that to complete on the 1st of February 2026.
Can I be really clear at this point? I feel that if I was to stay in that role any longer, I would be at risk of being disobedient to that word from God.
That wouldn't be good for me and it wouldn't be good for us as a church. I will then stay on staff. I will gradually reduce my hours until summer 2026 when I will cease being an elder or on staff here in Harvest Church and Emma and I will expect to leave Alton soon after then.
[24:55] By the way, Emma and I are praying about what God is calling us to next but we felt constrained from giving this very much thought until today as our focus is wanting to do this leadership transition really well and not to be distracted by other things.

So you can ask us where we're going and we may laugh and say we haven't got a clue. We're going not knowing. As with Abraham, God will direct our paths as we trust him, both for Harvest Church and for Emma and I.
Transition is never easy but we as a team are all committed to doing it well. Please pray for Tim as he looks to build, adapt and develop teams especially the eldership team and the staff team to serve us going forward.
Our transition plans hopefully give Tim that time and space and freedom to make a start on those things before I've gone. Very aware that this will be a surprise for many and you'll probably have questions and to be honest we may or may not be able to answer these at this point in time.
But can I encourage all of us to take both faith that is trust in God and courage. If we put our trust in God we can have courage.
[26:32] God gives us courage as we undertake this. In other words let's keep looking to God follow his directions just like Abraham. Transition change transitional change it affects us all differently.

For some it will be a sense of sadness others a sense of risk or threat or unsettling. That's all fine. Do engage with those feelings. Don't try and hide them or ignore them. But please know this we have loved being part of Harvest Church.

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And this will be a massive wrench for us. We don't do it out of some sort of casual way. But we do it because we believe God's called us to move on now having finished laying foundations here.
And grief yes there's lots but grief exists because there is love. We'll all need patience humility and prayerfulness.
Prayerfulness is expressing our dependence saying hey God we need you to lead us in this. But ultimately God gives transitions are about surrender and about obedience to God.
[27:50] Putting him and his plans first. Knowing that that is best for all of us. And it's an amazing opportunity to see what God will do next.

God is about a great work in us as a church. He knows what he's doing. He has wonderful plans for the future of Harvest Church. That we will impact our town and our district and even beyond to the ends of the earth.
And I want to encourage us let's give ourselves to encounter and to surrender to him. Let's play our parts to the full in all that he is doing.
And Emma and I wherever we are, wherever we end up, we will be cheering along with you from the sidelines. Jesus. So I want to finish just by reminding us that passage we just read from Hebrews 12.
Five things. Let's be inspired by all that God's done before and encourage and strengthen each other. Let's throw off sin and all hindrances. Let's run the race with perseverance, keeping our eyes on Jesus, fixed on Jesus.
[29:09] Let's not grow weary, but keep running that race for that glorious price. Amen? Amen. Thank you. I'm going to hand over to Tim now, who's also going to preach.

Thank you. Friends, you'll be having all sorts of immediate reactions to what Andrew has just told you.
That's okay. You will have right now and over the coming weeks and months mixed emotions, I imagine. That's also okay. Realistically, most of you who've been part of Harvest Church for a while are going to experience grief because you love Andrew.
That's one of the things that I've seen most over the six months that we've been here, much more than he realizes, you love him. Grief is a good and appropriate reaction to that.
There is lots of permission to feel however you feel. Please allow yourself to do so. it's good and healthy to grieve.
[30:37] It is particularly good and healthy to grieve when a beloved leader is running their race well and is trying to be obedient to God in things that they find difficult but doing it anyway.

And so off they go, of course you should grieve. There is no pressure from any of us to feel in any particular way. And you might find that you have questions.
Please ask them. Please come talk to one of the elders or one of the deacons. Ask your questions. I cannot, as Andrew said, guarantee that we will know the answers. But we can have a go.
But do ask your questions. what I particularly love for us to do as a church is take quite seriously the first half of what Andrew said when he preached to us from Hebrews 11 before he then applied it to himself.
He's just done a particularly brave thing. I know because I've been there actually. Helen and I stood up in front of a church and said, God tells us to go but we don't know where we're going. We came here.
[31:52] It's hard. It's brave. But he is following Jesus where he calls him. He read from Hebrews chapter 11 about Abraham that Abraham was looking forward to the city that had foundations.

Now the city being talked about is, yeah, it's the beautiful holy New Jerusalem that the church perfected in the future but therefore also it's this, it's Harvest Church.
The city that Abraham was looking for was you. It has foundations and Andrew has been laying them. He's done the work he was called to do well. That's why it's time in the Lord's mind to say, okay, it's time for another adventure.
the foundations are good. The foundations ultimately are who Andrew is. We should imitate him.
In the Bible, Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Jesus. I'd like to say to you, please imitate Andrew as he is imitating Jesus. He imitates Abraham as he imitates Jesus.
[33:08] Let's be brave in doing the things that the Lord puts in front of us. Those foundations that Andrew has laid are in us.

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All of us. This is not, it might be tempting to think, oh, this is kind of like it was Andrew, now it's Tim. Church doesn't really work like that. Church is a team sport.
Some of you would have been at lunchtime prayer meeting and a few days of prayer and fasting we had the week before last. Hannah Turner brought this actually quite powerful in the moment prophetic word.
She had an image of a team before they were going to go on the pitch and play sport. Everyone had their arms in that thing that teams sometimes do. They're looking at each other and jeering each other up for the match.
She said there's excitement, there's joy, they're all in this together, but they all know that one of them will score a goal, but actually that's not how it works. They all scored. the whole team does it together.
[34:10] That's true of a church. Church is a team sport. We're all in this. We've all got a job to do, to build on the foundations that have been laid.

A city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. So the designer and builder of this church was never Andrew.
It's certainly not me. It's not the other elders. It's Jesus. Jesus had this great idea that's changed the world. It's probably the best idea anyone's ever had.
It's called the church. Sometimes she's a mess, but she's also the most wonderful, beautiful thing that anyone has ever thought of. It's Jesus church.
It always was Jesus church. It wasn't Andrew's church. It's not becoming Tim's church. It's Jesus church. What did Andrew say to do? Get your eyes on Jesus. Let's follow him together.
[35:15] Let's do what Andrew asked us to do. Let's build the church by following Jesus. Why? Because he's really worth following.

I mean, if we're really honest, Andrew might have let you down once or twice. I will let you down way more often than that. But Jesus never will.
He's never going to. He's worth following. And he will do us good if we follow him. Because he loves his church.
He loves his church. As we've already heard, we are his beloved, his bride. died. It says in Hebrews 12, he died on the cross for the joy set before him.
What's that? You. But you as us, as a group, it's the church. He dies for his bride, his wife to be, because he loves her so much.
[36:21] Abraham, all that time ago, is setting out on a journey because he's had a little bit of a vision of the church that Jesus will build. he's still building.

The church is the most wonderful thing in the whole world, or she can be. Why? Because Jesus loves her. That's why.
Not because we're clever or we do great things or we really know what we're about. But Jesus loves us and he wants to lead us forwards. And I think that's really good news.
Let's try and keep our eyes on him. So what we're going to do now is I'm going to invite the other elders to come up here on the platform with me and then the deacons are going to come and stand with us and they're going to pray the deacons up for the church and we're going to invite all of you to stand along with us while they pray for the church and then Katie's going to lead us back into worshipping Jesus to try and help us get our eyes on Jesus.
Now you're still allowed to feel all the things you want to feel for as long as you like. You can ask all the questions. This isn't like oh now let's move on and look at you. Ask all the questions you want.
[37:41] Take all the time you need. But to try and help us with that the thing that we're going to do now is look to God. So how about we stand together and if elders and deacons can come join me.

Okay let's pray.
Jesus our beautiful saviour who was here at the beginning of creation who will be here always who is here right now in this moment.
We love you. We fix our eyes on you this morning and help us to keep fixing our eyes on you. Taking our eyes off our circumstances off our fears and our worries and lifting our eyes up to you. Because then we can test and approve the good plans you've got for us.
[38:55] That's what it says here in your word. And Jesus just as you prayed that all of them may be one about believers you prayed that.

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Says it in your word. I pray similarly this morning that we may be one. that we might be one body who loves each other who supports each other who has one goal and that's to see you glorified.
And we will remember that great commission that we are commanded to do and let this kick off that plan and purpose that you have for us that we will see people saved that we will welcome them into your house.
Give us the heart we need to love this place. Give us the grace and the mercy that we need to transform this area for you that we will see the lost saved.
Thank you for letting us be part of your plan. We love you. Amen. Father, I thank you that you love your church.
[40:13] You love your people. Lord, you chose us. You have brought us together as one church here in Harvest Church, Alton, and yet we're part of a much bigger, bigger plan across the world.

Father, we look to you and we say thank you that it's your plan, it's your idea, it's all about you, and we're not in charge.
You may use us, you may help us to do little bits, but Lord, we do your will. Lord, help us to surrender to you as we follow your plans.
Lord, help us to look to you and know the joy of following your plans, because that's the best place we can ever be when we're walking in your path and doing your things. So, Father, bring us together in unity as we look to you and rejoice in you with all that you have planned and prepared for us to do, Father.
Amen. Amen. John records in his gospel the words that Jesus spoke when he was about to leave his disciples.
[41:30] And within that, Jesus talks about himself as being the true vine. He says, Jesus says, I am the vine and you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.
He goes on to say, if you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
Jesus says, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.
you are holy, God. Thank you for calling each of us and giving yourself for us so that we may be part of your church, to be an expression of your love and compassion and grace.
[43:02] of your truth and justice and mercy, of your forgiveness and restoration and hope for the community in which we live, for this nation and its culture, for the world of which we're a part.

So, Lord, please keep us united, rooted in your word, filled with your spirit, following where you lead, courageous for the gospel and with generous hearts to serve and to keep on serving in a continuous attitude of worship of you, Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit.
Amen. In Deuteronomy it says, be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or terrified, for the Lord your God goes with you, he will never leave you nor forsake you.
And that's my prayer for Harvest Church, is that we would be a people who recognise that God is with them, that they're not afraid, but they are strong and courageous.
Lord, pray that for us. Amen. Lord, I just pray for every individual here this morning and who maybe might not be with us today, we just pray that you would bring peace that transcends all understanding, that you would be with each of us as we process sad news, as we look forward to the future, Lord, I just pray that you would be with us wherever we go.
[44:46] In the name of Jesus, Amen. We're told in the Psalms, behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It is like the Jew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, life forever more.
And my prayer is that we would, throughout this change, still be you totally united in our love for Jesus, in our love for one another, and in our love for our community, Alton and the surrounding areas, to bless those and serve in the name of Jesus.
Amen. Friends, I don't know what emotions you're feeling in this moment. Maybe it's sadness, maybe it's excitement, it's uncertainty, but I know one thing, Jesus is Lord.
I don't know what we're going to face as we leave here today. Maybe joy, maybe there's unknowns, maybe there are decisions and challenges, but I do know this, Jesus is so faithful.

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[45:57] He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus, thank you that in Hebrews it tells us to fix our eyes on you, the author and the perfecter of our faith.

Thank you that you are the way to the Father who loves us with a steadfast and unconditional love. Jesus, right now we choose to turn our eyes towards you.
Thank you that we can see that you are building your church and that you are equipping us for what is to come. You strengthen us to run the race marked out for us, not in our own strength, but absolutely in yours, Jesus.
As we go into this next season as a church family, we ask Jesus, would you fill us afresh with faith, hope, and a really deep sense of your presence. Help us to lift our eyes above what is changing here, to see the one who never ever changes.
Lord Jesus, as we come and worship you together now, please help us to keep our eyes fully fixed on you, to find in you all that we need, and to give you all that you are worthy of.
[47:08] We love you, Jesus. Amen.

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