

If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 11. The relationship between the church and culture at large has been known as *Christiandom*. What that is is that historically the institutions and media of society have taught, by default or on purpose, a specific morality. I'll give you a couple of examples of what I'm talking about. When I was in elementary school outside of San Francisco, we began each day like this. We would stand up beside our desk, we would put our hand over our heart and we would say the Pledge of Allegiance, including "One nation under God." After the Pledge of Allegiance was over, in San Francisco, just over 25 years ago, we would bow our heads, say a quick prayer and boom, we were off running. That's the institutions of our culture teaching a common morality. Now I don't think *Christiandom* in the end was a good thing, because where you have a stock morality without a regenerated heart, you have a lot of wickedness that occurs. On top of that, even media taught us as Americans that there were certain things that were true for all people. Let me give you an example. When I was growing up, the show we all watched on Thursday nights was *The Cosby Show*. We watched the Huxtables. And if you're ten years younger, think *Saved by the Bell*. And what happened in those shows every week was there was a moral dilemma built around one of the children. Either Theo snuck out to a party that he shouldn't have gone to and got hammered on some vodka or Jessie started taking pills to overcome her finals. Now in both of these shows, you watched the thrill of the moment give way to the destruction of the action and each show ended with a moral rule. "Good kids don't get drunk. Good kids don't do this. Good kids don't do that." That's *Christiandom*. That is our institutions and our media teaching a common good, teaching a truth. I contend that over the last 20 years, *Christiandom* has died. It's not on life support, it's dead. Completely cold dead. Let me give you some examples. Let's go *Saved by the Bell vs. The Hills*. On a recent episode of *The Hills*, which is a show on MTV, L.C. and her girlfriends head to the club and get smashed. They get smashed out of their minds, and somewhere in that evening she comes across a boy from London who is flying out the next day. L.C., drunk out of her mind, brings back to the table. They sit at the table and she whispers to her girlfriend, "Isn't he cute? He leaves to go back to London tomorrow." We go to commercial. When it comes back, L.C. wakes up the next morning having no recollection of the night before. She doesn't remember the boy at all, doesn't remember what happened with the boy. But here's the thing. There's no guilt, no "I'm not going to do that again." The show simply ends. There's no lesson, no "This ends badly," no heartbreak, no sexually transmitted disease. It just ends. There is no lesson; it's just what we do now. Or we can do music. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to say something "inappropriate," you would code it. You couldn't come out and say it; you would have to code it. Let me give you an example. "Sky rocket's in flight, afternoon delight." That song is not about a sandwich. That's not about lunch. Okay, it's about sex if you didn't know. He's talking about sex in the afternoon, but you couldn't just write a song called "Sex in the Afternoon" back then or culture would turn on you in a hurry. So you had to code it. Fast forward and now you've got "I kissed a girl and I liked it. I hope my boyfriend don't mind it." Or Nelly Furtado's *Promiscuous Girl* off her record *Loose*, which sold 10 million copies. *Christiandom* is dead, absolutely dead.

Now here's the thing about culture. Culture has to have something pushing and pulling on it. There has to be something that pushes and pulls on culture. So in the place of *Christiandom*, I think there are two forces pushing and pulling on culture. The first one is the idea of relativity. And that's what you see in L.C.'s little scenario. It's this idea that no truth fits on all people everywhere. I wish I could spend a lot of time on this today. We'll eventually do this. This is a very, very, very silly idea. And I'm not even speaking religiously; I'm just speaking philosophically. The moment you say that no one religion can have the truth, that all religions simply have a piece of the truth, you are claiming you have the knowledge that you say no one can have. You alone, as the relativist, see ultimate reality. You alone see how the universe works. You're claiming the very thing that you're calling Christians and Jews and Muslims arrogant bigots for. It's silly. You can't

say there's no truth, because that would have to be true, wouldn't it? The other force that is pulling on culture is darker than relativity will ever be. You've got relativity pushing and pulling on culture, and then you've got religion pushing and pulling on culture. So you've got these two giant forces, and they're the ones shaping, pushing and molding culture. So you may be going, "Did you just say that religion is darker than relativity?" Absolutely. Here's what I would contend. The gospel of Jesus Christ and religion are nowhere near the same thing, and the great bulk of American Evangelicalism is not gospel driven at all but religiously driven. I'll try to explain exactly where I'm going here. There are fundamental differences between the teachings of Jesus Christ and how religions works itself out. So if I'm in a scenario where someone goes, "All religions are the same," I very quickly go, "You're absolutely right." Because what I want to do is distinguish the gospel from religion. Because they really are that different.

Let me run through nine ways in which they are very, very different. In religion, if there was a mantra, it's this, "I obey, therefore I'm accepted." That's religion. Religion is, "There is this code to be followed, there is this morality to ascribe to, there are these things that I have to do. And if I do them, God will be pleased with me. And if I do not do them, God will not be pleased with me. So I obey, therefore I am accepted. So as long as I can do what's right and avoid what's wrong, the God will be pleased with me." That's the mantra of religion. Now, the gospel is completely different. Because at the center of Christian faith is a blood splattered cross. Because at the center of our faith is Jesus Christ going to the cross and having the wrath of God poured out on Him and absorbing it for us. So then, the mantra of religion is, "I obey, therefore I'm accepted." The mantra of the gospel is, "I'm accepted, therefore I obey." That's a fundamental difference in what the gospel is vs. what religion is. We don't obey to get accepted. We're justified by the cross of Christ, not by any of our actions.

There are several other things too. Like the motivation of religion is almost always fear and insecurity. And this is one of the ways I've seen it shape out in a lot of Evangelistic rhetoric. Like when you start going, "Do you want to go to hell? Of course you don't want to go to hell. You had better come to Jesus." So you've got massive amounts of people who did the mental work of, "Eternal damnation or not? Hmm. I mean I'm only eight years old, but I had better make this decision. I know. I don't want hell." And then you come forward. The problem with that is heaven is not a place for those who are afraid of hell, it's a place for those who love God. So fear-based religion is just that. It's religion; it's not the gospel. The motivation behind religion is fear and insecurity. "I had better do these things or God's going to get me." The motivation behind the gospel is grateful joy.

In religion, we obey God to get things from God. "If I do this, if I do this, if I do this, then God will do this, God will do this, God will do this. I will obey, and in my obedience, God will bless me." In the gospel, we obey to near Him, to be transformed into His image. We don't go to God to get things; we go to God to get God. He is the gospel.

In religion, when circumstances go wrong (and they're going to go wrong), I believe you're forced in this religious framework to either get angry with God or get angry with yourself. Because the reason difficulties have befallen your life in the religious system is either you did not measure up to what you were supposed to or you did but God has betrayed you and not given you what you wanted anyway. In the gospel, when difficult circumstances fall on us, we still struggle. Somehow there's been this thing hatched on us that once the Holy Spirit seals on us, we flutter about in Shekinah glory the rest of the days of our lives. There's never any doubt, there's never any dark night of the soul, there's never these moments where we ask why. It just doesn't happen to us as believers. It's dumb, ignorant. No, we'll struggle, but here's what happens in the struggle. In the struggle, we fully embrace that all of God's wrath for you and me were poured out on Jesus Christ in the cross, and although He has allowed this thing into our life for training, this is not about His anger towards us or our failure. And He will walk through it with us like a loving Father.

In religion, when you're criticized, your whole world will unravel and you'll either go violent or you'll go into self-loathing. And the reason that occurs is because in religion, your whole self-worth is built around your ability to do right and be a good person. So when someone criticizes you and points out that you're not a good person, your framework for acceptability in front of God collapses around you. In the gospel, when you're criticized, you'll still struggle. I've never met a guy who loves criticism. In fact, I always default to the same place. Sixteen years into my relationship with Christ, I still default to the same place. Somebody goes, "Chandler, this is an issue. I've seen this in your life." And I always respond with, "Huh, that's funny because while you were noticing some stuff, I was noticing some stuff. So since this is the kind of friend we are, since we've got that Matthew 18 relationship, let me point out some things too, log boy." And then later on I'll be like, "Aw, maybe they were right." and repent, but that's always my default. I've always got to go, "Is there any truth in this, Lord? Help me." But when you're criticized in the gospel, you're worth as believers in Christ is not in our ability to be moral, upright, fine, outstanding citizens. So when we're criticized, it doesn't unravel our world. In fact, if you'll think about it, it was criticism that brought you to the cross. It was the fact that you knew you failed in an area, you knew you needed a Savior, you knew you had a sinful heart. Those were some of the things that brought you to the cross of Christ.

In religion, prayer is almost always about petition. For the religious man, prayer is almost always about controlling his environment. In a life centered on the gospel, prayer becomes long stretches of adoration, long stretches of praise. If you'll think back to last week, the man centered on the gospel prays, "Hallowed be Your name." The religious man goes, "Fix this, do this, make this happen."

When you walk in religion, your self-view swings wildly between two poles. When you're doing everything right, when you got up and had a quiet time with *My Utmost for His Highest*, you got in your car and listened to Christian music on the way to work, you did not cuss, you did not watch a rated-R movie while not drinking a beer, when you've done everything that you're supposed to do, what happens is you feel good. You're doing it. You and God are like this right now. You're handling it now. Now in that moment, the dark side is you tend to be very unsympathetic to those who are failing. And then the other pole is when you're not doing the things that religion says you're supposed to do, you feel defeated and worthless and like you're never going to get this thing and that God is frustrated and angry with you. So you're either walking with a swagger or you're sniveling. Those are the two poles that you tend to swing on in religion. Once again, in the gospel, my self-view, my self-worth, my self-esteem is not predicated upon my ability to do anything but on the act of Jesus Christ in the cross. So in that moment, there's this weird thing that happens because I am bad enough that Jesus had to die for me, but He loved me so much that He was glad to do it. So this produces simultaneously a growing humility because He did it all and a growing confidence because He loved me enough to do it. It's why I don't walk with a swagger, but I don't snivel either.

In religion, your self-worth is built entirely on how hard you work and how good you are. So you can't help but look at with a great deal of disdain those who don't work as hard as you or those who are more immoral than you are. In the gospel, you know you have been saved by grace, through faith.

And even the faith to believe in that grace was given to you by God, so that you would be unable to boast in anything. If you really get grace, if you really get that you didn't do anything, that God justified you, that He saved you, it becomes nearly impossible to judge anyone. Any alternative lifestyle. Now we might not agree with them, but you can't judge them. Because by doing that, you've negated the very grace that was given to you. If it wasn't for that grace, what would be you.

We could go on and on, but we'll just do one more. If you look to your own pedigree and performance for your spiritual acceptability, then you constantly have to build this religions persona that may or may not be what's actually going on in

you. As a rule when I was growing up, because my home was about as broken as you can imagine, was that you always had to pretend that it wasn't that way and you had to keep your mouth shut about dark things that lurked in your home. So you went to church, tucked in your shirt (because God got frustrated if you didn't), wore khakis or a suit and you showed up because God deserved your best. It doesn't matter what your heart's like; just wear that tie. But you don't talk about the fact that this is going on or this is going on or this is where you're failing or this is where you're frustrated. You just show up and you protect that religious persona at all cost. So in the end, you're not after God; you're after some idol of religiosity that you've built. In the gospel, none of those things are ultimate. Like we're not even relishing envying good men. In fact, one of the places I think Christianity got off the rails and became American Evangelicalism is when we started saying really ridiculous stuff like, "Christians don't do this and we don't do that." It has been my experience in ten years of pastoring that Christians absolutely do that, whatever that is. So when you build out this idea that we're moral than everyone else, first of all you're lying and secondly you're taking away from the beauty of the cross. Because the beauty of the cross is not that you're perfect but it's that you're not and Christ loved you anyway. That's what creates worship.

Now let's look at the text. Luke 11, we'll pick it up in verse 37. Hopefully we've been able to distinguish between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of religion. I'll point it out to you once again. Jesus tends to be for people who are really a mess. He tends to speak softly to them, very gently to them. But when people got religious and started to try to lay religion on other people, Jesus got very upset. Look at verse 37. "While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner." Let me explain something cultural to you. This is not what you do with your kids before dinner. This is not about germs or external cleanliness; this is a spiritual, religious act for them that was symbolic. "And the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.'" Here's what He's saying: "You've spent so much time building up this religious persona of external perfection that you've neglected the state of your heart. So in the end, you're dead, dry and dirty, and if you would just be honest about where you really are, both would be clean." Let's look at where He goes after that. "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God." Here's what He's saying: "Externally you've got all the rules down, but you have no real love for people and you have no real love for God. 'These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.'" So just for the record, He's saying, "You tithe, you do these religious acts well, but you don't love people and you don't love God." And then He says, "You should love people, you should love God, but you should tithe too." Let's keep going. Verse 43, "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it." Now does it sound like pretending you're okay when you're not and building a religious persona and spending all the vitality inside of you trying to be good is what God is after in Jesus Christ? You don't have to be an intellectual to see that Christ is looking at these very religious men and saying, "You've missed it."

I love this next part. Verse 45, "One of the lawyers answered him, 'Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.'" Here's why I love texts like this. Do you remember that picture of Jesus that we grew up with where He's a white guy and He's got product in His hair? He's the most effeminate looking dude you've ever seen in your life. He's like wearing a white bathrobe and His hands are folded. This is not that Jesus. And one of the things that has happened because of this push and pull in culture is that Jesus has been relegated to the role of "Love Fairy," this effeminate male that runs around sprinkling love on everyone. But here's the thing about genuine love. Genuine love has a ferocity to it. Genuine love engages in places where it hurts. So yes, love wins, but it's holy, ferocious, truth-filled love. The lawyer should have just kept his mouth shut. I would have just sat against the wall and said, "I've been telling 'em. I don't know why they won't listen." But instead he just threw it out there. So look at Jesus. Let's watch this "I love everybody" effeminate Jesus. "And he said, 'Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch

the burdens with one of your fingers.” So here’s the job of a lawyer. The lawyer is to take the sacred text and teach it to God’s people in such a way that they are lead to and walk with God. And what He just accused them of doing is taking the light yoke of God and increasing it to where it’s so burdensome and impossible that it will crush men and putting that on them. When Jesus says, “My burden is easy; My yoke is light,” yoke is what a rabbi would call his teachings. It’s not a reference to farming. He’s saying, “My teachings are light. They’re simple.” He said, “Woe to you lawyers. You’ve made this thing unbelievably complex. Woe to you lawyers. You put impossible rules on My people.”

Let’s keep going here. “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.” He’s going, “You’re an enemy of truth. You don’t want the truth.” If you’ll follow Jesus’ accusations against this group, they always mirror the same line of thinking where He says, “You’ve studied the Scriptures in vain. You think that in them you have life. You refuse to come to Me. You burden My people.” This is a constant accusation against this group of religious men.

Look at verse 53. “As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.” Luke 12:1, “ In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.” Together there’s a collective shudder. When I’ve heard this text taught and even in some of the work I’ve done in breaking this down, it’s always this scene: “One day, you’re going to stand in front of God, and He’s going to turn on His television. He will turn it on, and every dark area of your life will play out on that screen while God asks you to explain.” So this morning you’re coming up I-35, trying to get here and someone’s in the left lane going 27mph and you’re trapped behind him and you’re like, “You rascal!” And when you die and you’re standing before God, naked as a jaybird, there you are on the screen calling the guy a rascal. And God infinite in holiness is going to go, “The R word? Really? You want to explain this to Me? I go and am slaughtered on the cross and that’s what I get from you?” Every thought, every action plays out for you in front of you and God on the screen. There are some problems with that interpretation, mainly that that’s not what it’s saying. The warning is, “Beware of hypocrisy. Beware the hypocrisy of the Pharisees whose thoughts, heart and motivation are wicked, while what you see is goodness.” In this moment, He is teaching how life in Christ will function.

Let’s do this. At the age of 30, Jesus shows up to two brothers, the number two is important, in a boat with their dad. And He tells the two, “Hey, if you’ll follow Me, I’ll make you fishers of men.” So they look at their dad, their dad looks at them, they say goodbye, immediately leave their nets. And now there are three. He immediately started with three. No one on one with Jesus. He immediately started with three. Not in the three, He begins to add, He begins to add, He begins to add. He gets up to twelve, twelve gets up to seventy-two, seventy two gets up to 140, 140 gets up to 500. That’s what we see happening in the New Testament. Now, Jesus really walks closely with the three and the twelve. When He sends the seventy-two out to the villages around where He is to proclaim that the kingdom is at hand, He sends them out in pairs. In Matthew 18, Jesus is teaching us how to engage our brother. Like if you see your brother sinning, you’ve got this responsibility to walk up to him and go, “Hey, I’ve noticed this in your life. I love you. I’m not trying to control you. I’m just saying, this ends in destruction. You ought to be careful with that.” And if you continue to read down Matthew 18, the very last verse after all that’s over is a verse that’s very popular. It says this, “Where two or three are gathered in my

name, there am I among them." So here's what I want to throw out to you. The Christian walk, your relationship with God, although it is intensely personal, was not meant to be private. The more private you make your struggles and your walk with Christ the more religious you become. And the more public you're able to walk in your relationship with Christ, the more sin loses its power over you, because Christ is present in your life.

Let me give you examples. When I first took this job as the pastor here, I was flying down to Houston every to teach. My wife was seven months pregnant. I flew down to Houston, got in my rental car, went to my hotel, changed clothes and went to a gym there. I got to the gym, started working out and a woman about ten years older than me came up and started talking with me. So I just talked back, and my thought was, "Oh, I'm going to get to share the gospel with this lady." So I have this game that I play. I don't ever tell anybody I'm a pastor. I tell them I'm a teacher, they'll ask of what and I'll say I'm a teacher of hedonism and then we're off running. So I say, "I'm a teacher. I'm in town for a couple of days." She doesn't even ask me what it is I teach. She went and finishes her workout; I finished mine. From there, I got ready to go. I walk out, go to my car and she follows me out. She said, "Hey, I want to give you this." She gives me a scrap of paper with her name and phone number on it. Now I am not an attractive dude. That stuff does not happen to me, not before I got married and never after. I wasn't wearing my rings because I was working out, so I just said, "Uh, I'm sorry if I was confusing or did anything inappropriate. I'm married." To which she responded, "It's okay. I am too." I was just dumbfounded. I went and got in my car and drove away going, "What just happened?" I immediately threw the paper out of my window on I-45 and got out my cell phone and called Michael Bleecker. I said, "Bleeck, you are not going to believe this, but this sketchy, evil seductress just threw some game on me, man." He was like, "What? Quit speaking in code and tell me what happened." So I just told him the whole story. Then he prayed with me. Because here's the thing. I wasn't worried about having an affair with this woman; that wasn't going to happen. But I'm in a hotel by myself for two days. My mind could give in to some things. There's things on TV that I could indulge. There's all this potential wickedness that could flow out of that. Nobody stumbles in to sin. Sin begot sin. It starts with a thought that you dwelt too long on. It starts with a fantasy that you created. That's how it leads you in to those things. So I was in danger of all those things. So Bleecker prays for me and then says, "Hey bro, I know you know this but every dream you have for your life, for how your life plays out, for how it ends, for what type of man you are, for however your children see you, however your wife sees you and how everyone else views you, all of them are threatened by this woman." Now in that moment, two gathered and Jesus was there also. So we put this thing to the test. We were just like, "Okay what if, by being honest at a very rugged level, power over us could be broken?" Because I can tell you this. My only thoughts of that woman for the next two days were one of pity and hope that someone might share the gospel with her.

Now, there are days, for no reason, that I just wake up irritated. The alarm goes off and I'm irritated and frustrated. Let me tell you exactly how those days I'm irritated are going to end. One of the kids is catching a beating they don't deserve and my wife and I are going to get into a fight over something ridiculous. That's what's going to happen. So if I keep that private. If in that moment I go, "Ugh God, I don't want to be irritated. Please take this irritation from me. Remove this and put happiness in my heart. Amen," I'm pretty irritated the rest of the day. But if I'll just make a call to Patterson or Bleecker or someone in my crew, if I'll go, "Man, my heart's just restless today. I'm just frustrated and I'm angry. And I know someone's going to catch it at home. I know Lauren and I are going to get into a fight about something dumb. This is not who I want to be. This is not how I want to love my wife. This is not how I want to walk with the Lord."

And it's amazing to me that in that moment, when we're not playing the religious game but we're able to be ruggedly honest with one another, Jesus is present. But when we privatize it and make it our own personal struggle because we're good enough and able enough to overcome it, that's religion now, isn't it? I just don't know where it came from that we are supposed to be this great, perfect people. Have you read the Bible? Do you want to take the tour? Start it early in Genesis. We don't get to chapter 3 before we blow it. The Bible is a massive book. Four hundred words into it, it goes bad. Moses kills a guy with his hands. Jesus is betrayed by one of His own. Every one of His disciples abandoned

Him. Peter sticks around just enough to throw out an obscenity filled denial. By the way, I've watched some Discovery Channel specials. If you're going to rewrite the Bible (as they claim), aren't you going to leave some of those parts out? If guys rewrote the Bible, they did a horrible, horrible job of it. You'll probably want to take out Jesus pleading to not go to the cross. And specifically sixty years later, when you're viewed as the first pope, you probably write out that part where you said, "Blankety blank, I don't know Him!" Just leave in the part in about you cutting the guy's ear off, so you can go, "See how brave I was back then? Follow me." From beginning to end, this story is wrought with failure. Sampson, Elijah, Peter, Paul. Paul comes off like he's wearing a cape, but he says, "Not that I've obtained these things, but what can I do? I press on, forgetting what is behind, straining for what is ahead." The essence of the gospel in the Christian faith is not that you're good, but that you're not and Christ loves you. That's where worship starts. The reason why so many of us are just unable to worship, unable to walk in the joy of our salvation is because you haven't really got salvation, you've got religion, and religion is this devastating, devastating thing. It dries up the soul, because you're trying to accomplish the impossible...when it's already been freely given.

Will you for a moment take just a little bit of stock in your heart? I think one of the things that creates so much angst in me here, in Dallas in particular, is that it seems that most of our testimonies would start with, "I grew up in church, but I didn't hear the gospel message. I didn't know. I've been trying to be good, I've been trying to do this thing." I've just got this great fear that we've got tons and tons and tons of religiously lost people. Jesus unpacks it in Luke 12. There are no secrets. He knows and yet He still goes to the cross. Think about how much energy you burn, how much vitality you lose when the goal of your life is to protect a persona that isn't who you really are. It removes your ability to receive love. It removes your ability for intimacy with anyone. It removes your ability to worship God freely. It kills personhood and self. "Brokenness and a contrite spirit I will never despise" is what David wrote about God in the Psalms. Okay, so you struggle. Welcome. Okay, so you're not there yet. Me neither. The difference between religion and the gospel is religion will hide it at all cost, the gospel knows that grace paid the bill. So my prayer is that you would wrestle a little bit with where your heart is. If I had to look at my life and go, "I obey therefore I'm accepted; I'm accepted therefore I obey," if we had to run down that list again and you really had to lay your life on it, how many of you this morning need to go, "Man, I am really religious. Jesus, help me. My number one concern is not You, but how I'm viewed. Help me."

Let's pray. "Father, we thank You for grace, we thank You for mercy, we thank You for Your love. I do pray that grace might take root in the deep places, that You might enable us to walk in honesty. I pray for the men in here. I think most men live life in their mind, with few friendships, with few honest relationships. I pray that You would give them a band of brothers to run with. I pray for our women in here, that we might glory in You and You alone, Your cross alone. Help us. We need You. We tend to go to religion by default. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."