

How we doing, good? All right well if you have your Bibles, let's get going – John chapter 3 is where we're going to be tonight. We're going to turn over to Galatians after awhile, but we're going to start in John chapter 3. If you're a guest with us tonight or just started to come around, it's kind of a good time to do that. We're going through what we call our family traits. This is kinda what shapes us philosophically and theologically and why we do the things we do, and why we don't do other things, but do do these things. And so, this is our 3rd week into 5 weeks of that. And so you've picked a good time to come and kind of check us out.

The first week we talked about truth and Scripture and Scripture's role, and kind of this thing we find ourselves caught up in. Last week we talked about really the fact that the story we find ourselves caught in doesn't terminate with us. That God creates the world, he creates the universe, He creates it with rhythm and in harmony with things working as they're supposed to work. Mankind enjoying the creation of God, bringing glory to God in that creation. It's really a beautiful 2 chapters of Scripture. But then sin enters into the world and when sin enters into the world, the universe as God made it with all that rhythm and all that harmony fractures. And in that moment, all that was good and right begins to spin out of control and becomes perverse.

I think some of the examples that we've been given the last couple of weeks, Scripture is clear that God gave wine to the hearts of men so that we might be happy. So wine is a gift from God. But then sin enters into the world and all of a sudden wine, that was a gift from God to make the heart happy, all of a sudden becomes alcoholism. God gives the gift of food. God grants food for his people to create a sense of gratitude and worship in their hearts so that when we take a bite of that fajita, that worship would explode, and we'd be like God you're good, literally, because you created the combination of these flavors. That gets replaced with either consumption without any kind of gratitude or even in severe cases that turns into gluttony. Despite the fact that the church has historically had issues with this, God creates sex. He creates it for more than just procreation. He creates it, the Hebrew word is *dode*, a mingling of souls. That God gives us the gift of sex so that a man and woman within the confines, within the creation of God could mingle with one another at this unbelievably deep level of intimacy, predicated upon 2 other Hebrew words, we don't have time tonight. Right? So, sex, this very beautiful gift from God becomes perverse and gets boiled down to a mere physical act and becomes adultery. I don't have time to unpack the last 2 weeks, but we've said that God is not the enemy of pleasure, God is not the enemy of good food, and good drink and good sex. He is the author of such things. Right? I mean these are God's ideas. He creates them. He makes them. He gifts them to his creation for their enjoyment and in the end, His glory. That sin enters into the world and spins the world out of control, breaks the harmony, breaks the rhythm of the universe. God comes in the flesh, Jesus, to redeem it, through his shed blood, through his broken body, Jesus redeems mankind.

Now, what we've been talking about, which is the 2nd poster up there, the missional living one, last week, was that the majority of evangelicals and the majority of men and women in churches today, think that the story stops with redemption. So they go, "OK creation, all right, fall, redemption." And they believe that the story terminates upon them, and when that happens and you don't have the fullness of what we find ourselves caught up in, the church becomes unbelievably impotent, and loses her place in the story. She loses her power, and what happens is believers begin to puff out their chests, and get proud, and say – "aren't we good, don't we do well, aren't we better than other people?" And we begin to boast in what is not ours to boast in. The truth of the gospel, if it's anything else, is that it's not about you. It's just not about you. It's a lot bigger than you; it's a lot bigger than me. We find ourselves caught up in something

that if it was a movie, we've got a 7 second scene in. All right? So, we don't stand as center. When you start to believe you stand as center, like the old... what was the old song they sang when I was a kid... "God loves people more than anything" they sang it better than that but that's what they sang. It's this idea that we stand at the center, that we're good, we're right, we're redeemable we're the... but we're not the story. The story is the redemption and restoration of the world. Of the universe. And so, when churches and individual Christians begin to believe that we are the center, and that we're what this whole thing's about, then all of a sudden all of our money, all of our time all of our resources goes to us. And so all of a sudden despite the fact that there are 42 Starbucks within a 2-mile radius of this joint, all of a sudden we're building coffee houses, and we're building restaurants, and we're all within the confines of the Church. Because it's about us, and hey, come in here and be careful, the world's filled with sinners, and if you get close to them, you'll get it. So don't touch them, or don't get near them, next thing you know you'll be "adultery" you'll have the virus of sin and it will destroy you and everyone you love, and the only ones better than our government at fear mongering is the Church. You get around them, you say this, you do this, you go here, you do this... and then all of a sudden we sound ridiculous. All of a sudden we sound ridiculous. All of a sudden the gospel gets boiled down to rated R movies and secular music, whatever that's about. Whatever that is. And so the church was filled, we sang about it individually, but corporately, we have this encounter with God that then overflows out of us, and into the spheres of life that we walk in. So my call as a believer in Christ is not to build a coffee house in a Church, and tell everyone they should come to it, but rather to walk outside of these walls and be in coffee houses around here. Correct? Are you tracking with that?

All right so this is the call of the church. We have been saved and redeemed, not so that it terminates there, but so that it flows out of us and the word is restoration, so that God is restoring this fractured creation of his through the bride of Christ, through the church, and through not us harboring ourselves together and building a wall around us and saying "oh we better be careful", but rather for us to be out there shaking hands, and saying hello, and getting to know, and having people into our homes, and loving on men and women. That we are a part of the restoration of the brokenness of the world, which will be perfected when Christ returns. All right. So that leads us, that's the best I can do, just 10 minutes of catching you up for the last couple of weeks.

Where we've got to go tonight is difficult. It is, and I'll promise you this, it is more difficult the longer you've been in church. So if you've grown up in church, this will be very difficult tonight. If you've had no church background, maybe the whole thing will be difficult, but at least you won't have this framework that we've got to kind of attack tonight. So, I want to pray for us, because what we need to happen for us tonight is not cognitive, and it's not just a lesson of theology that we just need to get. But we need the Spirit of God, this mysterious Spirit of God to move in us, stir in us, break down things in us, and give us the ability to see. So let me pray for us and then we'll get started. Very familiar story that we'll find ourselves in tonight.

"Father I thank you for these men and women and I thank you for a chance to come together and open up the Scriptures and see what you have to say to us. And so, I know tonight where we're going. I remember this story in the book of Luke where you begin to unpack some stuff, and it enraged people. And so, I pray for protection against that tonight. I just pray that you would stir our hearts towards you, and that the weight and the beauty and the greatness that is the Gospel would shine into our hearts, and we would be changed by them. And it's for your beautiful name I pray, amen."

All right, John chapter 3. You're going to find this story, if you've been in church at all, very very very very familiar. All right? So, let's go 3, starting in verse 1. Here's what it says:

"Now, there was a man of the Pharosies, named Nicodemus. A ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him – rabbi (rabbi is just a term for teacher) we know that you are a teacher come from God. For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

All right now, there are 2 things that I need you to see. We'll get through this whole story, I promise you. There are 2 things that I need you to see. There are two very big pieces of information that we have to know here before we finish digging through this text. Number 1, Nicodemus is part of a ruling counsel of Jews called the Pharosies. They set policy, not only for the Jews in Jerusalem, but the Jews throughout the world. There were never more than 6,000 of them, and these were men that took, basically, a blood oath, or a covenant, in front of 2 or 3 ministers that they would spend their entire lives following the 10 commandments to the letter. And so, these pharoses were men that said 'with my whole life, with my whole being, with all that I am, I will obey the 10 Commandments'. Now, the 10 commandments are a little bit nebulous, are they not? Like here would be my example – remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Well, ok, but what does it look like? I remember what it used to look like in our country. It used to look like the Blue Laws, right? Most of you didn't think I'd remember the Blue Laws, but I remember that. I was in, like, 3rd grade. The Blue Laws were that period in American history where it was illegal to be open on Sunday. You couldn't be open on Sunday unless you were a restaurant or something. There were certain goods that you couldn't sell.

So that's how they'd define it. But the pharosies, they had another level of pharosy called the scribe, and what the scribe would do is the scribe would take the 10 Commandments and he would begin to write out what that looked like for the pharosies. And so you got this ridiculous book of laws that the pharosies would begin to follow. And I say ridiculous because I mean ridiculous. Like I'll give you a couple. To keep the Sabbath holy, for the pharosy, there were rules like this that were involved. It was illegal to make mortar on the Sabbath. All right. Mortor for brick and for building. But if you spit on the dirt, that spit hitting the dirt would form mud, which was their mortar. And so for the pharosy, it was illegal to spit on dirt on the Sabbath. But you could spit on a rock. Giggle all you want, I'll give you our version of this in a few minutes. All right, now do you get what I'm saying when I say ridiculous? But here's what I want you to catch in your mind. Nicodemus is an unbelievably disciplined, unbelievably smart man who is doing all he knows to pursue right standing with God, is he not? I mean so much so, he's like... mmm no, not there, rock (spit sound). So here is man who is taking seriously this pursuit of God. All right? But there's a second thing he says here, and I want you to see it because it's one of the things we're going to have to address pretty harshly tonight. Look at verse 2.

"this man came to Jesus by night and he said to him, rabbi, we know that you're a teacher, come from God."

For the pharosies, the basic philosophy of how they operated was that all that was necessary for us to please God, was good teaching and obedience to that teaching. All right? So to the pharisaic mind, to the mind of Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus and he says – 'teach me'. Because if you'll teach me, Rabbi, raboni, teacher – if you'll teach me then I'll obey what you teach, and I'll be able to please God through obedience to what is taught, and so teach me because all we need to please God is good teaching and a strong will. Does that sound familiar? No? Yeah. Now, Jesus' response to Nicodemus is one of the most unnerving, difficult passages of Scripture in the Bible. And if you've been in church too long you might skip right past it, but it's unbelievably unnerving. Let's look at what he says. So here's this man, sneaks to Jesus in the middle of the night, here's what Jesus' response was:

"And Jesus answered to him – truly truly, I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now, on the surface it doesn't seem like it's too unnerving. But, here's what just happened. This man who is in the Scriptures all the time, this man who has obeyed it so thoroughly that he watches where he spits, this man who has memorized beyond what you and I would ever memorize. To be a pharosy, you'd have the Torah memorized word for word. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Anybody ever read through the entire book of Numbers? I mean, I know in January you're like 'I'm going to do it this year' and you get to chapter 7 and you were like "I'm going back to John" and back to the New Testament. But these men, they had it memorized, so in terms of raw Spiritual discipline, they are beyond what you and I will ever be. And Jesus says "truly truly I say unto you, unless a man be born

again he will not see the kingdom of God” So for Nicodemus, in an instant, his world spins out of control. Because Jesus says, knowing and pleasing God is not about doing, it’s about being. And he in a moment removes all the tools and all the pride and all the ability that Nicodemus believes that he has to stand in front of God blameless, he yanks it from him and says – it’s not about what you do. It’s not about doing, it’s about being. I mean do you feel the impossibility of that? Be born again? When you’re born of flesh your kid has – my kids both have these personalities, and they grow and they grow and they grown and they grow. It’s really hard to go back and give them a new personality. Isn’t it? So Jesus says - be born again. I mean do you feel the impossibility of that. Be born again? So, Nicodemus asks a question, it’s an interesting question. Let’s look at it – verse 4.

“Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

All right, so Nicodemus – this is a common mistake that occurs over and over again in the book of John. Jesus loves to use symbolism, and he loves to tell stories and everybody always wants to take him literally. Like, you remember the time when Jesus says ‘I’m going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days’. And then when he’s arrested and brought before the pharoses, that’s the accusation – ‘he said he was going to destroy the temple’ – and Jesus was like – ‘me – that’s not what I meant’. Right? So, you’ve got this – they want to take him literally and he’s going ‘no no no, you’re missing it, I’m not saying climb back into your mothers womb. That’s not what I’m saying.’ Keep in mind here, even the mindset of Nicodemus, which is do this, do this, do this, do this, do this... because these things please God, the mindset of Nicodemus – he’s hearing it like – ‘OK so if I could do my life better, if I could do my life better, then God will be pleased with me.’ So Jesus is saying be born again, and Nicodemus is going ‘this doesn’t make any sense, so what he must be saying is that I should’ve lived the earlier part of my life better’ and I think that almost all of us are guilty of thinking back on life and going ‘oh if I would’ve just known more back then’ All right, but here’s the weight of this text. The problem is not our lack of knowledge - but rather, who we are. The problem is not so much what we do, or don’t do. The problem is at the very core of our being. At the very core of our being. Because of the fall, because of the fracture, because of the disharmony.

Ephesians 2 says – we are by our birth objects of God’s wrath. Now, I know that we don’t like that because this here is what we think - that there is something redeeming about us. I mean, we like to turn on CNN and say ‘I’m not wicked like that. God should like me; God should accept me because I haven’t done that that that that’, and we begin to define our rightness by what we have not done. I mean forget the shallowness of indifference that most of us live in, we just want to go ‘I mean, I’ve never bombed anybody, I’ve never killed anybody, I’ve never done this, I’ve never done that’, and we begin to define our rightness by what we have not done. Like we think that there’s this redeeming quality in us, like we’ve got these things that God’s really going to like. And honestly, this is where it almost gets comical to me. Like those offerings are like – ‘I don’t cuss! There Lord, delight in that! Delight in the fact that I don’t use naughty language. I don’t watch rated R movies unless they’re about you. And if they’re about you, we’ll rent out the theater and bring everyone we know into them.’ And so what???? Is God in Heaven going ‘As I perused creation, I noticed that guy cut you off. You didn’t cuss - on your way to see me crucified at the rave motion picture theater. All this is yours – come in. Come in. Enjoy.’ Listen, we’re giggling, we’re having fun here, but this is the comedy that most of us live in. That we have trinkets that God finds valuable. The infinite creator God. You have nothing of value. And you have by your existence wronged the creator of all things. I know we’re going ‘how is that possibly wrong? I didn’t go on you-tube and blaspheme the Holy Sprit. How have I done what’s wrong?’ OK, according to the Scripture God created you, wired you, inside and out to bring Glory to His name so that all that you are and who you are was given to you not so that you might glory in it yourself, but rather so that you might display the infinite perfections of God.

So if at any point in your life, you've taken your athletic ability, your beauty, you've taken your smarts, you've taken your money, you've taken any aspect of your life and you have honored, glorified and exalted yourself - you've blasphemed - because that gift was given to you for the glory of God, not for your own glory. Guilty. If you've ever failed to acknowledge God in anything. In anything. Like one of my favorite pastor's says 'you want to know the wickedness of mankind, 100,000 airplanes will take off today all across the world. None of them will go down. No one will glorify God tonight that He kept all those planes in the air. You let one plane crash to the ground and we'll go 'where were you'. We fail to acknowledge Him. I feel good right now. My knees are working. I don't need any surgery. I'm pretty healthy. I feel good right now. I have energy... I don't have the flu. I'm breathing through both nostrils... I'm breathing (breathes) I'm breathing through both nostrils. I feel good, I feel sharp. My mind is clear. What did I do to get those things? They're gifts. So for me to take those as if they were mine for me, makes me a blasphemer. So, look, we're in trouble. And this is the way that Nicodemus begins to feel. Because God goes, I don't care if you read the Torah! That doesn't give you access. You're guilty. Congratulations you fast. Great, you go to temple every Saturday. Those things don't intrinsically please me. A man will have to be born again. So Nicodemus is going 'how is this even possible'? OK let's look at the next line:

"Truly truly I say to you. Unless one is born of water in the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

OK so we're born of the flesh, we're born with this disharmony. This fractured universe. So we're born of the flesh, and immediately we begin to crave what? Flesh. So all right, we're born of the flesh. We start going 'I want food' all right? We get food. We get a little older. 'You know what I want? I want stuff. I want good sex. I want people to love me. I wanna be cool.' And I know we chuckle and we think that coolness thing is relegated to college, high school. Singles. But I'm telling you that it still permeates our culture, even the 40 and 50 year olds. They still want to put up that vibe, and put up the please like me, please love me, please affirm me, please tell me I'm beautiful talented, good, right. On Thursday night we went and saw a movie screening, and after party for this production company that I've got some acquaintances in that go to the Village. The after party was at the Ghost Bar. So I went to the Ghost Bar on top of the W on Thursday night. I had a great time. I giggled all night long. Because it's 20, 30, 40, 50 year old men and women screaming out - 'please someone tell me I'm cool. Please someone, affirm me. Please someone see how successful I am'. This is the flesh begetting the flesh - 'please someone bring me value, please think I'm right, please think I'm good. I need new trinkets. I want better this, I want ...' the flesh begets flesh. It wants more of it. But look at what he says next. This is what he says next. Here's why we're so guilty. The flesh begets the flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is what? Spirit. So that when we're born again, when the Spirit gives new life, creates a new heart, then all of a sudden, what we want is the Spiritual. SO now all of a sudden we want to know God. Now all of a sudden we want to know Jesus. Now all of a sudden we want to do the will of God. Now this does not play itself out in perfection. So don't hear me saying that we have this moment where we're Spiritually born again and there's no more struggles, we're not still going - 'please someone think I'm cool'. Because part of this thing is a process of God refining and growing. Yeah. That which is born of the flesh wants the flesh. That which is born of the Spirit, it longs for the Spiritual. OK so let's keep reading:

"Do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again (verse 8). The wind blows where it wishes and you hear it's sound. But you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

I love this line. Like you can almost feel like if you'll put yourself in this night - so it's the middle of the night, and Nicodemus and Jesus are playing outside, Jesus is trying to explain to him that all your external religious actions mean nothing if the Spirit hasn't transformed your soul. He's trying to explain these things to him. Nicodemus just can't grasp it, and then all of a sudden the wind blows. You hear it rustling through the trees. They feel it on their skin. And Jesus goes - 'it's like that'. Like no one can explain the wind, but you've gotta have it.

My father in law called me several months ago. He was out on lake Lewisville, in his sailboat, it was injured and died? But there was no wind. So think "Tommy Boy". He's just sitting out in the middle of the lake. Just sitting there. So he had to call me up after several hours and he was like "can you come get me". So I have to go find a boat, get in a boat, go throw him a rope, tow him in. I mean we need the wind. We need the Spirit of God to blow through us. We need him to stir our hearts. We need him, and there's no $2 + 2 = 4$ here. There's no if you say this, do this, go here, don't do that, then it happens. No, it's the wind. I know it's coming, I know it moves stuff, but I don't know where it comes from. All right, so now this is even more confusing to Nicodemus and to us so far, right? OK, so here we go. This is pretty sad that this is the last words that we hear from Nicodemus.

"And Nicodemus said to him How can this be?"

For people who have grown up hearing that what Jesus wants is good, Sunday School kids who have not struggled, who have not fallen, who have perfect marriages, who wake up in the morning and read their Bibles and go through my utmost first highest, who listen to Christian music, who don't like the things of the world. For those of us who grew up hearing that list of things and have felt like nothing but an absolute failure, so instead of being honest in that we have gone overboard in keeping all of those commands. This feels unreal and we would agree with Nicodemus tonight – How can this be? Because this removes the Church's ability to control people. We don't like that. We want to control. We want to say 'don't do that, do that, go here, don't go here', and although there are grounds Biblically for some of those things, not to the extent that we have taken it. Not to the extent that we have taken it. All right, so look at what Jesus says.

"Nicodemus said to him – How can this be? And Jesus answered to him – Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet do not understand these things?"

The reason he's saying that is because Nicodemus knew the Old Testament, and Jesus is going – Are you kidding me? The whole old text tells you this is coming! What do you mean 'How can this be?' In Ezekiel – you've got it memorized – you know I am going to take up a heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. You've read Isaiah. You know I talk of the new creation. You've read of Jeremiah. You knew there was going to be a new home. What are you talking about How can this be? You've got it memorized. Those things are about me. Now look at what he says. He's going to start to help us here All right?

"Truly truly I say to you, you speak of what we know and there witnessed what we have seen. But you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things, and you do not believe, how can you believe I will tell you heavenly things?"

Now, he's going to answer the question now. The question is 'How can this be? How can a man, how can a woman, have right standing with God. How can a man, how can a woman, please God'. Jesus just goes – 'all right, I've been trying to explain this to you, and you're not going to get it, so I'll try one more time. But I don't think you're going to get it'. So, the reason why if you're paying attention tonight, hone in right now. Because this is the answer to 'How do we please God?'. How do we find ourselves in right standing before him? And what is it that in the end stirs God's heart. Here we go.

"No one has ascended into Heaven except he who descended from heaven."

Step 1 – the incarnation. God in the flesh comes down from Heaven. Now, why is this so important? Because all of us are a part of a fractured creation. We need someone, something outside of creation to help us. We all owe, we've all blasphemed, we've all fallen short. We've all offended God. We are all objects of God's wrath by our birth. Not when you were 5 years old and we were like "that's a lie, but I'm going to do it anyway" You are by your nature objects of God's

wrath. Ephesians chapter 2. We need something outside of the scope of creation. So God in the flesh, Jesus, comes down incarnation. Here's the 2nd one.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up."

What's that a reference to? The cross. 'I'm going to come – you wanna know how you please me? You wanna know how you're born again? You wanna know how the Spirit is imparted? I'm coming. I'm going to die and in my brutal death, I will absorb the wrath of God towards those who will believe.' Now look at the result.

"That whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

Now here's the verse that we see all the time, on every pencil and every mug.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only son. That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have Eternal life."

Look at this next part.

"For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him."

You and I are justified before God, born again by no action of our own but submission to the Holy Spirit's calling and power in our lives. Now, Let's go to Galatians 5 very quickly.

On Friday morning we woke up to a winter wonderland, did we not? We did. And they didn't even shut down the city. During artic blast '07 we had to shut it down, we had no choice. This weird white stuff everywhere, but this time, we got used to it. We didn't shut it down. Friday is my Saturday. Saturday I'm here, so, Friday morning we got up and my daughter and I were up, everybody else was still asleep, and Audrey wanted to go play in the snow. So, we got dressed, and went out in our back yard and there was about – at my house, depending on who you talk to - about an inch to 2 feet of snow. There's about 1 inch at my house in the back yard. We're playing around, I'm nailing her with snowballs. She's 4 so she just took it. She wants to make a snow angel. So, she lays down like she's supposed to and she turns her hands flat like this (shows how she put her hands), and she does the snow angel. With the first wipe, she wipes away all the snow and she's literally just in mud. She's like (sound effect of doing snow angels in mud)... And when she's done, she stands up, and there's not a snow angel, it's just like white, and then mud where she was. And so she gets up, and while she's doing that, there's mud flying everywhere, and this huge pile of mud was on her face.

So I was like "Boo, you've got a little, uh, something on your face" You got some mud on your face. So she was like and she just smeared it – because her hands were all muddy. I was like "no there's mud on your hand". I mean, she literally went from having this one spot of mud to having mud smeared all over her face. All over her face. Here's the thing. In order for her to get clean, because there was literally mud all over her hands and now all over her face and her neck – in order for her to get clean, someone who wasn't dirty was going to have to help her. Because all she did, no matter how much she wiped, was smear the mud. That's all she did. I don't think she wanted the mud on her face, I think she wanted it off. She's girly girl. She was not enjoying the mud play. She wanted it off her but it did not matter how much she wiped. So we walked inside and went into the bathroom and turned on the water and waited until it was warm and then we got her hands under there, put some soap on there, and then we got this little rag, put some soap on it and got it nice and wet and then handed it to her – I'd already washed her hands and she started wiping the mud off of her.

The thing about Church and religion and all of that stuff, if you don't have a new heart, if you haven't had help getting clean, then in the end you can wipe all you want, it just spears. This is what Jesus meant when he told the story. I always here this, I wanted to know what the charismatics believed, so I started going to all the charismatic things when I was a kid, and now I became one. So it was fruitful, but I would go to these things and I always thought they butchered texts. One of the things I heard over and over again was them tell the story of the demon that got thrown out, and the man brought his house into order, and the demon comes back to the man's heart and they're like 'no one's in here – yeah! Look how nice it is' with 7 of his friends, right? And that guy becomes worse than ever. I think what that's referencing is a moment like this, when you'll try to wipe the mud away and you're just smearing it. I mean you get rid of one little thing with your own discipline, and then before you know it, there's a 1,000 other things that pop up. All right, so read this with me, and I want to prove my point. I promise I'll get you out of here.

Galatians 5 in verse 19, "Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalry, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgy, and the like. I warn you and I warned you before, that people who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Now look at verse 22, " But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," I love this next line, "against these things there is no law."

All right, so let me ask you a question. Forget the question. No one in here can decide to love. You can decide to act loving. But, you can't decide to love. I've heard those that sing that love is a verb. I disagree. Who in here can go 'I'm patient – I'm patient right now? Oh I'm patient', oh I hope so, it'll be tested here in about 4 minutes when you try to get out of the parking lot. Who in here can say 'All right – Faithfulness. I'm faithful now. I've got it! You know, I'm going to be gentle. Come here, gentle at you. I'm going to be...' – you can't. These things are beyond you –so I want to push here. Listen. There's this really warped view of Spiritual disciplines. There's this really warped view as if they're about us – about us fixing us. 'I'm going to read my Bible and study so I can get better. I'm going to pray so I can do that.... I'm going to fast so that this...' in the end the Spiritual disciplines are not about you reaching into you, but rather you getting out of you. Like the reason we pray is not so that I might fix myself, but in an external confession that I can't, so I need the help of God. The reason I study the Scriptures is because my mind is broken and there seems – there's a way that seems right to me, and in the end leads to death. Right? So I need my mind repaired. But I can't do it, so I study the Scriptures to go outside of myself and get help. I fast not to go inside myself, but to go outside of myself. To over and over and over again we do the disciplines because we can't, not because we can. Not because we can.

OK so what do we do. How does this work. I mean, I don't want to leave you in ambiguity. What do we do tonight– OK here's something that I would say that you need to do. I think you need to wrestle with whether you've been born of the Spirit or not. I think you need to pray, I think you need to be in the Bible, I think you need to gather Christian counsel and you need to go 'have I been born of the Spirit or am I just playing religion?' The 2nd thing I would tell you, and I'm such a big believer of this and I know it's like climbing Everest, but, if you've been coming to church for awhile and you want to know Jesus but you're frustrated. Anybody? Well, I've been there. I've been -in fact I've been there repeatedly. You're just going what is this and where am I. Don't medicate desperation. Desperation is the birth pains of new life. Don't medicate it. That's it's hard right now. All right – come on – yes. See you've got struggles deep dark struggles that historically negate you from knowing Jesus. That's ridiculous. That's ridiculous. Zachaeus, you come down for I'm going down to your house today. It's ridiculous. Don't medicate desperation. I rarely, if ever, worry about guys that are like 'I'm so frustrated Spiritually right now' I don't worry about them. I worry about the people who are completely unmoved either way.

I'll leave you with this. How does this fit into the whole scheme of...how does this fit into the story of creation, fall, redemption, restoration? OK, what happens when the new birth occurs in our soul and God stirs in us and changes us and we begin this process of him chiseling away at us and building us up, and now all of a sudden, redemption leads to restoration because we have new lenses by which we operate in the spheres that we're operating in.

OK so, here's my example – on Thursday night I told you we were invited – there are a couple of young men that go to the Village who own, or partially own, a production company, that produces films. They have one of their first big films coming out – a film called Bella. It'll come out I think in May or June or maybe not until August. So we got invited to come and view the movie and I sat down in this movie and watched this phenomenal movie. The 1st line in the movie was – “my grandfather my grand mother told me if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans” It was such a great line! It's like – that's so creepy – my wife is like SHHHHH (he whispers) “sorry”. All right so, we watched this movie and it's this phenomenal movie with all these glorious themes of redemption and reconciliation and the wrestle that is life, and here's the deal – at the end, there was no invitation. There was no – and listen it wasn't even a Christian movie, as if movies had souls and could accept Christ - No but what happened was that God changed the hearts of a couple of men who had a passion for the venue of film and they produced out of their affections for Christ something beautiful – and they effect the sphere of life – the arts. Just like we should affect business, just like we should affect – because we're there. Because we're there in these – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. So we use those things onto the canvas of the world that we're in. This is how the gospel works towards restoration. No matter if you're the vice president of some large corporation, or you paint, or you write poetry, or you weld. Yeah.

And this is also why if we as believers in Jesus boast in anything, it is the cross and the cross alone. Not in how I raised my kids or how I did this, or how we do this... no no no, we just go (pfffff) Jesus, the cross, the blood, Him. All right so we talked about the truths of the Scriptures, we talked about being externally focused and now tonight we say there are no quick '2+2=4 Spiritually 7 steps out of doubt'. Seriously. If there were 7 steps out of doubt, would anyone have doubt? 'Three steps to intimacy with God'. Ha ha ha. No.

There's hunger, there's desire, there's longing there's groaning, there's God being faithful to complete what he began. And there's boasting in His cross alone. That's why this has to be a place where it's OK to be not be OK. That's why we never get to lean against the cross and talk about how good and great we are.

“Father I thank you for these men and women tonight. I thank you for a chance to get together and open the Scriptures and dig through them and I thank you for your Holy Sprit that brings new life, new birth, new heart. Doesn't mean we won't struggle today. Doesn't mean that we feel like we're right in the throne room with you tonight. But it means that we are yours. We belong to you. I pray that you'd help us rethink the disciplines those who have historically struggled with the Scriptures, struggled with prayer, struggled with how to do the... I pray that you'd help us see those things differently. That those things are not about our discipline to fix us, but rather us positioning ourselves under the waterfall of your grace in the hopes that you- who said you would – would transform us. I pray you'd protect us from religion. I pray that you would consistently and constantly stir our affections towards you. And that out of this place novels would be written, movies would be made, businesses would be run, garbage would be picked up, neighborhoods would be lived in – all for your name, for your renown, for your glory. That nations would be touched, orphanages would be built, clean water would be brought, diseases would be kicked out, that your gospel would go mightily out of the lives of the men and women in this room, and the men and women who belong to your kingdom. Thank you Father. We love you, and it's for your beautiful name. Amen.” I love you – be safe out there!