

We're going to be rather ambitious today. We're going to try to make it through all 62 verses of Luke 9. If I ever heard a message or read anything on what it's like to wait on the Lord or wait on God to do something or to accomplish something or read an article or book on how frustrating and confusing it can be to follow Jesus, I don't remember it in my formative years of faith. I graduated from high school, didn't go to college right away. I had just become a believer and was just confused about what life should look like. So I just took two years and got a job. I ended up in Abilene, Texas for schooling. I know I joke a lot about Abilene a lot, but those were formative years for me. A lot of what I know to do here, I know because of Abilene. So out there, most of the Baptist churches had this program where young couples would adopt college students...not legally. They would just kind of adopt a college student and take care of them. You would get to hang out at their house and they'd cook you dinner or check in on you and things like that. I got put in with a family I didn't really click with. They were odd and I was odd. Two odds don't work. You need some normal to carry it. So mine didn't work, but a good friend of mine, she drew this great family, the Goodriches. Jack Goodrich taught Sunday school, loved God, loved to give us guys a hard time. Dudes love that, young guys especially. They just love to be challenged and all that. He had a five year old daughter and a two year old, very much were I am now. He was an Oklahoma Sooner freak, just a Sooner freak. Almost all of his clothes had the Sooner covered wagon on them. And when they won on Saturday, he would have the OU tie.

So anyway, about three of my friends and I grew to love Jack Goodrich. I don't know up until that point that I've met a guy quite like him. Late in my freshman year, Jack was diagnosed with a bad type of cancer. I'm not trying to say there is a good kind of cancer, but what I mean is the kind where they say, "We can't heal this; we can buy you time." That's the bad kind. The bad kind is the kind where they go, "We can buy you time in the hopes that there may be something new discovered that can heal you, but we can't heal this one." So my crew and I were very, very young in our faith. Even when we heard the news, we were like, "Whatever, Mr. MD. We worship the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Abraham. You don't know that this can't be healed. In fact, this will get healed." And we just kind of set on this little mission to see Jack healed. So we prayed a lot and even had fasts on Thursdays for God to heal Jack. Jack got worse and worse and worse, and finally the doc said, "We can't run him through chemo or radiation anymore. His body can't take it." He was just far from what he was when we met him, but we still believed. Even when they sent him home with just pain medications because there wasn't anything else they could do, we believed.

So David McQueen, who was my pastor out there, a great friend of mine, called the church to a day of fasting and prayer because we all just believed that God was going to heal him. So we got together and just prayed and prayed and prayed. A few days later, Jack had this burst of energy, and we had been told by doctors that the body will have this burst right before it dies. And so we kind of conceded at that point that maybe it wasn't going to work out. But then that one day of energy and vitality turned into two, and that two turned into three, and that three turned into four, and that four turned into five, and so on for two weeks. So the doctors were kind of perplexed also, so they told him to come back in. So he came back in and they screened him, and almost all of his tumors and all the cancer that was squeezing the life out of him had rescinded, had shrunk. He wasn't on any chemo or radiation, he was just on pain meds, and his cancer had just withdrawn. So my crew and I just blew up that night. I mean, we partied. We didn't sin...well one guy did, but we rebuked him the next day...but we partied that night. We rejoiced in the Lord in all things. We celebrated the fact that God had brought back our friend, our beloved back from the precipice of death, and it looked like He healed him. And so we

celebrated and went, "We told you. The wise look foolish. Doctors don't know what they're talking about." We just kind of walked with that swagger. Just a few months later we put Jack's body in the ground.

Now a few weeks before he died, David and I went to see him. He was so hopped up on pain meds that he was just hallucinating the whole time we were in the room. He kept yelling at his son to quit doing thins, but his son wasn't there. And in a great little gift from God, he thought I was Bob Stoops, the coach of the Oklahoma Sooners. He just kept calling me Coach Stoops and wanted to talk with me about formations. I just rolled with it. I was like, "Yeah, we're going to have a good year." That was really a gift because it was about the only thing keeping us from falling on the floor and sobbing. So I walked out of the room and we got in the elevator. My pastor McQueen was tearing up and you could see he was just praying. That's when the first wave of anger hit me. First of all, that's no way for a man of God to die. We get martyred or live to be 90, but we don't have a disease squeeze the life out of us over a four year period of time where our five year old and two year old children look on. That's not how we die. And then what in the world was that trash 5-6 weeks ago? Why fill your people with hope, praise and celebration only to snatch it from us? That's what I felt. By the time that elevator hit the ground floor from the third floor...it took me 6 seconds to get to that place where I was confused and angry. Maybe I would have been alright if God would have just taken him home. But why that little burst there at the end? Why give us that hope? Why let the doctors go, "Well, we don't know. It looks like the cancer is receding. It looks like he's going to be alright?" Why give us that and then rip that from under us? There was a lot revealed out of my heart in that. I don't know what your relationship is like with the Lord, but usually when I get frustrated and upset with Him, He tends to show me I'm proud and have idolatry. In the end, what I feel like I was walking in and what I think we all get caught in is that we tend to walk in this thing, whether we would say this or not, we believe that God owes us certain things. We believe that if we do X and Y, God gives us what we want and what we think we should have and He works it out like we think we should have it. So here's how I see it over and over again here at the Village. Somebody will lose their job and go, "God's got me. He's going to take care of me. He's going to provide for me." And at the three month mark, they're like, "Where's the provision?" And then at the 6-7 month mark, they're like, "What, are You serious?"

And at the 10 month mark, they're angry. Like, "Where are You in this?" Or we find that one, we find that woman, we find that man, we get married, this is a gift from God, the one that God ordained before the foundation of the earth that we would spend the rest of our lives with, and then a year in, five years in, ten years in we're going, "Maybe this chick's from the devil...Maybe this dude has been given to me by Satan try to destroy me." You've got this thing, so you're like, "Alright, what's the deal?" Or my little sister and her husband, who happened to be my college roommate went to China as missionaries, and they got there and there were some very difficult things that befell them very quickly. They had a baby over there that needed immediate surgery. So here they are serving the Lord in a difficult place and you've got these difficult things happening, and you've got to be saying, "If anyone should be safe from this kind of stuff, it's people who have left the comfort of suburbia Dallas to go to a difficult place in China to serve You. If somebody should be exempt from frustrations and difficulties, it's them." And no matter how good our theology is, not matter what we know of the Bible and what life has taught us, we just can't help but believe that we know how our lives play out, and we really believe that because we're good people who are good church folk, then God's going it this way, this way and this way. So when it doesn't happen that way, it shakes us up and confuses us.

So here's what I want to do. I want to read through Luke 9 and show you how odd Jesus is. And then at the end of Luke 9, I want to give you some very practical things regarding life in a fallen world and the frustration that sometimes accompanies following Jesus. Luke 9, starting in verse 1, "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages,

preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” Nothing big, but I want to point this out. Jesus goes, “I’m going to send you out to all these villages, I’m going to send you out to preach the word, I’m going to give you the power to heal diseases, cast out demons, but here’s the rules. You don’t get to take a thing with you, not a snack, not a cellphone. You take nothing with you. Oh and by the way, there are going to be these cities that you go into, and they are not going to receive you, they are not going to like that you are there. They are going to kick you out of the town. When they do that, shake the dust off your feet as a symbol.” Now here’s my question. If a town is not receiving you, I’m guessing you’re not going to get a sandwich there. I’m guessing you are going to go hungry that night. If you don’t get to take a tunic and you’re not received into a village, I’m guessing you’re sleeping outside somewhere, without even an extra blanket, and extra jacket. That’s a strange command. I don’t go anywhere like that.

Let’s keep reading. Verse 7, “Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead,...” which would have been terrifying because he had John killed. So if you kill a guy and he comes back, it is perplexing. “...by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.” So I’ll just point out that it’s not just the disciples that get confused by the person and work of Jesus. The whole area was.

Now look at verse 10. “On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, “Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.” But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.”” So let’s catch up on the scene. There are at least 20,000 men, women and children in this crowd. So the disciples are going, “We’ve been going at this all day. The people are exhausted. For some of them, it’s going to take them days to get back to their village. We’ve got to send them out of here to find lodging and food, because it’s going to be dark soon.” And Jesus is going, “Or you could feed them.” So very quickly they’re going, “We don’t even have food ourselves. We stole some little kid’s lunch.” Have you ever been asked to do something by God, by reading the word or having something taught to you from the word or just in your relationship with God, have you ever had God ask you to do something that just seems, feels and senses to be impossible? Have you ever been asked by God to do something where you’re going, “I don’t even know how I possibly could be obedient to this?” Here are the disciples with 20,000 people starving, and they walk up with a couple of fish, basically a sandwich, and God goes, “Feed them all.” And then Jesus is going to smile and do it Himself. Here we go, “They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.”” I think there’s a little sarcasm in that, since these men are very poor. “For there were about five thousand men.” If you count their wives, you’re at 10,000. And if there are any children there, it’s up to 20,000. And that’s a very low estimation because...there wasn’t any birth control, so you had babies, lots and lots of babies. If you go back and read Biblically how big families are, there’s a lot of babies. “And he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” And they did so, and had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.” Now I think that would be a spiritual high.

Watch verse 18. “Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”” Now, Jesus is going to confirm this in another gospel. He turns to Peter and says, “Blessed are you, Simon Peter. Because God has revealed this to you, man has not.” And the Christ to the 1st century Jew is the Messiah that’s going

come and reestablish the throne of David. So here's what they just heard Him say. "I'm going to overthrow Rome." That's what they just heard. "I'm going to overthrow Rome. I'm going to establish a throne. I'm going to rule. The time of Israel is here." So I would guess that the man could just make fish and bread appear is also the one to free them from oppression and that that would knock up the spiritual high from Thursday night at youth camp high. That's just my guess. Now look how Jesus follows this. Verse 21, "And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." So now all the air is out of the balloon. "I'm the Christ. I'm here. I will deliver Israel." They're hearing, "I will establish a throne in the line of David, Rome gets overthrown, it will be Israel's day in the limelight." But He follows that with, "But first I've got to get killed." Can we agree that there would be some confusion here? In fact, so confused are they by Jesus talking about dying that they're afraid to ask any questions or talk to Him about it anymore. So if you keep wondering why Jesus continually says, "This is how it's going to go down," and the disciples just don't buy it, it's because they just don't understand. They can't reconcile that He's the Messiah and that He's going to die. In the 1st century, from what they knew of the prophecies, they could not boil it down that the Messiah was going to die. He can't. He's going to be the one to usher in this historic reign. So how could He die? I'll show that to you here in a second.

Now look at this. It makes so much sense to us post-cross and resurrection, but it doesn't make a lot of sense to them. Verse 23, "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." So now you're going, "He's referencing the electric chair. He's referencing a method of dying that was reserved for murderers and thieves." So He's going, "If you want to follow Me, you take up your cross, you die daily and never be ashamed of Me." So now they're going, "Now what does it even mean to follow You? Are we going to get crucified? How do you die daily?" It's just a very confusing little season for them. Now, I want to skip over the Transfiguration because we're going to get back to it and we've already covered the boy with an unclean spirit, so let's pick it up in verse 43. This is some of my favorite stuff here. It gives me hope for me. "But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying." So isn't it confusing that Jesus is saying, "Pay attention here, listen up here," but then the Holy Spirit's not them perceive it to begin with? That's weird.

Now let me show you where this just gets greatness. Verse 46, "An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest." Can I add that we're just ten minutes after the sermon on dying to self and being the least among these? We just read that. Jesus just said, "Die to yourself. Take up your cross daily. The least among you is the greatest." And so they're going, "The least is the greatest. I am the least." It's like the guy who says after you ask him what God's doing in his life, "Well, God's really working humility in me. I mean, I am more humble than anyone else I know right now. God has just stirred up a lowliness in me." That's what you've happening here. You've got guys arguing then, "Okay, if the least is the greatest, who's the least?" And so Jesus, knowing their heart, does a really cool thing. "But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." A couple of things and I'll even pull it into a modern parallel. In the 1st century, women and children were viewed as secondary at best. If you'll read through the New Testament, you'll find multiple occasions where children try to come to Jesus and they're blocked by men. "No, we don't do childish things...we don't play with children." And Jesus constantly rebukes them from that, but here in this scene, He picks up this little child and sets him down. Why? Because anybody who would spend time with a child is the least of these. He doesn't have an important role. It's kind of like the nursery workers not viewed as the pinnacle of ministry. It's kind of like Kid's Village isn't viewed as that place in ministry that people ascribe to, that kind of use it as a stepping stone maybe into something else. But Jesus goes, "No, he who has a heart for the least of these...this is how it works."

Now watch this. There's such great things in these next two sections. "John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." Let me tell you how I see this thing, and I could be completely wrong. We got back from our break and went to bed. We got back very, very late. It was about 1:00 in the morning. We took our kids to bed, put them in their beds and then went and got in bed. We were just wasted. It's amazing what vacation with your children will do to you. About about 7:00AM, my oldest runs into the room and goes, "Daddy, Daddy" and she's shaking me. I look up and go, "What's up?" She replies, "I did a science experiment!" And just immediately I was like, "Oh no, this is not going to be good." And so fearing that fire might somehow be involved, I hop up out of bed and put some shorts on and follow her to the playroom. And she is skipping in front of me. We turn the corner into the playroom, and she's got a cookie sheet down and she had this flubber like stuff that a grandparent gave her before we stopped letting them come to our house. She had cut it into slices like you do cookie dough, and she had put it on the cookie plate. She then somehow had climbed on top of the refrigerator, opened up the cabinet that's on top of the refrigerator, pulled out all the food coloring and poured all the food coloring all over the cookies, all over the cookie sheet and all over the carpet around it. She skipped, skipped, skipped, turned as if I'm going to see this and rejoice. She thinks I'm going to walk in and see this and go, "Yes! Awesome! Amazing!" And that's such a tough moment as a parent because my girl's soul is about as open as it can get in that moment. So you can't blow her up. But then again, my carpet's black. And I don't know what you know about food coloring, but that's not going to change...ever. And so I get that feeling from John here. Here's John, he runs up to Jesus and he's going, "Okay, we saw a guy, he's casting out demons but he ain't one of us. So I stopped him." It looks like John wants approval here. John wants Jesus to go, "Good job." But it's now what Jesus does. Jesus turns to him and rebukes him. He turns to him and goes, "Why would you do that?" That was actually my response. "Why would you do that? If they're not against us, they're for us." I want you to feel the weight of this. John is doing something that he thinks is going to please Jesus only to find out that it doesn't.

And before we move on, have you ever gotten frustrated with yourself because it seems it seems like you can never learn or you keep having to learn the same spiritual lesson over and over and over again? It's like on Monday something gets revealed to you and you're like, "Oh, I've been walking in disobedience in that. I'm going to give that to the Lord." But by Tuesday afternoon you're right back there again. Well there's good news. Most of the guys in the Bible join us in that. Look at verse 51. "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" I love that. I mean, even Jesus hadn't done anything like that. They went straight up Old Testament prophet, right like that. So once again, you've got guys who think that this coming out of their mouths is going to make Jesus turn around and go, "Handle it." Like Jesus is going to be proud of them. Like Jesus is going to go, "Yea, you love Me that much that you would destroy an entire Samaritan village simply because they wouldn't let us stop there? I love you guys too. Flame away." Once again, this is not Jesus' response. Six minutes after He rebukes them for stopping the man casting out demons, He rebukes them again for this. Why? In fact, if you'll read the text, the reason why the Samaritan village would not receive Him is because He had set His face towards Jerusalem. Which means sovereignly God is governing and He will not stop there because He has an appointment, an appointment that nothing can stop. It was the will of God that the Samaritan town rejected Him.

Let's read this last little bit and then talk just a bit. "As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Let me throw this out there because it might be confusing for some of you. Culturally there's several things that could

be going on here. It's highly unlikely that this man's dad is dead. It is more likely that what is being said here is, "I work for my father, I work on my father's property. I can't just go and leave. Now when my father dies and I own everything, then I can come and follow you. But until my father dies, that can't happen." That's much more likely culturally to be the thing that's going on here, because it sounds kind of cruel. Let's keep reading. "Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Let me point out why I think this is strange. You have three separate men all saying, "I want to follow You," and Jesus gives them three separate answers on what that would mean. You've got one guy that says, "I want to follow You," and Jesus says, "Foxes have holes..." And the next guy goes, "Okay that's not my issue. Hey, I'll follow you." And the dad's his issue. And then the third goes, "Okay, I don't have a dad issue and I don't have a house issue. I'll follow you." And Jesus says, "Okay, here's your deal." If you're looking at this in succession, it's kind of an odd deal. Because what we want to do is make this a formula. We want to make this into  $2 + 2 = 4$ , and Jesus isn't letting this happen. He's got three different answers for three different guys.

Let me be honest here. And I get e-mails from some of you because you want me to be really careful about things I say, particularly about other things that get preached. Like I cap on the prosperity gospel a lot because it's not the Bible at all, it's not even Christianity, and it's a lie. So I'll cap on it, and people will send me, "Chandler, what about unity?" Unity is not letting wolves devour the sheep. That's not unity, it's just not. That's a warped, twisted view of, "Oh, here's a pit bull with blood all over its mouth. Hey come here. Here's my children." That is a different, different idea altogether.

My problem with the prosperity gospel and what I hope is resonating with you this morning is that it's everyone's hope but it's no one's reality. Has coming to church made you impervious to difficulty, pain, sorrow and frustration? Has coming to church made any of you super wealthy? Let me tell you who it makes wealthy. The guys who spew on you that you should be wealthy if you would love God enough. And then they use their own lives as examples. "Look at my 72 bedroom mansion. Look at my private jet. Do you know how I got that? Faith." No, you got that by lying to widows and stealing their money. So the reason why I hammer on that stuff is because it's so untrue. And if you buy into it, you're going to have the rug pulled out from underneath you. Because God fearing, Holy Spirit filled men and women of faith die at 40 and leave their 2nd graders behind, and their marriages get hard, and their kids go crazy for seasons, and they lose their jobs, and sometimes they just get by, and sometimes they wake up in the middle of the night and doubt whether or not they're saved, and sometimes they just don't want to come to church that morning. I mean, am I lying up here, or are all you the super saints? "Not me, Chandler. Jesus is in my fab five. That is not me. I have not walked in that. I have not experienced that. I don't know anyone who has. So I don't know what gospel you're looking at. I don't know what Bible you're following, but that's not true about anybody I know or anybody I've walked around. That's not true in my neighborhood, it's not true at the churches I've been at before this one." I mean, come on here. At some point, you've got to look at what life is and stop creating this imaginary fairy-tale that's not in the Scriptures, and you've got to engage truth. And truth is that you and I, beloved by God, are at times going to bleed and we're going to get confused and we're not going to understand what He wants from us and we're going to have our faith tested and life's going to play out in different ways than we want it to. Isn't this true?

So how do we live in light of that? Because we know He's good. Here are some things. It's why we so desperately need each other. It's why how we do church in the Bible Belt where you attend and listen to a sermon but aren't connected to other Christians is so devastating. I've been very blessed to travel and see a lot of the world. There are several things I like about that. I love other cultures because it reveals my bigotry. Because I don't think I'm a racist. I really don't think I am. In fact, my older sister and I grew up in cities where most of the time we were the minorities. But let me go to another culture and spend 17 days there and watch some of the goofy stuff they do, and I go, "That is dumb. That is stupid. That is goofy." So here's what I do, "Our culture is smarter, better and wiser than their culture. Their culture is lame, ours rules." That's what I'm doing. So seeing other cultures really exposes that I've got a wicked heart that God needs to

continue to work on. That's one of the good things. The other is I learn to very, very much love this country, particularly the liberty that we have here. But even with liberty, here's one of the things birthed in the U.S. The U.S. has this "self-made man" thing to it. This, "I got this. I don't need others. I've got it." Which is why I'll press hard on the men, most men I know do not have any kind of relationship that goes beyond sports and hunting and other things like that. Very few men have relationships where they let their weaknesses be seen by other men, where they let their frustrations be seen by other men and where they walk in deep community with other men. Why? Because we've got it. That's not what men do. Men handle it. Men take care of it themselves. "I don't want to burden anybody with my stuff. I can handle it." I'll give you a good example of a very good friend of mine. My nine year anniversary was this last week. We talked about it and she's decided to give me another year, so we're going to keep trudging ahead. The day after our anniversary, a friend of mine who I've known for years texts me, "Happy late anniversary. I hope you had a good time. I'm praying for you this weekend. Don't be afraid to preach the word unapologetically." He's a real encourager for me. And then he goes, "Oh by the way, pray for me. There's a spot on my liver." So I sent back, "A spot on your liver???.....?" Now listen to what he sends back to me. "In 2000, we found out I had this blood disorder thing, and so every six months to a year I've got to go in and get scanned. About six months ago, they found this spot. They've been watching it. Now we've got to go in and do a biopsy on it." So I'm like, "In 2000?" So on the scale of friendship, I'm at year 8 for information. So I might not even have friends; I might just think that I have friends. This is just an example of "I'll handle it. I'll carry this." I don't care who you are, if you've got a spot on your liver, you're worried. There's fear there. You can cloak it all you want in Romans 8. You can put the little Romans 8 tie on it. Throw a little Philippians 1:21 designer jeans on it. I mean, you can do whatever you want, you're going, "What's about to happen?" But this is par for the course. This is, "I don't want anybody worrying about it. I don't want anybody praying for me. I've got it. I can handle this. I'm not worried. God's good." Just get over yourself. The body has been given to us for this purpose, that we live in a fallen world. It's broken, and no man has been gifted by God with the power to sustain wave after wave after wave after wave. It's why Hebrews says do not neglect the gathering of the saints and encourage one another daily. It's so you don't get hard. We need each other.

Alright, let me throw this one out at you. This one is not going to be popular. Some of you are not going to come back because of this...which is good because we need the seats. I feel like I'm going to catch and e-mail on that one. Let me throw this out to you. What if you and your life are not the center of history? What if you are not the sun around which all other planets rotate? What if you are a part of the greatest drama/adventure the universe will ever know, but you're not the star of the play. What if your life goes beyond you and plays into something bigger than you? You can't deny the fact that you're temporary and that you're ignorant. Me too. Let me show you. Six months from today at 3:00, what are you doing? Who are you hanging out with? What are you guys having for lunch? Some of you are like, "I don't know what I'm having for lunch today." But who does? Do you realize the billions of tiny details that had to be brought about to even get you in this room this morning? And you are aware of few of them. You think you're here because your spouse pestered you into this place or your neighbor pestered you into this place or this is just what you do. You think you're in here for those reasons. Did you know that we moved from San Francisco, California to Galveston, Texas, and within just a few months of us moving there, a guy begins to share the gospel with me? Did you know that the book of Isaiah says that God moves a man from here to here for the purposes of God? We moved because the military saw fit to move my father. But could it be that God was moving him because I had an appointment with salvation? I don't know. I'm just throwing that out there. All I knew was that I was moving from the Bay Area, which is kind of attractive aesthetically, to Galveston, which is kind of not. I moved from friends and connections to none. You just can't see what God's doing. So maybe He's accomplishing His will. And let me just put this out there. Could it be that your joy as well as your suffering is being used by God not only in you, but in those around you to accomplish the purposes of God?

I have had no greater gift from God outside of my salvation than my wife. There are no greater tools in the hands of God for my sanctification than that woman. And here's what I've learned. I'm type A and I'm driven and I want to fix stuff. That's me. I just want to fix stuff. I see something broken, I got to get in there. I think I see very well, and I've been that

way. Like my story is I move, I come to know the Lord, I move up to Abilene, I begin to teach a Bible study that grows to a couple thousand, I go into Dallas where Metro had kind of dilapidated to about a thousand. We begin and build that thing up again to about 3,000. I come here, we're about 168. We rewire things, rebuild it and now we're up to about 5,000 and growing on two separate campuses with over 70 people on staff. That's just my mind. It drives my wife crazy, but I can fix stuff. It's what I do. So I get married to this beautiful beast of a woman. That's an affectionate term in our house. And she goes into the dark night of the soul. She goes in to where she's struggling and having a hard time finding her place. My place was clearly defined. I'm 22 when we get married, she's 19. And so she's trying to figure out her place, she's wrestling with the Lord. "Here's what my husband does. What am I going to do?" It doesn't help that everybody's introducing her as "Matt Chandler's wife" instead of Lauren. She's trying to find herself. And here's my problem. I can't fix her. I can't fix it, despite the fact that I can see it. I don't know how your wife works, but if my wife even smells me trying to fix her, it is not going to go well for me. She does not want me to lead her like I lead men. She does not want me to lead our home like I lead this church. She is fiercely independent, passionate about the Lord, has her own walk. And so when she's hurting or wrestling, I just can't fix her. So do you know what that creates in me? Humility. Because I can't do anything. Do you know what I've got? Prayer and try to be patient. That's all I've got. And there's reciprocity there. She would say the same thing watching me struggle, watching me hurt, watching things happen that make me want to yank out my hair and wonder what God's doing. Those things increase her faith, increase her prayer life, push her into us, grow our intimacy, get us closer to God, redefine how we want to raise our children. Those things are birthed in sorrow. And then joy? Joy is just contagious. Do you know what happens to her walk when something elevates my excitement about the gospel? Do you know what happens to my walk when something elevates her worship and praise and passion? All of a sudden I'm elevated, all of a sudden I'm driven. It's this really beautiful gift.

So what if your suffering wasn't just all about you? What if God's accomplishing other things? What if death isn't the worst thing ever? What if we believed that one day all that is dark will be pushed back and the new heaven and the new earth will be established and all of the deepest sorrows will make sense and it will come together like this beautiful stained glass window where here all we saw was jagged glass? And then it all makes sense? And then we see the picture? See, I think we have to have an eternal mindset. I think you have to have kingdom eyes. And if you don't see that, you're going to get sucked in. And when life is all about you, religiously you will sky rocket when things are well into self-righteousness, and when things are not well, you will plummet to self-pity. Which is why when everything is going well for you, you don't understand why it can't go well for everybody else. "Well, they just lack faith" or "You need to come to church with me. It's working for me." And it's why when things go bad, people tend to wallow in self-pity. "Poor me. I just can't figure it out. Maybe I'm not elect. God hates me." And that's what happens when it's all about you. And I really believe that this is one of the things that retards our faith. "It's my faith, my growth, my relationship, where I am, what I feel, where I struggle, where I do well..." And that's that rugged individualism that's just American Christianity. It's not biblical Christianity. It's why Paul goes, "I've been rich, I've been poor, I've been sick, I've been healthy. God's good." It's why Job goes, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I'll return. The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." By the way, that's right after all seven of his children die, all his wealth is taken from him and all he's left with is a nagging wife. And then I always want to push this on you. You have to always keep at the forefront of your mind that you're not under wrath, but that you're under mercy if you're children of God. Which means everything that befalls your life is the mercy of God. And I know it's easy to go, "I don't know about that." But what would be more merciful than you getting sick and having the life squeezed out of you and in it knowing Jesus Christ really deeply or God giving you health to 103 and never letting you see Him or know Him? Which is the mercy of God if you're looking at this thing in regards to eternity and not your little 30-70 years?

For some of you, this will need to be filed away for later. But for others of you, this is right now. I have to believe that if it's okay for Jeremiah to say, "You have seduced me" or "You have tricked me," if it's okay for the disciples to be frustrated and confused, then maybe it's okay that we are as well. But I think it would probably be wise for us to be honest about

that though. But you have not been abandoned. God is working. He has not lost control. I pray that He give you a community to mourn with and that He give you eyes to see beyond yourself. Let's pray. "Father, I pray for these men and women, and I thank You for the truth of these Scriptures that we covered today. I pray that You would give us the faith to follow even when it's frustrating and even when we don't understand and even when we wish you would have played it differently. Father, I do pray that You would give us eyes to see just beyond us, that we would be able to see both our joy and our sorrow corporately, what You're accomplishing in your church, what You're accomplishing in the lives around us or maybe what You're making us wait for while You set up other things. We do place our hope and trust that one day there will be no more of this and it will all make sense. Until then, help us. It's for your beautiful name. Amen."

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