

"Father, I thank You for tonight, and I that You would help us. And I ask specifically for maybe those in here tonight who have found religion but not You. And I pray for grace over law. And I pray tonight that we would leave here differently than when we walked in. And I confess to You, in front of all these people that I do not hold that kind of pull or sway but that if you would visit tonight, it is a possibility. And so help us. I don't want to do church here tonight, and I don't want to just fall into the routine of Sunday, but that there might be expectations on our part to hear from you. And it's for Your beautiful name that I pray these things. Amen."

We've got quite the ambitious task tonight. We are going to try to teach through the entire book of Hebrews chapter 7. We're going to try to knock it out tonight. The order of Melchizedek, I know you've been just chomping at the bit at that, you've been so excited about him. For the record, I don't say "jacked up" anymore. I have a three year old daughter, so once she starts running around going, "That's jacked up!" you're like, "Don't talk like that, baby. It's jacked up." So, I'm trying to clean that up. Now, Jesus' style of communication, it seems His preference for communication is the word picture. And over and over again when Jesus teaches, He's going to use the word picture to communicate what He wants them to understand and get. And so, if you'll go back and read the New Testament this week, specifically the Gospels. You'll find that Jesus is walking with His disciples, and He goes, "Oh yeah, the kingdom of God's like that. Okay, do you see that? Do you see the woman sweeping out her house, she's taking all her furniture and throwing it in the front yard? The kingdom of God is like that. It's like a woman who loses a coin in her house, and she sweeps out her entire house to find that coin. That's what I'm like." And He walks a little further and picks up this little mustard seed, and He goes, "Hey, the kingdom of God is like this little bitty seed. It's the smallest of all seeds, but when it goes into the ground and dies, it grows so large that birds of pray will perch on it...The kingdom of God is like that shepherd who owned 100 sheep. And he loses the one and leaves the 99 to grab the other one...The kingdom of God is like a father who had two sons, and the younger son was a rotten, rotten brat. And he wanted all his money up front, and he took it and he spent it on hookers and booze. (That's a newer translation) And it all went bad for him, and he came home, and the father, in his glee, threw the Polo shirt on him and ordered in Three Forks." And so, Jesus' preference, it's story, He wants to tell, "The kingdom of God is like a vineyard, a guy who owns a vineyard, and he hires these people at this time, and these people at this time, and these people at this time, but he pays them all the same...The kingdom of God is like..." And I'm just scratching the surface.

And it's not only Jesus, but in the Old Testament, God would come to prophets, and He'd say, "I want you to live out this deal, so I can explain something to My people, because they're not going to believe it unless I can make them see it." And so, He comes to this man named Hosea, and He goes, "I want you to marry a hooker." And Hosea rightly asks a question, "Did You say hooker?" And He said, "Yeah, I want you to marry a hooker. And here's the deal, she's going to be unfaithful, and she's going to rip your heart out of your chest, and you're going to be faithful to her and you're going to love her anyway. In fact, you'll sell all you own to buy her back, because that's how much I love you. Now go." And then, in my favorite move in all of Scripture, which probably reveals something about me, God comes to the prophet Isaiah and says, "Israel's about to lay desolate. So what I want you to do for the next two years is take off all you clothes and run through the streets naked. That's your ministry. Go."

Now, God has preferred, Paul does it the same...in fact, you've found in the epistles that we've gone through, one of the ones I bring up more often than any is that a man pursues a woman, Ephesians 5 tells us, not because of just

some hormonal imbalance, but God wanting to reveal to mankind that He pursues us, that He loves us, that He longs for us. He put it in the heart of man to pursue woman. So, it's not about procreation, it's not about filling the earth, it is a picture of God's romantic desire, love for your nearness and connection to Him. And so God, He loves the word picture. Colossians would call it "shadows of the form of Christ." He loves to communicate in this way.

Now, what we're going to do is, we are going to read through Hebrews 7. And Hebrews 7 sets up a word picture of something that occurred, something very mysterious in the Hebrew Bible that occurred. Abraham had killed these kings, and on his way back, he runs into this guy called Melchizedek. And it's really, really interesting, because in the Old Testament, when the Old Testament introduces a character, it will tell you their ancestry, the time in which they lived, when they died. I will give you information about him, but when Mel shows up on the scene, it doesn't tell us anything. I mean, he just literally appears out of nowhere. There's just a few verses on him, and he disappears. And he was a very mysterious character in the Old Testament and to the Jews in the 1st Century. And now, who I believe is Paul is going to unpack for you, the word picture. Now, here's what we're going to do, I'm not going to wait until the end to get to application. What I'm going to do is, we're just going to read through this thing, and we're going to talk through this thing, application, we'll dive back into the text, and we're going to be kind of all over the place because that's the way the text works. And so, in the first three verses, you should get the word picture, alright.

So, here we go, starting in verse 1, "For this Melchizedek..." By the way, Melchizedek translates, "king of righteousness." "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem..." Salem translates "king of peace." So, the king of righteousness, the king of peace, do we know anybody else who goes by those names? Hmm? Anybody? I don't know, maybe. Any New Testament character? Maybe an eternal character. Here we go, "...priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him..." Now, this idea of blessing in Genesis would have been to offer wine and bread. Bread as a symbol of sustenance and strength and wine the symbol of life and joy. So Abraham, exhausted from battle, just finished slaughtering the kings, comes across the king of righteousness, the king of peace, who offers to him strength and life. Is this starting to sound familiar? And exhausted and weary traveler coming across the king of righteousness, the king of peace, who is offered life and strength, bread and wine, which holds some New Testament weight also, I believe. Let's keep reading.

Verse 2, here's what it gets weird, "...to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils..." Now, what this means is that he tithed. So Abraham comes across the king of righteousness, the king of peace, who offers him strength and life, and he tithes 10% of all he owns. Now, the tithe to the Hebrew wasn't, "Oh, I've got to give my 10%." It was a symbolic gesture that meant this: "All I have and all I own is Yours." It's not just, "Oh, I've got to do this, so that God will bless me." It is a symbolic gesture, not that "hey, this 10% is Yours," but rather, "everything's Yours, and this is the symbol of that." So, you've got Abraham tithing or saying, "everything is Yours" to the king of peace, the king of righteousness.

Verse 3, "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually." Now, verse 3, exegetically, has caused people fits for years, because what it makes it sound like is, Melchizedek is eternal. So now, you're going, "Oh man, I'm confused." So, you've got God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and God the Melchizedek, alright. That's not what's happening here, because it's not a reference to the man; it's a reference to the story. Do you understand the difference? It's not saying that Melchizedek is eternal, but that his character in the story seemingly has no beginning and that we hear nothing about where he came from, which is highly unusual in the Old Testament. And we know nothing of his ending, which is highly unusual in the Old Testament. So, what the writer of Hebrews is saying is, the silence that occurs in the book of Genesis is so that this word picture could be imparted to you and to me. And that is, that there is a king of peace and a king of righteousness, who longs to offer life and strength to those who are completely His. So, just to make it as clear as possible, Melchizedek is Jesus, you are Abraham. Are you with me? Okay.

Now, we're going to move on from here and trudge through some very wordy, wordy things. Before we get to that, I want to explain to you the function of a priest in Hebrews society. A Levitical priest would be a modern day equivalent of a counselor, a self-help guru, a psychologist, a behavioral consultant for you wealthy folk. Alright, "I don't go to counseling, I have a behavioral consultant I speak to once a week, alright." They are, and let me try to explain what they did. What would happen in the Leviticus system is that those of us who were struggling with guilt, confusion, we were overwhelmed, we had a lust issue, we were broken on the inside, something had gone wrong in our wiring. We would come to a Leviticus priest, and we would say, "I'm struggling with this...I've done this...I've sinned here...I'm doing these things...I hate these things." And the Leviticus priest would take your life, and he would lay it against the law, alright. And he would show you right behavior, and he would show you the lies that you've bought into. And then, he would show you the way to live in a behavior kind of way, and then they would kill an animal for your screw-up. And that's the Leviticus priest. And today, that same office is held by priests in the Catholic church, by biblical counselors in the Evangelical church, by self-help gurus, by you name it, anybody who's going to come in and go, "This behavior is an issue. This is why it's an issue. This is what you need to change to get over it, and move on." So, that's the purpose of the Levitical priest. Now, what's about to happen in the text we're about to read is the Scriptures are going to say that that office is secondary to what God wants to do in the end. And I'm going to show you that, and then I'm going to go back to telling you and fitting in why...because I know you're sitting in here, going, "Wait a minute. It's like every week, you're telling us to get into counseling." Okay, well just ride with me to the end.

Let's go, this is going to get out of control wordy. Verse 4, "Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils." Let me tell you why this is an oxymoron to the Hebrew. Patriarchs did not tithe. They sat atop the family as the authority figure. Like when my all gets together to have lunch or supper, although I am the preacher in the family, I do not bless the meal. My father blesses the meal, because he is the patriarch. There is no greater authority in our home than big Steve. Because he, as my father, I exist because he does, and my children exist because he does. And so, when I'm with my family, when I'm with the Chandler clan, dad prays, he's the patriarch, and in this system, the patriarch bent their knee to no one. And that's what makes it so interesting that Abraham the patriarch bends his knee and tithes. So, this would have made no sense to the Hebrew. God's gonna unpack it for them though.

Look at verse 5, "And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham." So, it's saying that the priests get tithes from you and me. The priests are descendants of Abraham, taught and trained in the way of Abraham, and we tithe to them.

Now, let's keep reading. Starting with verse 6, "But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. In this case [the case of Leviticus priests] mortal men receive tithes, but in that case [the order of Melchizedek] one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." Here's what He's unpacking for us, the Leviticus order of priests, our biblical counselors, our psychologists, our psychiatrists, our self-help gurus, that the thing that they do is an Abrahamic system, and there was something greater than Abraham. So that, although there was great value in what the priests do, in what the counselors do, in what the self-help gurus do, in the end, it is secondary to what Jesus wants to do in the hearts of men and women. Are you following me there so far? I promise you, it will start coming together.

Now, let's read 11-19. This is where it's really going to start coming together. In fact, if I was going to get a tattoo, and I can't get a tattoo because I read for a living. I mean, how you gonna pull that off, you know? If I were going to get one, I would get a verse we're going to read, and I want you to repeat it back to me. Now, this is a big time text that we're

about to get into. So, the biblical counseling and self- help gurus are secondary to what Christ wants to do in your heart and in mine. Look at verse 11, "Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?" Here's what just happened: the Scriptures, this sacred literature of ours, this book that we read from every week, just said, "If you and I could be made right by obeying the Law, then why did God send Jesus?" That's what just happened. If you and I could gain right standing before God by doing everything that's right and avoiding everything that's wrong, then why the need to send Jesus? Why send Jesus at all? Why? Earlier, we sang a lot of songs. Did you notice we didn't sing any to Moses? Did you pick up on that? Did you pick there wasn't any, "How great is our patriarch Moses...sing with me..." Did you notice we didn't sing that? Why? And I'm going to quote Phillip Yancy, he wrote a book called "What's So Amazing About Grace?" If you haven't read it, you should. It's definitely a top 3. And he said in that, "If right standing with God could occur because of good book keeping, we'd be worshiping Moses and not Jesus." Yeah. He just asked, "Why would He need to send Jesus at all, if you could just be good and get there?" Alright, it's a rhetorical question. It needs not to be answered.

Alright, let's go. Verse 12, "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also." So, you can even see this in our culture. Has there been a big difference between the Clinton administration and the Bush administration? Well, yeah. We got the younger generation going, "I dunno. Maybe. I heard something about a war or something." Yes, alright. And I'm not making a political statement; I'm just saying there have been major differences in policy and emphasis. For better or worse, it's different. And He's saying, "Listen, when there's a new top, things change."

Now, let's keep reading, verse 13, "For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests." So, the priestly order was from the tribe of Levi. Jesus, our new high priest, isn't even a part of the tribe of Levi. He's of the tribe of Judah, "The Lion of Judah." That's why they call Him that, because He's from Judah. Verse 15, "And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness [here's my tattoo verse] (for the Law made nothing perfect),..." Look at me, the Law makes nothing perfect. The Law makes nothing perfect. The Law makes NO THING perfect. I'll be right back to that. "...and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." Okay, I am passionate about few things in greater zeal than what we're about to talk about. Let's do it this way. How many of you have been saved for longer than 10 years? If you're not raising your hand, don't be embarrassed; you're probably better off than we are right now. So, what happens when the grace of Christ comes alive in the heart of a man or a woman? Now, I'm not talking about walking down an aisle and getting baptized. I'm not talking about when you were 6 years old, going, "I'm going to follow Jesus..." I'm not you weren't saved then; I'm saying when the soul is awakened to the reality of your deceived, wicked heart and the beauty of Christ. In that moment, when grace takes root, there is this zeal and this joy for who Jesus is, and you want to be near Him, and things don't feel like duty anymore, they feel like delight. Are you tracking with me?

Now, spoken and unspoken, churches have this kind of unwritten code of Christian behavior. And the funny thing about the Village is people don't think the Village has that, you know. They're like, "Not at the Village." Ridiculous, alright. Let me give you an example and I haven't said this and if she's here tonight...oh well. At Christmas, I wore khaki pants and a red shirt. I call it my Christmas outfit. Do you remember that? And it just stood out because I don't normally dress like that. And I was like, "Hey, I got all dressed in my Christmas outfit..." Well, I got an e-mail the following week calling me a sellout because I dressed preppy for Christmas. Now, let me say something. When I tell you that the line between all that you want to be and all that you hate is thinner than anyone wants to acknowledge, that little girl is absolutely the

poster child of that. So what happened is all of us got turned off from church because you had to dress a certain way and act a certain way and behave a certain way, "So let's go over here and start a church where you have to dress our way and act our way," and you became what you hated. That's what you did. You became the very thing you rebelled against. So, we have it here. In fact, depending on the time of life that you get saved, the list looks different. Like, if you got saved when you were in college, your heart was awakened to the reality of Christ in college, all of a sudden, you like have to start playing the acoustic guitar. Because you can't be a Christian and not play the acoustic guitar in college, that's for sure. And you have to join a worship band or you start reading John Piper's books, and you've got to go here, and you've got to do that and. And you start filling out that list. Now, when you're older, it looks a little bit different. You know, you're Republican, you've gotta fight this moral quandary that our nation's is in, as we as Christians are hard pressed. And by the way, if you'd like to fly to Liberia or China, I'll pay for you to go, and then you can know what hard pressed is. And then you're got a checklist, you've got to study this, you've got to join this, you've got to go here, you can't do this, you better start doing this... And here's what I've noticed. In fact, let me say this, if you've been a Christian 10 years or longer and this is not your testimony, you have got to get a hold of me, because you are an anomaly. I mean, you are like Neo in the Matrix. You are "The One." So, you need to get a hold of me, because I need to learn from you, alright. Here's my point: what ends up happening is we begin, whether spoken or unspoken, to try to conform to this list of expectations on Christian behavior. We begin to work towards it and begin to master it, and where we can't master it, we begin to pretend to master it. And what ends up happening is we grow more and more and more in the knowledge about God and wake up and can't find Him anywhere. So that, what ends up happening is our knowledge about God has increased monumentally over that moment where He became real to us, but Jesus is nowhere to be found. Jesus is nowhere to be found.

I would explain it like this. In fact, I've always explained it like this. When I grew up, I spent the formative years in the Bay Area. And when I was there San Francisco was beating Dallas in football. And then, just as we flew here, the Cowboys started beating down the 49'ers. Now, the quarterback of Dallas those days was a guy by the name of Troy Aikman. You guys heard of him? And here's the thing about Troy. He played high school football in Oklahoma, and from there, he went to the University of Oklahoma, got hurt and then he got beat out. So, he transfers out to UCLA, where he becomes the golden boy, Troy Aikman, sets all kinds of NCAA records from there, heads to the Dallas Cowboys, 1st round draft pick, begins to set records there, wins Super Bowls. And if I had my computer right now, we've got wireless here, and I could Google him, and I could find out his wife's name, his child's name, I could probably find the drink he prefers with his steak, I could find his favorite restaurant. I could find tons out about Troy Aikman. And I could go to dinner with you tonight, and I could convince you, by the knowledge about him, that I know him. You could order your steak, and I could go, "You know, Troy prefers the merlot with the steak. And Vanessa, oh ho, Vanessa..." I don't even know if that's her name. I didn't really Google that stuff. I could talk in such a way that you're going, "Yeah, yeah, he knows Troy." Now, here's my great fear for you. Here's my great fear for us. My great fear is that you would know God like I know Troy Aikman, in that you can spout out facts and know nothing about the freedom and the life that He brings.

Now, here's the problem with the Law: the Law does not set free. The problem with the Law and the reason that Jesus has to come is because the Law enables us to understand the behavior is wrong and corrects to right behavior but does nothing to free the soul. So, let me do it this way. Does an alcoholic who wakes up tomorrow and does not drink, but all day long is almost paralyzed by his own addiction to alcohol, is he free? Absolutely not. In fact, Jesus would attack the same idea like this: "Um, you've heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery,' but I say if your heart's full of lust, you're just as broken....Okay, you've heard it said, 'Do not murder,' but I'll tell you if you're always in a rage, you're no better off than the murderer." And the thing about the Law is if we follow the way of the Law, then we grit down with discipline, try to overcome behavior without a heart being transformed. In short, we become transformed to a pattern of religion, but we're never transformed by the Holy Spirit of God. We've become conformed to a pattern of religion but never transformed by the Spirit of God.

Like, I'll try to explain this to you. Like, have you noticed every couple of weeks, I'll make fun of beer? And I kind of do it like this, I kind of say stuff like, "Beer's not a sin, light beer's a sin." And then, everybody's like this, "Ha ha ha ha," but some people are like, "God's gonna kill him if he keeps doing stuff like that. You just watch. God's gonna kill him." Now, the reason I want to pick that out and openly mock it is because for some reason or another, to Evangelicals, it is the litmus test of how we feel about Jesus. Like if you drink a beer with dinner, you have issues or something. And so, I always want to mock that because it is an obvious example of what I'm talking about here. And so, then we sound like morons out there. Because then lost people go, "Didn't Jesus turn water into wine?" And then we say, "Well, wine back then wasn't really fermented. It didn't really have alcohol in it," which is why Proverbs says, "Don't get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." Because you know, grape juice would make a room crazy, alright. When people get too much grape juice into them, all kinds of debauchery breaks out, so stay off the juice, alright. And so, we end up sounding ridiculous. Now, I am not up here, in any way, saying, "Go out and get yourself a Shiner Bock tonight" or anything like that. That's not even my message; that's not even what I'm talking about. What I'm doing is trying to expose the painful reality that this relational Jesus, who transforms our hearts so that the weight of sin disappears is not the Jesus that a lot of us worship. Instead, we are, with all our might, trying to conform to a pattern of morality that has done nothing but exhaust us over the years. It has done nothing but exhaust us over the years.

Now, let's keep reading. Verses 20-26, "And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever');..." Now, all this is saying is that this is the final way that Jesus is going to reach the world. And we know that because Old Testament priests did not swear an oath. Like, an oath signifies forever. Like when I stood on an altar with my wife and we entered into an oath covenant based relationship, we said, "For better or for worse, 'til death do us part." So that means whether this thing goes good from this moment on or this thing goes bad from this moment on, I'm in it. And I swore an oath, which means this thing is permanent. Now, He's saying that the Old Testament Levitical priesthood did not need an oath, because it was never planned to be the permanent way. It was there to show it's folly, so that Jesus could come in the fullness, and that's when He swore the oath.

So, let's keep reading, "...so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant." This is going to be another reason why Jesus is so much better than the Law. "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently." So, He's going to show another way why the Law is lacking. Not only can the Law not change your heart, but now He's going to get into this, God's gonna go, "I had to have tons of priests because they were always dying. They were always limited on how much they could help because they were human and they were dying all the time." And here's what He's saying here, have you ever had your world unravel and not be able to get a hold of anyone? Like that little support system of yours. Everybody should have one. Like, I always preach this, and I try my best to practice it. Like, Jesus, He ran with this crowd of 120, but inside of that 120, there were 72 that He knew better than the 120. And inside of that 72, there were the twelve, and He knew the twelve really well. And inside of the twelve, there was this three, and this three that he was intimately tight and close with. And I say this all the time, and I'm trying to teach, since we're going to be together for a long long time here. Like, I refuse to let other people's convictions about how I should lead my life lead me into unhealthy things. And in my life, I try to model this thing. My wife knows every bit, she's in here tonight and she knows the good, the bad and the ugly. You can't hide it at home baby, not for long. And then, I've got a group of 3-4 guys that I am very close with and I walk with. And even in my life, there have been moments, dark, heavy, weighty moments where there's no one to be found. And I'm calling people that I know just to have a voice that can comfort me, and I'm getting voice mail. And you know it's just people screening your call. I've seen some of you look at your cell phones since you've been in here. Nobody's ever apart with their cellphone. I mean, you've been with them at dinner, where they're like, "Hmm?" I mean, that's just you, that's what they're doing when you call and you get voice mail. They screened you. It's a whole social pecking order. It's a weird deal, alright. And in that moment,

where no one's to be found and you are all on your own, Jesus here is referencing that moment and going, "Here's another way I am greater. I am always, always, always available. 2:00AM...available. Thursday night...available. Sunday morning...available. Christmas Day...available. I do not nap; I do not eat dinner; I have no need; I am always available to those who will draw near to Me. No voice mail; no 3 days to get back to you via e-mail. I am here. Right now, here.

Okay, let's finish it. Verse 25, "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." If you get what we're doing here, you'll say "us" instead of "them." So that means that Jesus, at the right hand of God, is saying, "Save, stir, help, move..." The best place you can see this is where Jesus comes up to Peter and asked, "The devil's asked permission to sift you like wheat." Now, I love that story, because the devil's the peon that he is. He's like, "Can I tempt him? Hmm?" He's like, "Sure, go ahead. He needs it." And Jesus is going to say to him, "So, I'm gonna let Satan sift you, but don't fear, I have prayed for you." Now, what happens? Well, Peter blows it, doesn't he? But he comes back, and he's restored. Why? Because Jesus prayed for him, and He bats 1.000. Jesus doesn't pray for stuff that doesn't happen, alright. "Please save him." "No!" "What? Me? Did I say that or did You? Which head said that?" Jesus is batting 1.000 when it comes to His prayers.

Now, understatement of the year, verse 26, "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest..." That is the understatement of the year! Like, the text just said that you aren't bound to the Law, you aren't bound to obey this moral code in order to see God. In fact, you have a high priest who wants to transform your soul in such a way that sin loses it's power. So, you have a high priest who's not interested in you gaining control over your lust, but healing you of your lust. You don't have a priest that commands you to get control of your lies and your drinking and your issues; you got a high priest who wants to heal you of those things. So, it's fitting we should have Him. Are you kidding me? This is the greatest news in the world! But man, we love the Law. Man we love it. We just keep running back to it. Okay, what then is the purpose of biblical counseling and Celebrate Recovery, which is this huge ministry we do here on Thursday nights? What is the purpose of the Levitical priest now that there is a better way, now that there is a way for wholeness to be put in place? The moment that grace takes root is that moment where honesty occurs in the deep parts of the soul. The purpose of biblical counseling, Celebrate Recovery, those venues are to lead us into truth, where in truth grace takes root. The thing that biblical counseling, the thing that Celebrate Recovery does is it guides us into the deep parts of the heart where the darkness that's in us can be exposed for what it is, and in that moment of real honesty and in that moment of clarity where our stuff is seen, there and only there does grace and transformation begin to occur.

So, I want to invite you out to play with me. Here we go. We do this thing every Thursday night called Celebrate Recovery, and somehow or another, its become this thing for drunks, which is horribly untrue. Celebrate Recovery isn't a place for just drunks and druggies. Now, they're there. They're there. Celebrate Recovery is this deal that we do where something's short circuiting in you. Like, let me give you some examples. Like, do you ever find yourself just being angry and having no clue why you're so angry? Like you're just perpetually angry, and you're not really sure where it came from or what it's about, but it's just there. Or maybe it's lust or maybe it's laziness or maybe it's self hate, but something's just misfiring in you. And you come in here every week and you go, "Oh man, I hear what you're saying. I'd love to be part of that. I'd love to grab a hold of that. I'd love for those things to take root, but something's short circuiting in me, something's not getting from here to here. Well, the purpose of Celebrate Recovery, the purpose for the Center for Christian Counseling is to help you connect that circuit in such a way that truth can be seen and transformation can occur.

So, maybe you're not hearing me at all tonight. Maybe you're just sitting here tonight, and I've just done a horrible job at this text. You're like, "You lost me at Melchiz-a-whatever." Or maybe you can't hear me because your ego is so gargantuan that your only way out will be in God's mercy to let that huge head of yours crush you. And that would be God's mercy. It would not be God's mercy to let you walk around with your inflated ego all the rest of your life. So, maybe

you're not hearing me tonight because of your pride. But maybe you are hearing me. Like maybe tonight you're tired of the short circuit. Hey, why don't you come hang out with us on Thursday? I'll be there. Heck, my whole family's there. I'll save you a seat. Come on. And if you're going, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know if I'm supposed to. I don't know if that's for me," how's the last three years worked? On this short circuit thing, let's just go three years. How's the last three years worked? Have you been short circuiting for three years? Some of you are going, "Try twenty-seven!" Do you keep falling back into the same junk? Are you still stuck in the same cycle? Do you got that same thing short circuiting? Do you got that same thing popping over and over and over again? How about we take a chance, man? Come on, you keep hearing the promises over and over again. How about we buy in? You keep short circuiting, the same issue over and over again, the same thing creeping up over and over, the same thing destroying your relationships, the same thing keeping you away from God, the same thing, over and over again, haunting you. How about we just get some help? How about we find some people who can help us figure out this short circuit? Is it risky? Heck yeah, it's risky. It is risky. But come on, man. What's your other option? To keep doing it the way you're doing it?

So, my dad and I, big Steve, we want some things to go in the ground with us, you know. Like, there's been some pretty wicked junk in our bloodline. Like, I want it to turn to dust with me. Now, my son, he'll have his own new junk that I give him, but the dark stuff, I mean the really dark stuff that's existed in the last 100 years of my last name, I want it do go in the ground with me. I don't want to, with sheer will, behave correctly but be overwhelmed in soul. I want to be healed. But this is the horrible part of my job. I can only decide for me.

So, the Law beckons. It always will. The list is there. It will always be there, and it will never bring life. So, God sent Jesus, God came in the flesh. Let me just end tonight with Romans 8:3, which is one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture. You ready? "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did."

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for tonight, and I thank You for a chance to just to get together and talk about the fact that we're pretty powerless to make changes in us. And so, I know it's a weird kind of night because I know there's a lot of people who aren't church folk and we're talking about Levitical priesthood and covenants. But maybe tonight's not for them, Father. I pray for my family in here. I pray for those who know Your name and know how good You can be and know what life is like not when you're conformed to a pattern of religion but when you're transformed, that they've tasted that bread, drank that wine. I pray tonight for them. I pray tonight for my brothers and sisters in here, my family in here who are exhausted because they're still trying to still go the Levitical route. And I pray for my brothers and sisters in here tonight who are exhausted because they are trying to earn what cannot be earned. And I pray tonight for my brothers and sisters who, right now, could sit down and talk with me about what You're like and what You do but somehow have lost You and that connection to You and that grace and hope. And I pray for my brothers and sisters who sit in despair right now because they feel like sin has mastered them, and they just can't overcome it. And I thank You for a night where we can just come together and talk about truth."