

If you have your Bibles, let's go to Psalm 19. That's where we'll start out. In fact, we're going to spend a majority of our time there, and then we'll move over to 2 Corinthians for just a little while. Now, I want to review the last four years with you. And I know that sounds like a horribly long sermon, maybe even an impossible one. But I don't think it is, because really everything that's been spoken from this stage falls within the confines of one story. And it might be a chapter of that story or even a paragraph out of a chapter of that story or it might be a section of that story, but it comes out of one story. Now, we are, beginning this weekend and for the next four weeks after this weekend, doing what we call Family Traits 2.0, family traits being our...core values seems too corporate America to me, and so we call them family traits. They are things that we value, things that we're built upon, things that will always be who we are. And so, I wanted to do it a little bit differently though, which is why we called it 2.0. I want to look at it from a different perspective. Like, I think we could go through the core values, and if you've been here any length of period at all, we can go through it and I think you can individually get it. Like tonight we're going to be talking about truth here in a little while. And I think that we would go, "Yeah, okay. I know. I need to read the Scriptures. I need to be in the Scriptures. I get it. I need to be doing that." And if we went into foot washing, we could go, "I need to be serving somewhere in the church, giving back to the body." And if we talked about missional living, we could go, "Yeah, I know I need to." And on and on we could go through the five family traits, and we all kind of understand them individually, but the truth is I want us to see them a little bit differently. I want us to see them within the confines of what's actually happening, beginning to end. Like the reality is, you and I have been caught up in something that's hard to get our mind around. Like you and I have found ourselves caught up in the story behind the universe. And if you don't understand the fullness of what's occurring here, then we have a tendency to make Christianity and make Jesus and make God and make the church all about us rather than seeing it for what it is and honestly what it will be.

And so, before we get started into truth and seeing it this way, I think the question we have to answer is, "What then is the story?" If we are part players in a larger story, then what is the story? Well, it starts out with creation. It starts out with the triune God overflowing on the blank canvas that is creation. So God, in His perfectness, overflows onto nothing and begins to display and unpack His glory, His splendor, His magnificence, His love, His grace. He just begins to create an overflow and out of nothing begins to create everything from the majesty of the universe to the beauty of mountains and oceans to the sensuality of man and woman. These are all an overflow out of the heart, mind and soul of God onto the blank canvas of creation. It is the apex, the pinnacle of human existence. We are near to God, we are able to enjoy the gifts from God and of God without taking those gifts to any perverse area or any perverse level. We are walking in intimacy with Him. The garden is there. The gazelle doesn't run from the lion. All is rhythmic, all in harmony, spectacular, beautiful, awe inspiring. God sets into motion a rhythm, a harmony, a display of His infinite perfections in all that He creates. And that lasts for two chapters of the Bible. And then in the middle of this really beautiful moment, sin enters the world through disobedience and takes what was, a full soul, and fractures it and replaces harmony with brokenness and replaces rhythm with noise. And sin enters into the world and with it, all that was good and right begins to go haywire. Let me give you an example. Some how we get this really bad rap, but reading the Scriptures, I don't know we get the bad rap. So, the Scriptures say that God gave us food and wine so that our hearts would be happy in Him, that we would eat good food and drink good wine, and in that, there would be an enjoyment of those things and a gratitude towards God, and really a splendor in God who could think up such flavors. But that was Genesis 1 and 2.

In Genesis 3, the world that we live in, all of a sudden food and wine become gluttony and alcoholism or at just the basic level, consumed with no gratitude for their maker. Now listen, if you've grown up in church, we might have to wrestle here, but I promise I'm not lying to you. Like sex, that was God's idea. That was His. He came up with that. That wasn't a weird accident or some kind of byproduct from some other part of creation. That was Him. He said, "Be fruitful and multiply." So sex, a gift given to His creation so that souls might mingle, so that this really beautiful gift given to a man and woman to be enjoyed in the creative order God made for it. And then, what was so beautiful and so safe all of a sudden becomes just a mere physical act or it gets replaced with adultery and fornication. And I don't even really know what fornication means; it's just as a pastor, you have to say that word. Like if you go to any kind of Bible college, they'll be, "At least once a day, you have to say fornication. Sign this." That's the only way you can get your degree, is to say fornicate. So, this really beautiful gift, it's fractured, it's broken, the rhythm's gone. Okay marriage, which was this really beautiful place where a man and woman compliment each other in such a way that wholeness is felt and known and walked in, all of a sudden this thing that was so beautiful and so right becomes riddled with strife. Do I need to keep going? Like it's like the whole thing that was so beautiful, so right, so rhythmic, so much harmony, it's like there's barely a semblance of it anymore. The picture I kept getting in my mind was...I'm a little bit addicted to the History Channel and if you stay up past 11:00, it's just pretty much World War II from 11:00PM to 11:00AM. There are these images, this video that if you watch, you can watch London, which is this really beautiful city with such history and such grace, and the Germans blew it to pieces. And what was once so beautiful and so historic, it ends up being smoldering ruins. I think this is the imagery of what happens in the fall in Genesis 3, that it's beautiful and it's right and it's lovely and the perfections of God are visible, and now all of a sudden, it gets blown to kingdom come. And now where there were no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no angst, innocence, no judgment, now all of a sudden there are tears, there is angst, there is pain in what was once beautiful. And so, most of the Old Testament is the play out of this smoldering remains of what was once so right and men grasping and trying to get back there. The thing about the soul...I think a lot of the soul got emptied at the fall, but there's part of us that still remembers. There's part of us, at whatever deep level, that remembers. Our souls remember what it was like before the fall. That's why we're never satisfied, always frustrated, can never get enough of anything. It's why the book of Ecclesiastes says, "The eye never gets tired of seeing; the ear never gets tired of hearing." And we can't fill ourselves because our spirits remember. Okay, so remember we're talking about the story that we find ourselves in, that creation, that this beautiful moment is followed by the fall, sin enters into the world, and what was once perfect is not smoldering ruins. And then, after man trying to fix it goes horribly wrong, Jesus, God in the flesh, born to redeem men and women out of the brokenness, out of the smoldering ruins.

Now, most of us and most places see the story ending there. So when we hear this kind of epic that we're caught up in, it goes: creation, fall, redemption, and then the story just kind of stops. But the problem with that is if you stop there, there's this really big tendency to make Christianity about us. If you stop there, then all of a sudden, the message of Jesus and all that's occurring in the universe, it's about us. It's about me reading my Bible, it's about me doing this, it's about me not doing that. And then all of a sudden, what stands as central in the Christian message and in the gospel and even in what's expected of us as believers is it just stops there. And to quote one of my favorite preachers, when that happens, then all of a sudden, the church is in real danger, because it's becoming a cruise ship. When that happens, then all of a sudden, things like prayer that were meant to plead for God to restore the earth, now all of a sudden, prayer becomes a bell for us to ring to get God to fetch us a pillow. Because it doesn't stop there. It doesn't stop with redemption. In fact, I think it's because we haven't communicated well what the whole story is that we've got churches crammed filled with people that think they know Jesus simply because they walked down some aisle, shook a guy's hand, was baptized, no regeneration, no Holy Spirit working their life, no transformation, no difference in how they live their lives but simply they were confirmed or they got or they got baptized, because that's what they were taught that redemption's the end. Now, hopefully you're hearing me right, because I'm not complaining about redemption. I'm not going, "Dad-gum redemption's ruined this thing!" No, that's not what I'm saying. Redemption is beautiful and it's

right and should be celebrated, at least the God of redemption should be celebrated. But the truth is the story doesn't stop there; it doesn't stop with redemption. It goes: creation, fall, redemption, and then the next word is restoration. And then you've got all these insane verses in the Scriptures where Jesus would say, "Even if you give some one a cup of cold water in my name...You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world...Go and make disciples..." You've got Ephesians 3:10 that says that the manifold wisdom of God will be viewed in the church. So now all of a sudden, you've got God redeeming, saving and men and women for the sake of His name and for the restoration of what's gone horrifically wrong. So the church then serves as a repairer of rhythm.

And then the last little piece is...I want to be real careful here, because I don't think restoration completely occurs until Jesus returns. That's where our hope is because as long as we're alive, we'll feel like, "Oh, we're not there yet, we're not there yet, we're not there yet..." I kind of chuckle a little bit when some of you come to my office and are like, "I just feel like I'm not there yet..." I'm like, "Yes, yeah." Bono said it, hello, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for." That's what he's saying there. He's saying we're not home, it's not restored. It's what Romans 8 means when it says, "We groan and we long because we can see that it's still broken," and yet the Holy Spirit of God whispers, "Fix, restore, push back." And so, this is the story that you and I find ourselves caught up in. It's not about you. I mean, it's just not. Like it's not about you and it's not about me and as awesome as things have been around here for the last four years, crazy small that must look to God. You know, like in the scope of all that He's doing in the restoration of the rhythm and the harmony of the universe through the church and through His return, do you know how tiny this all looks? I mean, is He seriously going to be impressed? "Man, that's huge. And I'm God. This is huge." It's not about you, not about me, it really transcends us. We are, and let me be really honest with you, loved bit players in a divine epic. And I think you've got to have that in your head as we start working through our family traits here. Because if not, nobody can answer the question, "Why?"

Like we're going to talk about truth in here. Let's just get into it. For us, one of the family traits is that we believe the Scriptures...like if you come here, you're just going to hear me preach the Bible. I tend to preach through books rather than topical studies. I'm not anti-topical studies. I think topical studies are great, they're great and there's a time for them. But I like preaching through books of the Bible because it makes me preach on stuff I don't want to preach on. So I like preaching through books, you know why? It's because we believe that these Scriptures, this sacred literature of ours, it's authoritative. There's something about these Scriptures and the story we find ourselves in. There's something about this sacred literature of ours that's a part of the epic that we find ourselves in. But there's been some frustrations over this book has there not? I mean, A) there's been a lot of people killed over this thing. You can go back and read the Reformation, you can go back to people putting this in English, putting it in German. That book on your lap right now, it's got blood all over it. I mean literally hundreds if not thousands of men slaughtered, killed badly just to get it in your hands. But like all the things they say about it, they confuse me. You know, like the road map to your life. Well, maybe. I want to show you what the Scriptures say about the Scriptures, and I want us to look at it within the confines of the story we find ourselves caught up in. So, Psalm 19, we'll pick it up in verse 7. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;" Okay, so I want to chat here. Somehow in God's epic story of redeeming the fallen and restoring the order, the rhythm, the harmony of things, somehow He's decided that the words in this sacred literature are the primary means by which He revives the soul, which means that upon reading this and studying this and devouring this, there's something that works, the Holy Spirit somehow works in the depths of our soul and begins to restore and revive and redeem the broken places in you and in me. So much so that we'll say the Scriptures are sufficient in and of themselves, which means that if God so chooses, all we have to do is stand up here, read this and He can blow up any soul He wants. And you'll find testimony over and over and over again of a phrase or a verse that threw somebody's life upside down in a positive way. So, somehow in this story the Scriptures are used to revive the soul.

Look at this, "the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;" So according to the Scriptures then, within the confines of the story, in redeeming and restoring the world, those who will become obedient to God's revelation

of Himself within Scripture will begin to live life as it was designed to be lived. So, let's chat here. If the things that we already mentioned: wine, food, sex, work, marriage, children, if those things were created by God pre-fall and given to us so that His glory might be marveled in, then God's desire is not for us to be miserable men and women who miss out on the deep levels of life and joy. But rather, the parameters laid out in Scripture are rather for our full joy so that we might drink deeply, and I might even say as deep as you possibly can, from life as God's created it to be. And so, when He builds parameters around wine, He's not saying, "Don't enjoy wine," He's saying, "Waking up in the back of an El Camino in another state is not a good idea." Correct? Anybody want to argue with that? When He's setting parameters around drinking, He's not saying, "Don't enjoy." in fact, He's saying, "Listen, I gifted you this. I thought of this. For you to display My splendor to you, I created this. Stay within these parameters or it is going to hurt you." So, He creates sex and says, "Listen, within these parameters, it's beautiful and it's right and it's good and it fuels and feeds the soul. Outside of these parameters, it goes bad and it can wound. It can wound so badly." In the parameters of work, He says, "Listen, it's good to work, but work shouldn't own you, you should own work. If you get outside of it..." And so, the man or the woman who is in the Scriptures is wrestling with the Lord. In Scriptures he begins to live life pretty deeply. Notice I used the word deeply and not easily. We'll get to that more later. We can lie to each other.

Let's go on, "the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;" Okay, here comes the time when we lie to each other. What He just said then is within the confines of the story, one of the things that occurs when restoration is on the menu is that He creates in us a rejoicing over obedience to His commands, which means we begin to walk in and feel the weight of obedience to Christ and it brings joy, joy that transcends even the most horrific of difficulties. You know, I never want to lie to you and we'll talk about some of this more in a minute, but He's not going to say here, "Obeying the Lord is great fun! Obeying is simple, easy, one little prayer and you're in." No, He's saying to be really clear here, in the end...and if you know your Bible well, you'll understand this one...after your hip's broken, there will be rejoicing.

Let's keep going, "the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;" I love that one. There's something that occurs when you're constantly digging in the Scriptures and asking the Lord to speak to you. All of a sudden, you start seeing the world a little bit differently. Like how we raise our children, we see that a little bit differently. How we interact with one another in marriage, we should see that differently. Like, you're in the Scriptures, all of a sudden Jesus says "Love your wife like I love the church." That changes the way you see marriages, doesn't it? Okay. "Impart My splendor to your children." That changes the the way we see our children, doesn't it? It enlightens the eyes.

Let's keep going, "the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;" I love that line, "The fear of the Lord is clean." If you'll remember, about nine months ago, I did a sermon called "The Good Fear" where I talked about there's a good kind of fear, there's a kind of fear that will save your life. I think I used the illustration of my daughter being scared of the street. And we were okay with that. We want her to be horrified of the street. We want that, to save her life. This is what it's talking about here. The fear of the Lord is clean. It's not, "Oh no, He's going to destroy me if I don't," but it's this, "He loves me and He wants to protect me." And this is what creates endurance and understanding that we do not want to be far from Him. And the only thing good that can come from being far from Him is no good.

Okay, "the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether." Verse 10, "More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb." Here's what he's saying here. He's saying, you know why the word, the Scriptures are so important to us? They help the redemption process. They help the restoration process. So what good is it if you have all the money in the world but you can never enjoy the fullness of anything because outside of Christ, you cannot have the fullness of anything? What good is that gold? What good is honey that tastes so good to your lips if over and over again, it's just going to make you throw up? Look at what he says next, "Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." Alright, this is what the

Scriptures say about the Scriptures and how they play into this redemption, restoration epic that will be consummated at the return of Christ.

So if the Scriptures are this important to those who trust in and know Jesus, why are so few people intrigued by them? Well I think I know some of it. I had this really dry three or four years, this really low valley/desert. No matter how much I prayed, no matter what Bible study I went to, no matter what, it was just dry and God felt far off. At the time, I was in Baptist college, and you're not allowed to struggle there. So I had to pretend, which was easy because that was when that worship song, "And with our hands lifted high we will worship and sing..." And so, all you had to do was wait 'til that part and then lift your hands. So, it was really easy to pretend that you love the Lord back then despite the fact that you felt far from Him. And so, I started getting a disdain for the Scriptures during that desert experience. And it was really for one reason, because whenever I was foolish to confess that I was struggling, somebody would always just answer me back that I should be reading my Bible. I mean, I just got to the place where I just wanted to punch people in the face when they said that to me. "I'm reading the Bible. I'm reading it! I'm reading the mess out of it! Don't tell me that that's some kind of magical combination lock that makes all of this go away." Or we were in that...I don't know what it was. There was some kind of movement that swept through where all of a sudden, I think honestly it was a reaction to liberalism where all of a sudden there were all these mathematic equations at church. I've mocked them since I got here. I told you this would be a review. Like, "Seven ways to remove all doubt." Are you kidding me? By the way, step 1 through 3 was read your Bible more. And so then, I'd do the seven steps and now not only am I doubting whether or not I'm saved, I'm doubting whether or not anyone is. Here's the error that we make. I think we make promises that the Scriptures don't make. I think that's what happens. We make promises that the Scriptures don't make. And we put time lines on things when the Scriptures won't. In John 5, Jesus is talking with these Pharisees, and He says, "You study the Scriptures in vain. You're reading the Torah in vain, because you think that in them you have life and you refuse to come to me." Now, this next line is interesting. "You refuse to come to me, of whom the Scriptures testify." Now, He's not referencing the New Testament there. What's he referencing? The Old Testament. He's reverencing the Torah. So here's what Jesus just did. He just says, "Listen, David and Goliath? That's about Me. Ester? That's about Me. Moses? I'm the greater Moses. Abraham? I'm the greater Abraham. You fill in the blank. That's about Me. Do you know the Old Testament story, the same one over and over again of a man leading people out of slavery? Or a king delivering people from bondage? Have you not picked up that that's a common theme that culminates in Me? Have you not notices that it's the same story over and over again with new faces? All of that is about Me." And so, He goes, "You go to the Scriptures to find rules and laws and you miss Me and they're about Me. I redeem, I restore, not the Scriptures. I'm the one. Know Me." Why? Go to 2 Corinthians 3, we'll start in verse 18. It says this, "And we all, with unveiled face..." This is those who have become believers in Jesus. "...beholding the glory of the Lord,..." So by beholding Jesus, look at what happens. "...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." By seeing Jesus, we are transformed into His image from one degree to the next to the next to the next.

Alright, let's go real practical in family traits this year. I've never been a guy...and if you've been here the whole time, you know this...I'm not a guy who says you shouldn't watch TV or listen to secular music. I don't secular music exists. I think music exists. I think when you start using Christian as an adjective, you get yourself in a lot of trouble: Christian camp site, Christian music... Those things don't have souls. They can't have Jesus. Jesus has them, they don't have Him. And so, it's always confusing to me when we use it as an adjective. So, I've never been a guy that says, "Don't listen to this. Don't go here. Don't...don't...don't." But here's what I do know. When it comes to pressing into God, Jesus through the Scriptures, it will never accidentally happen, ever. You will not pop popcorn, grab a Coke, head in to watch Jack Bauer kill some people and stumble into the Scriptures. You will never come home one night, having plans to eat dinner with your friends and sit back and relax and all of a sudden, find yourself studying the Scriptures. Now, you might have

plans to study the Scriptures and all those other things happen, but it never works the other way. "What are you doing tonight?" "Oh, I don't know. Maybe hang out with some friends..." Next day at work, "What did you do last night?" "The weirdest thing. I studied the book of Numbers for like six hours. I don't what happened. I did. I wasn't planning on getting wrapped up in it like that, just all of a sudden, it happened. It was weird." But here's what I know. I know some of you are forced to live vicariously through preachers, because you have no ability to feed yourself. And so, you're forced to go from church to church to church, speaker to speaker to speaker, podcast to podcast to podcast. Like, I think if you don't pick a time, it's just not going to happen, and I think you'll spend the rest of your life going to bed at night promising God, "Tomorrow..." Or you'll do it once. Like after you know, I hit this subject maybe once or twice a year. Like, maybe tonight's the night or tomorrow morning you're all excited and you pick a book and you'll study it. But to make it a practice, to make it pursuing, trusting that maybe He's working on our souls whether we can feel it or not. Like here's the thing about my little 3-4 year valley. The funny thing is to look back on it now and see all that God did in that time when I felt so hopelessly alone, that my sin were whipping me, that I had no balance. It's funny to look back on that now and watch how much the Lord was just chiseling and beating.

Can I throw some practical things on you? I like books of the Bible because they're one thought. So, I like studying books. Let me encourage you to do this tonight. I'm not going to say, "Study a book. That's not where I'm going. Do this tonight though. When are you going to study? You gotta answer that. If you don't answer that, it is not happening. When are you going to pursue...and I know I keep using the word "study" and some of you are getting hives, some of you are starting to sweat, some of you are already buying that lie that, "Well, I just can't remember stuff," one of my favorites. When are you going to do it. I got nothing against Jack Bauer; he's awesome. I'm a fan. Meredith Grey, I guess is great. I'm okay with movies and TV. But seriously, are we trading some of the process of redemption and restoration for Jack and Meredith? Are you kidding me? Are we slothing up our evenings? I'm just asking. When? Pick a book. Philippians is great. Galatians is great. Stay away from Leviticus and Numbers for now. Although there's coming a day when I'm preaching through Numbers. Probably when we fill up even the video and all of that, I'll be like, "Two years on Numbers, let's go." Thin it out, see who's serious. Pick a time. Pick a book. I'll tell you where we're going. Starting in the Fall, we're start going through the gospel of Luke. We'll maybe be in it for a year. Go ahead and jump on Luke. I think after that, we're going to get into Acts. I think it was written by the same guy, so go ahead and tackle those. Like all I do is open up and go, "Who's this being written to? Who wrote this? Who did he send it to? What's the message? What does this reveal about the character of God? How is this connected to Jesus? If you do Luke, easy. What do I need to repent of, and what needs to be integrated into my life so that redemption, restoration, those things can work in me? You know, we always talk about and prayed about being a deep place rather than a wide place. Man, it's so much easier to be wide than it is to be deep. So my hope is...and I think this is a naïve hope honestly...my hope is that on your way home tonight, you'll figure out when, you'll figure out when and that will be your time with the Lord. And I'm not promising fireworks. I'm not promising the Shekinah glory of God to show up in your study or your dorm room. I'm not promising you all of a sudden you're going to want to know Greek. I'm a pastor and don't want to know it. It's just in there now. I'm not saying all of a sudden you're going out to buy Wayne Grudem's "Systematic Theology." But the process of redemption and restoration involves the redeemed encountering the living God in His self disclosure of Himself to them. When? What book? It's not a race. Take your time, savor. The first time I read through the book of Romans, I stopped at "I Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ" for like a month. "What does that mean?" My hope is that our depth would catch up to our width, but I can't preach that into being.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for this story that we find ourselves caught up in, that it's bigger than us, beyond us and yet is including us. I thank You for the angst that exists in every one of us in this room if we're honest enough to admit it. I thank You for some of the frustration. I even thank You for the desert. I think it's easier for me to do that now that I'm not walking in it as much as...how impossible to thank You for it while I was there. I pray for the men and women who have

chosen to worship here at the Village in this little segment of Your body in this small sub-chapter within the chapter within the section within the story. I pray that we might be faithful with our part, that You might revitalize the soul, that You might grant us wisdom, that You might enlighten our eyes, that You might give us a clean fear, that You might warn us and protect us and be more valuable to us than gold. But this is a weird one because it involves discipline, and it seems like we love spirituality but have no room for discipline. I thank You that things are being restored. I thank You that we're day closer. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

© 2007 *The Village Church*