

## Galatians #12 - 4 Ways to Cultivate Spirit-Filled Community

- How are you church family, pastor Mark here in Wartburg, Germany, really excited to be in the book of Galatians with you today. We've been in the book of Galatians for most of the summer. It's been a great study. Next week, I look forward to being with you, and finishing up the book as we get ready for our third birthday on August 11th. What brought Grace and I here to Germany was the new book. "Win Your War" comes out in October, it's on spiritual warfare and it's a book that we have honestly been working on for decades. Pretty much all of our adult life. We're really excited about the project in October when the book releases there'll be a full sermon series and we'll give a free copy to all the visitors at The Trinity church. And we were recording the trailer for the book right here in this room. And the obvious question is, well, why? This is the room in which Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer sat down to translate the Bible as a Bible teacher. This is an incredibly historic location. We enjoy the Bible in our native language. There are innumerable translations available to us, in English and the Bible has become the most translated, distributed, read, and influential book in the history of the world. But it wasn't always that way, there was a time when the mass, the church service on Sunday was in the language of Latin. In addition, the translation of the Bible that was available was called the Vulgate again in Latin. What that meant was if you wanted to learn about God, you needed to first learn an entirely new language. Well, there were some who wanted the Bible to be translated into the language of the common folks, so they could read it for themselves. This includes men historically like Wycliffe, but truly everything changed with Martin Luther as he was studying the Bible, especially books like Psalms, Romans, and also Galatians, which was one of his favorites, he wrote an entire commentary on it and did a series of lectures at his church on the great book of Galatians that we've been studying. But Luther went back to the original scriptures in their original languages, Old Testament in Hebrew, New Testament in Greek. And he realized that some of the teaching was inaccurate and inconsistent with the word of God. And he determined rightly so, that over the church is the word of God. And that the word of God exists to instruct, direct and correct the people of God. Well, this led to great controversy. This was at the beginning of the Protestant reformation. A death sentence was literally put on Martin Luther's head. He was considered an outlaw after civil and ecclesiastical courts condemned him and his life was in jeopardy and dangerous, illegal outlaw. People could kill him with no legal recourse. And so what happened was a political leader in the region, this is very near his hometown and where he grew up, a political leader, faked Martin Luther's death. And they staged what would have been kind of like an assassination attempt, but it was all choreographed, so that then they could smuggle Martin Luther to this location. Many of his critics stopped that he was dead. Some of the drama and conflict died down and he sort of hit out right here in the Wartburg Castle for what is reported to be about 10 months. He did a lot of theological work, wrote some books, but the biggest project that he undertook was going back to the original Greek language of the New Testament and translating it into the common language of the average person to unleash the word of God. It is reported that he sat in this very room that he sat in a chair exactly like this, this is a replica. That he was dressed up like a knight. And so the picture behind me shows him with his beard and his haircut, not typical for

the monk that he was, but it was his way of protecting his identity and extending his life. The desk behind me is from a near relative of his, it's from the same time period. And some suggests that he may have sat there, and studied there as a young boy. But nonetheless, this is the room that Martin Luther sat in, to teach and to study and to translate the word of God. And what came forth historically, it was around the same time as the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg, not far from here, all of a sudden the Bible goes viral. Bible teaching goes viral. Finally, people can read the word of God and read teachers of God's word or themselves. Well, this transformed every thing in the history of Christianity. And so it's a great honor to be here, and I just thought it would be fun to share with you. And so what I wanted to do to honor the legacy of Martin Luther and especially the word of God, is to spend a little time with you in the book of Galatians. So if you've got your Bible go to Galatians 6: 1-10 well, as we near the end of Galatians, what Paul is going to share with us today is the conclusion of a series of grand, great and godly arguments for the gospel, the good news, the saving work of the person of Jesus Christ. Now, this is important because God cares about your relationship with him, and your relationship with others. And so Paul spent the first portion of the book of Galatians, really talking about our relationship with God, how we are justified, declared righteous, made acceptable in the sight of God, solely through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We contribute no human works, baptism any other secondary effort from a human being has no consequence on your eternal state. Jesus on the cross finished all of the work. He lived the perfect life you've not lived. He died the substitutionary death you should die. He Rose to conquer the enemies of saint, sin, death, hell and the wrath of God. And if you trust in Jesus, your eternity is secure and your relationship with God is certain. And then he moves in the second half of the book, to talk about your relationship with others, that this relationship should inform and direct other relationships. And the problem is that Paul started the church in Galatia, he left, what he calls false brothers came in, started to introduce false teaching to the church. And now the people are not loving one another. They are biting and devouring one another. They're criticizing one another. They become law based, not grace based. They become legalistic and not holistic. And as a result, their relationship with God and one another, both of those relationships are in dire jeopardy. And so then what he told us was, we can either live by the flesh or the spirit. That if we live by the flesh, our life will be one of sin and sadness and suffering. If it is in the spirit, then we will follow the character of Christ. And so what he's saying here in Galatians six is really what it means, really what it means to belong to God and to live a life in the spirit as the community of God. So we'll look at four ways to cultivate a spirit filled community. Number one; Paul's gonna teach us to build people up, don't beat people up. He says it this way in Galatians 6:1, "Brothers," And so it's this warm Amelia family type of concept. "If anyone is caught in a transgression." How many of us right now, that's our situation? We've sinned, we blown it, we've failed. If you're not there now ,you used to be there, or you will be there in the future. Sadly, tragically, we all fall into sin, folly and rebellion. He says, "If any of you is caught in a transgression, you who are spiritual or filled with the Holy spirit or belong to God should restore him, in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourselves, less you too be tempted. And so what ultimately happens when someone sins, when someone fails, Satan wants us, to beat them up because that's what he does. He beats them up. Satan wants us to beat them up so that we punish them, by telling everyone what they have done. Or sometimes

we can literally cause them pain or harm or become an enemy. Sometimes this can be the silent treatment it's punitive rather than forgiveness space. It's literally pulling the culture of how we're no one is forgiven and everyone is beat up into the relationship, rather inviting the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven down into the relationship, because that is the place of forgiveness, where people are built up and not beat up. And so when someone sins against you, it's very important for you to come back to Galatians six and say, my God wants me to build them up into the fullness of Christ not beat them up. And what he's talking about here is also being honest about your own temptations. He says lest you be tempted. What he's talking about there is sometimes when someone is in trouble and we go to help them, all we do is double the problem, we don't bring a solution. Many of us probably have friends that we love that are in trouble, but as we pursue help for them, that actually brings harm to us. That's what he's talking about. So let's say for example, you're a recovering alcoholic and your friends are recovering alcoholic, you may not be the best one to go pick them up at the bar. That might be a difficult and attempting situation for you. Or let's say that you are a male who is concerned for the wellbeing of a female, but both of you are married. She needs help, but you might, I would say likely you're not the best person to bring that help. That someone else who is female would be in a better position to do so. So once we determine that someone needs help and we determine whether or not the best person to provide that help, our goals should be to restore them gently. That means to build them up to the fullness of who they can be, through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. And I was thinking about it in this way, it's Monsoon season in the Valley, We love living in the Valley, but the monsoon season is the most complicated. And I don't know about you, but it seems like it's impossible to keep your car clean. And if you're new to the Valley, here's what happens, the storm clouds roll in, then the dust, absolutely, covers everything shortly thereafter, the rains hit and turn it all to mud. And so if you're a person who's trying to keep your car clean, this is an impossible foul to fight. So one of the things that you'll see all over the Valley are the unlimited car washes, I have not seen them around the world. Not seen them in many States. Grace is a big fan of the unlimited car wash. And the way the unlimited car wash works is this, you pay the monthly fee and you use it as many times as you want, there are no limits. God's grace is like an unlimited carwash. Monsoon seasons are gonna hit in your life. Dust is gonna come, mud is going to come. You're gonna find yourself covered in sin, made bad decisions, have regrets. None of us is in heaven yet, none of us is Jesus. We've all got stuff that we wish we would have done differently. And when that happens, we need to be able to come to God and the people of God kind of like you would take a dirty car to a car wash. And what happens is there are three kinds of people when it comes to the car wash, there are those that have paid the fee and they never use the carwash. Some Christians live like that. It's like, I don't have any problems. I don't have any needs. And if I do have a problem or a need, I'll take care of it myself, rather than bringing it to God or to his people. Secondly, there are some people that use the carwash appropriately. They pay their monthly fee and whenever they need it, they take their car through the car wash. Just like your car needs to go through the carwash. Your soul needs to be made in the grace of God needs to be cleansed through relationship with God and his people. And then thirdly, there are some people that are going to abuse the unlimited carwash. They're just going to keep using it, even when they don't need it. And let me tell you that God's grace is like an unlimited carwash, that there are people who abuse it. And

that's unfortunate, but God would rather have his grace be abused than shut down the carwash for those who truly need it. And so this is an invitation and an opportunity for us as God's people to examine our own life and to ask, is there a place in my life that there is sin, folly, rebellion? If so, I'll bring it to God who gives grace. I'll invite in grace-centered spirit, filled people. And I will invite them to walk with me, to build me up into the fullness of Christ. And you need to know The Trinity Church, this is our heart for you. We don't want to be a place that beats people up. We want to be a place that builds people up. Secondly, point number two all says, be a burden lifter, not a burden giver. He says it this way in Galatians 6: 2-5, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor." And then he says, "For we each have to bear our own load." And what he's talking about here is two kinds of people. Those who put burdens on you, those who take burdens off you. Jesus taught previously that religion, religious people, law-based people, non-relational people, legalistic people, he said they put heavy burdens on people, duties, responsibilities, no help, lots of expectation, overwhelmed. Some of you have been in religious environments and you feel that way. Jesus says, instead, come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden, you'll find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, My burden is light. And what Jesus is saying is that religious, demanding, legalistic law-based people, they're going to put burdens on you, they're burdened givers, and that he is a burden lifter. He helps lift your burdens and carry your burdens. And so what he's talking about here as well, is burden lifters are those people who bear one another's burdens, that's Paul's language. And what this word is in the original Greek, it means a heavy load. And then he's going to talk about burden givers, those who won't "bear his or bear their own load." What's the difference? It says here, bear your own load, bear one another's, which one is it? It's different words. If it's heavy, we gotta help. If it's light, you need to take it yourself. Think of it in this way, someone has a catastrophic illness, they're in the middle of a divorce, something unexpected happens to one of their children. It's more than they can bear. We come along as the people of God to help lift the burden. There are other things that are simply someone's responsibility as an adult, you need to get a job, you need to figure out your transportation, you need to pay your bills, you need to get up in the morning, you need to oversee your diet. Your life is your responsibility, and those are adult responsibilities. And what happens is that in church and in Christian community, people want to transfer burdens. And so what happens is overly responsible people who like to be burden lifters, attract irresponsible people who want to be burdened givers. And next thing you know, they're dumping all of their burdens and responsibilities onto the burden lifters and what that does that taxes, that overwhelms that takes the time and energy that the burden lifters would have to help those who have real need. And so we're not talking about not loving these people and loving these people, we're talking about loving these people first and teaching these people to be responsible and self-sufficient so that they too can help the burden lifters and not always burden givers. You know you're in a relationship with someone who is a burden giver when they are giving you, their responsibilities, all of a sudden the things that they should be responsible for, they're seeking to make you responsible for them. This happens in marriage relationships, employee-employer relationships. This includes obviously parenting and adult children. And so sometimes though what the irresponsible people will do, they'll call this love or fellowship or

Christian community it's co-dependence and it's unhealth. Because Paul says you got to carry that, we will help you carry that. And then the person doesn't get to make the decision, but the people who are walking with them get to decide whether it is a light or a heavy responsibility. Just a couple of observations that I will give you, about burden lifters versus burden givers, and a couple of decades as a senior pastor, burden givers make excuses, burden lifters make plans. You're gonna spend your energy, making a plan to fix the problem or making an excuse so that someone else will come along and make a plan to fix the problem. In addition, think of it like relationships. And I like to say that burden givers get bad gas mileage, some cars get great gas mileage, some cars get awful gas mileage. Some relationships get good gas mileage. Some relationships get bad gas mileage. You know, you're with a burden giver when it's exhausting, you don't make much progress. It feels like you're literally pushing the relationship uphill, like a broken down car. Meanwhile, someone who's a burden lifter, someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit, those relationships get really good gas mileage. A little bit of investment, a little bit of education, a little bit of instruction or correction. Next thing you know they are making forward momentum and progress. And I love you, but let me just ask you this, don't think about all the people that need to consider this, start with you. Number three, Paul is going to teach that spirit filled community means we need to learn to receive and give generously. He says it this way in Galatians 6: 6, "Let the one who is taught the word, share all good things with the one who teaches." What Paul is talking about here is that generosity is the test of grace. The theme of Galatians are one of the major themes is grace. And what grace manifests itself in is generosity. Generosity with your words, your deeds, and also your wealth. And so what Paul is saying here is that, those of us who have the great honor of teaching God's word, we need to give generously to those who give us the honor of teaching them. So let me just stop and say, thank you, for all who are watching online, it's a great honor to teach you the word of God. For those that call our church family home, you're extraordinary people, we love you, you are very teachable and I love just opening the Bible and working it through with you. So thank you for that honor. He says, "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches." What he's talking about is being willing to receive and also give. Receive and give. And it requires grace to do both. How many of you, you're better at giving than receiving? You'll help them, you don't need them to help you, you're going to lift their burden, you're not going to give them your burden. Part of living in grace is being willing to not just give, but also receive. And sometimes people, they mean well, and maybe you're one of those people, but people don't get to give to financially. They don't get to help lift your burdens. They don't get to walk with you through situations, because you'll take care of yourself. Grace to them is inviting them in because you need them, and they can then make deposits and investments in your soul and in your life. But in addition, if all we do is receive grace, we can become very greedy. All of a sudden it's about what I get, the attention I deserve, the money that I've earned, the help that I have coming to me. And so what he doesn't want us to be is a person that only gives or only receives. What he's putting in motion here is that we need to be givers and receivers. And just practically, I'll tell you this, that at various seasons of life, you're gonna shift between the two. There'll be some seasons where you're giving a lot, and there'll be a season where others are giving to you. And this is the blessing of grace. This is the grace of God on Christian community. Principle number four, Paul says, is to keep sowing in the spirit. Galatians 6;7-10, "Do not be

deceived: God is not mocked." Lot of people mock God, but eventually that comes to the end and God gets the last word. For whatever one sows that he will also reap. It's the law of the harvest. You sow an Apple seed, you get an Apple tree and an Apple. You sow to the flesh, you're gonna get sin and death. "For one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life and do not let us grow weary in doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity let's do good to everyone, And especially to those who are the household of faith or believers." What he's talking about here is the principle of sowing and reaping. And I can still remember I was in high school and had an economics class, and the professor taught us about compounded interest. And what he said was, if you'll just put aside this small amount of money, starting at a very young age and do so consistently, the compounded interest will make you very wealthy at the end of your life. And as I looked at it as a kid, I thought that's amazing that you can give so little and get so much. But what happens is you sow, sow, sow, sow, and then one day you reap, reap, reap, reap. And so let me say this, number one, you reap what you sow. We all reap what we sow. If we give law to people, expect to get law. If we are nitpicking people, expect to get nitpicked. If we are loving people, the odds are better that we're gonna get loved. If we encourage people, the odds are, they're gonna encourage us. That we reap what we sow. Not only that you re where you sow. If you put all time into your marriage, you'll reap a harvest there. You put time and energy into each of your children, you'll reap a harvest there. If you spend all of your time at work, you might be very fruitful at work, but not at home because you have reaped at work and not at home, and so your sowing is ultimately only in one place. And so as Christians we've got to look at our life and this is where our priorities come into play. So as Christians here's what I'm driving toward, that ultimately many pains and problems don't sneak up on us, that we have sown for a long time. And then we reap oftentimes at one zone. So think of it with your health, you can sought bad diet, poor nutrition, and it takes a while before you reap the consequences. You can so lots of financial mismanagement and maybe don't feel the full pain until you reap the consequences of the bad investments and decisions. You can neglect your relationship with your spouse, or your friend, or the Lord, or your kids. And it seems to be functional for a while, until one day it breaks because you reap what you sow. You reap where you sow. As Christians this brings us back to our priorities and just practically for me, my relationship with Jesus, my relationship with Grace, my relationship with each of our five kids, and then my job, those are my priorities. And I wanna reap where I sow. And so I wanna sow into those priorities. And I would just ask you right now, are any of the priorities in your life out of order, you're sowing your time, you're sowing your energy, you're sewing your life towards someone or something that maybe isn't even bad, but it's not priority. And that's what he is ultimately telling us to do. And I'd say this as well, oftentimes in relationships, we don't make enough deposits, we only make withdrawals. And you know, you can bankrupt a relationship, just like you can bankrupt a bank account, when you make more deposits than investments. Sowing is making deposits. Reaping is then getting a return on that deposit. It's making a withdrawal. And we all do this in our relationships. But if we're sowing, sowing, sowing, then when a withdrawal occurs, we'll still be benefiting from the reaping of the entire sowing, into the relationship. And I mean this very seriously and practically. And so what this means is, well, let's say you've got financial problems, physical problems, spiritual

problems, relational problems, familial problems, whatever the case may be, there probably isn't a really quick fix. Just like if you're hungry, you need to plant a seed, wait for something to grow and then reap the harvest. Oftentimes we can get discouraged, oftentimes we could say, you know what? I read the Bible it didn't work, I prayed, it didn't work, I did what God said, It didn't work, I quit. That's where he says, do not give up. He says, "Do not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." It's like the farmer who just keeps going to work until they get to enjoy the fruit of the harvest. And that's our whole life. That being said, what he's really architecting here is a community of grace centered around the person and work of Jesus and empowered by the person and work of the Holy Spirit. And so what I wanna do is make a practical transition in this sermon to show you what that look like in the life of Martin Luther and his wife Katherine, and the estate that they held, and the ministry that they had, and the children that they raised. So join me for the second half of the sermon. Well, as we've spent the past few months studying Galatians together, one person in particular is the most towering figure in all of church history, when it comes to the great book of Galatians, his name is Martin Luther. He published a commentary on Galatians that is fairly polemical and also published something else called lectures on Galatians, that were far more pastoral and were preached to his church congregation which is just a short walking distance up the street, where he preached a few thousand times as he loved his people and fed them the word of God. Well, Luther was so enamored with Galatians that his study and work really has made him, the most prominent Bible commentator in the history of the world on this great book of the Bible. He in fact said, "I betrothed myself to it, It is my wife. What he said was I love Galatians so much, I asked it to marry me. You know, you're a nerd when that's what you say. Galatians is a short book, it's 149 verses. You can read it in about 20 minutes. And the theme that I've laid over is that God creates and Satan counterfeits. And so what he was arguing for early in the book, the Apostle Paul was that God creates a relationship with us by grace and Satan wants to counterfeit that, with a relationship of works. Grace is about what Jesus has done, works is about what you must do. And what it is is antithetical, because it's saying that Jesus didn't do all the work for our salvation. So we comparison contrast these. And then he moves to our relationship with God and one another talking about God creates us to be filled with the spirit, and Satan's counterfeit is that we live according to the power of the flesh. That was chapter five, which brings us to chapter six and where we find today. And what I wanna do is just look for a little bit at the life of Martin Luther. The Bible has a doctrine that is to instruct, correct and direct our life. And then as we apply it, we start to experience the grace of God flowing through the spirit of God in our life. And this is absolutely what happened to Martin Luther. The same thing that happened to Martin Luther, I'm praying would happened to you. You'd get into Galatians, understand the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, live in the fruit of the spirit which is the character of Christ, and enjoy the life that God has given you. And this is part of the gift of grace that once you know that you are saved, once you know that your eternity is secure, once you know that you have trusted in the finished work of Christ and all that needs to be done for your eternal security is finished. It frees you up to stop worrying about where you're going, and start loving the people in front of you. And so within that I wanna just look at Martin Luther's life. And I would say the first half of his life, was a life of works, this is why Galatians meant so much to him. And so where we are presently is

Wittenberg, Germany. This was originally a monastery that I'm told that Martin Luther first entered in 1508 and he had taken monastic vows. He was here full time, I believe starting around 1511. Monastic vows were a pledge of chastity and poverty to almighty God. And he did this in duress. Luther was frankly a troubled man living according to the sort of works-based, law-based religion where love and relationship is at the finish line, not the starting line. And you're not exactly sure if you're gonna get there, And if you don't, you might go to purgatory and have to suffer for an extended period of time to pay God back. He was trained as a lawyer. He spent some time studying legal matters. And so when he came to the Bible, he came with a lawyer's mind, and he realized all the works, all the things, all the obedience, all of the holiness, that God demands of his people. And he tried his own life according to his conscious. And he realized I am doomed, I am doomed. There is no way that I can be perfect if I read the Bible, and I understand that ultimately it's about living a perfect life. Well, the only person who's done that is Jesus and we all fall short. And so what this cause for him was fear, guilt, shame, condemnation, burdens, maybe you have felt some of those things. He was walking home one night, it is reported that lightning struck. He thought that maybe God was seeking to kill him. So he cried out, "Saint Anna, save me and I'll become a monk." It was a rush vow, the Bible says not to make rush vows, but then he pledged himself to a monastic life, which is why he moved in here with other men. He forsook marriage, he forsook possessions and wealth and status and opportunity. And what he determined is that he would suffer. He would live a life of works. Reportedly, the bed that he slept on was very uncomfortable. The food that he ate was very unhealthy that he fasted so frequently trying to pay God back for his sin, which of course is impossible, that he actually really did damage. It is reported to his internal organs and to his intestines and that he had lots of intestinal problems for the duration of his life. He struggled with insomnia because he was so wracked with guilt and shame and his life was miserable. And he says that he didn't love God. In fact, he hated him. That was his view of God. That if God is just a lawyer, always holding court and everything I do is a punishment for me, then how can I possibly love this God? And then something happened. He was teaching initially as a professor through the Psalms, and then worked into Galatians and the book of Romans. And he started seeing that we are not justified, declared righteous, made right, in the sight of God through any human works, but solely through the divine works of Jesus. It's not about what you do, it's about what Jesus has done. And on the cross, when he says it is finished, all the work for your salvation is completed. And now you need just trust in him and live in the grace of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, he says in so many words that this was a key that unlocked all of God's word and all of God's heavenly treasures for him. And he started thinking and reading and studying and going back to the original text of the scriptures, particularly the Greek New Testament, everyone in that day was using the Vulgate. It was a Latin translation that was under the auspices of the Catholic church. As he went back to the original writings and looked at what the word of God actually said in places like Galatians, he realized, we have gotten the gospel wrong, we have lost Christ. That's essentially the conclusion he came to. This caused him to start teaching and writing. This included something called "The 95 Theses," which was sort of his toe may have complaints against the church, their indulgences, lack of respect for the scripture. This included him being prolific and writing tracks and books. And just prior in God's Providence, Johannes Gutenberg not far from here, created the printing press, which allowed



Martin Luther's work to literally go viral. And so now people are reading in their common language of the people, new teaching that undermines the authority teaching of the church with the authority of the word of God. Well, this included Martin Luther writing a little track called "On Monastic Vows." And he wrote, and what he said was that, monastic vows that priests and monks like him would take were in fact ungodly. And that you could love and serve God, whether you're in vocational ministry or have a normal job, because Jesus had a normal job. So apparently that's a Holy way to live your life. You could honor God whether you were single or married, whether you had children or not, and that a life working a job, loving your spouse, raising your kids was Holy and sanctified and good and pleasing in the sight of God, and not a second class status for God's people, which was revolutionary. Well, this track on monastic vows went out, and it became very, very popular. And some nuns were in a convent and they read it. Young women who had also taken their monastic vows, and they determined and decided that they wanted to leave the convent. They wanted to forsake their monastic vows, that they wanted to get married and be wives and have children. And so what they did, they wrote a letter to Martin Luther saying, "Please help us escape." If you can believe this. So what happens is the monk, he plots and leads the literally the jail break of the 12 nuns on Easter, Easter Sunday, they come in, in some sort of horse-drawn wagon. They have barrels in it and they hide the various nuns in the barrels, sneak them out to be free, and then provide for them opportunities for husbands. So all of a sudden the nuns are jail break by the monk, now everything is in turmoil and all of the women then, are starting to marry. Now what happens at that time is all of the women married except for one, her name is Katherine Von Bora. She is about 16 years younger than Martin Luther. And by all accounts, she is a very strong personality, very keen mind, very sharp wit, very acerbic tongue. She's she's a force to be reckoned with. And they tried to marry her off, and the guy who was going to marry her, he backed out at the last moment. So what the former renegade nun told Martin Luther was, "You either find me a husband or you marry me, become my husband, and we're gonna make babies and live happily ever after. And he said, and I quote, "Good Lord, thy will never thrust a wife on me." The last thing he wanted to do was be married. Well, what eventually happened is that, no one married Katherine. She was left single and her family was likely very, very embarrassed to take back. Her mother had died when she was six. As a young girl, she was sent to basically an orphanage. And as a young woman, she became a nun. This contributes by the way, to some serious awkwardness early in their marriage. And I'm going to argue that the marriage of Katherine and Martin is one of the most significant unions in the history of the world. Because they set in motion, a pattern and precedence of not just the theologizing God's grace, but sharing God's grace with your spouse and with your children in the context of your family. But because he had been a monk, and because she had been a nun, they didn't have a lot of interaction with members of the opposite sex. And they were very awkward with one another, and they didn't know how to communicate with one another. And they weren't quite frankly attracted to one another, most biographers agree that when they first met, it was not love at first sight. It was frustration at first sight. Well what happened, they ended up moving forward and getting married because no one would marry Katherine. When asked why he married her, he later said, "To spite the devil." Which is the least romantic statement any man has ever uttered. There is another report that he says, "In addition to marrying her to spite the devil, I was also

spiting the Pope." Well, they were married in the backwoods of rural Germany, June 13th, 1525. And what was really interesting is that, they moved back to this place. So this was a place, And just so you know, this is their living room. This is the living room of Martin Luther and Katherine Von Bora. They moved here as a married couple, forsaking their monastic vows in 1525. And that is original their dining room table. This is where they had friends and family. It originally had some 40 rooms. It was a monastery that Luther had lived in, but they turned it into a brand new ministry center as a married couple. And I'm making the argument that the grace of God first belongs in the families and households of the people of God. Luther was fond of saying that, if Jesus wanted us to love our first, our neighbor, that rather our first neighbor is our spouse and then our kids. So those should be the neighbors that we love first. The love of this family is the heart of the Protestant reformation. Martin Luther would have never made it, without Katherine Von Bora and the love of their six children. They went on to have kids, the monk and the nun. I was a Catholic altar boy, so I don't know about you, to me this is a little scandalous. And there was a folklore in Germany at the time among some of the rural folks that the antichrist would come through the illicit union of a renegade monk, and a rebellious nun. So when Martin Luther and Katherine Von Bora got married and then announced that they were pregnant, many thought here comes the antichrist. So there an interesting story and a couple of characters. By the time it was all said and done, this place where Luther had lived under law, became a place where he lived under grace in relationship with his wife and children. Katherine Von Bora was a means of God's grace to him. And when we're talking about God's grace, it's Jesus' work for you on the cross. It's the Holy Spirit's work in you to change you, and give you faith in salvation. And it's the Holy spirit working through you, to be a means of grace. Not only did he teach grace, he married a woman with whom they learned how to give grace to one another and share it with their kids. Well, some examples of what grace looked like because of his wife. One of the first things she did is she cleaned the old monastery where all the guys lived. She took out his bed of straw, which has not been changed in years, and it was highly uncomfortable and she made a nice fitting bed for them. She started decorating the home. She planted a garden so that she could change his diet , so that they could live a healthy lifestyle. She started inviting people over, and hosting parties and guests and lectures. And next thing you know a place that had been a miserable place of law, and works, pain, suffering it came a place of love and joy and relationship and freedom in the Holy Spirit and in the grace of God. They went on to have six children, three boys, three girls, tragically two of the girls died one around the age of one, and the other around the age of 13. a beautiful little girl that Martin loved very, very dearly. And what happened was reportedly, she died in his arms. I can't even imagine that might have been, I am not altogether certain or sure, but it could have even happened in this very room being of course, the family living room. Couple of things I'd like to share with you as well, part of the grace of God that was on them, is that they did ministry together, which was really unusual. Grace, my wife and I have read the biographies of this couple. She reads Katherine's, I read those on Martin. And then we read the letters that they would write to one another when they were separated. And those letters over the years became increasingly more tender and dear. Apparently to just tangentially, she was a renown brewer. She was a brewmaster. And so he would write her letters and say, "Dearest Catherine, I love you and I miss you and I miss your beer." So there you go, a very German-ish relationship. But nonetheless, as the grace of God

lived in their house, they did everything together. So as you read letters of correspondence from Luther to others in the reformation, he would say, "Katherine is here with me, she's sitting at my side, she sends her greeting." She was in on the theological discussion. She contributed, she had a brilliant mind. And I think her contribution to the reformation has largely been overlooked. She also had a sense of humor. They could really give and take a joke, and she would snap him out of these sort of depressed funks into seasons of grace. There is an occasion where he came home and opened the door and there was his wife dressed in all black like a morning widow. And he asked her, "Who has died?" And she said, "Well, if the great Martin Luther is so despondent then I assumed that God must have died. So it's time for his funeral." And it just sort of snapped him out of it. She had a great sense of humor. She was a means of God's grace to him. She helped edit his writings and she on a few occasions, saved his life through prophetic dreams. As she worked and walked in the spirit. There's one occasion where she went to bed, and she was awakened with a prophetic dream or vision, that men were lying in, wait to murder her husband as he was heading out the next day on a trip. And so she awakened him and said, "I believe this is a word from the Lord, don't go." It was later confirmed that had he gone, he would have been murdered that that plot was in play, but that prophecy was true. She was an extraordinary woman. Early on in their life, they weren't attracted to one another, by the end, they adored one another. You know why? They shared the grace of God. You know why? They lived by the power of the Holy spirit. You know what? Your life, your marriage, your family, your relationships, they can be radically transformed, quickly transformed, generationally transformed. If you will walk in the grace of God, receive it and give it so that the Holy spirit can flow in the family. Near the end of a life as they're writing letters, he calls her Lord Katie. He really respected her. He also called her his dear ribs, sir Katie, the Empress, my true love, my sweetheart and a gift of God. She was a hardworking woman. Grace does produce fruit, which is different than works. She had a hard time stopping work because there was so much work to be done, but she would sit down for meals with her husband. She would sit down to read her Bible. She would sit down to pray. And one of Martin Luther's seasons and moments of grace that he treasured the most is when he would play music with his wife and children present. And the kids would sing and dance and play. For a man who was attacked, his life was in danger, his reputation was destroyed, his eternal destiny was said to be damned, to go home and experience the grace of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ with your wife, with your kids. I'm just telling you that is the grace of God to any man. And as Martin Luther was studying Galatians, it led to this family, it led to these relationships, it led to this lifestyle. And I believe that's, God's intent for you as well. And had Luther would use to say that the devil couldn't enjoy a joyful, happy, rejoicing environment, so let sing and make music and make merry and throw parties and have fun because then the devil will flee us, as we live in the grace of God. Well, nearing the end of his life, Martin Luther died at the age of 62. His wife was younger and outlived him and he says, "The greatest gift of grace, a man can have..." Grace. That's the word. "The greatest gift of grace a man can have, is a pious, God-fearing home loving woman, whom he can trust with all his goods, body, and life itself, as well as having her as the mother of his children." You wives need to know you are a means of God's grace. My wife's name, might cry if I think about it, she's standing just off camera. Her name's Grace. My wife Grace is a means of God's grace. Your spouse, your kids, your relationships, those are the means of grace. And then

I'll close with this line. He says, " My Katherine has always been a gentle and pious and faithful wife to me and she love me dearly." These two people started with works. They started with performance. They started with legalism. They started with duty and they ended in grace. And God wants the same for you. So thank you for giving me the opportunity of teaching you the word of God. And now I want for us as a church family to have an opportunity to respond with communion and prayer and worship, throw a party, the devil will flee, and I'll see you to finish the book next Sunday.