

If you have your Bibles, turn to Romans 12. We need to do a little housekeeping tonight, so I want to do Romans 12 to give us a framework for what we need to talk about as a community. Australia was tremendous. I taught close to 20 times in the 11 days I was there, so it was quite busy. The very last thing I did was teach at a Baptist church on the Sunday night before I flew out the next morning. And Australia is an extremely secular country. Only 3% of their population is evangelical or Bible believing Christians. It's always weird to define it that way because there's no such thing as liberal Christianity. There's Christianity and then there's this other thing. There are not two branches of our faith. There's our faith and then there's make believe. But I was teaching and I said that one of the things that happens in a secular society when you try to use the Bible as some sort of authoritative book where you say, "God has spoken. He's telling us how life is supposed to work and operate in the Bible," they try to paint you and the God of the Bible as some sort of out of touch, out of fashion, yesterday, 1950's ideal that is out of touch with 2009. So I said that what they're trying to do is make God look like the man at the mall who is wearing Reebok high tops with his socks pulled up to his knees, short Op shorts and wearing a fanny pack. And when I said that, the entire room gasped. Because apparently the word "fanny" in Australia is an extremely obscene word that is not our word for for fanny. And so because I'm an idiot, I went, "Fanny or pack? Which one is it? Is the problem fanny or is it pack? Or is it those two words together?" And literally, a pastor in the crowd named Richard went, "Quit saying that." And if you don't know what I'm talking about, just trust me. It's a foul word and shouldn't be used. They call a fanny pack a "bum bag." So I feel as though I should have been briefed. I feel as though I should have landed and someone should have had a document going, "These things don't translate well. Please be careful." So I think in Australia I'm probably known as the foul-mouthed preacher now, and I did not try to earn that title.

It was a small world while I was over there. The first Sunday I was there, I was speaking at Resolve Church in Sydney, which reminds me a lot of us when we were younger. Their pastor there, Hans, was about 27-28 years old and everyone in that church is in their early 20's. It's a very small congregation. So I preached, and afterwards they had this meal. And so we were just kind of drinking coffee and eating food. This guy comes up to me who was from Africa but was studying in Sydney and says, "Hey, my brother goes to the Village. You need to look him up and say hi." And so we kind of just chuckled at how small the world was. And then I went up to Katoomba, and their Grand Canyon could fit in our Grand Canyon like 700 times. I'm just saying. Anyway, I'm there and this girl walks up and says, "Say hi to your sister for me." So I say, "How do you know my sister?" Well, my sister and her husband were missionaries in Xi'an, China for four years. This girl was a missionary in Xi'an also and had met my sister and actually babysat my niece and nephew in Xi'an while my sister did some of the stuff that she was doing over there. So I thought, "How crazy is this." And then here's the one that just tops it all to where I was like, "This is ridiculous." I was doing the Katoomba convention, which is like 1,500 twenty-somethings and one of the topics I was given was "Seeing relationship through the lenses of the gospel." So I went through the creative order and really kind of challenged young men to grow up, get out of their mama's house, master something other than video games, get a job, pursue a wife in a godly way, marry a woman, love her like Christ loved the church, have babies and then live out Deuteronomy 6 while they work hard and grow in responsibility all the days of their life. And where they fall short of that, they're outside of God's plan for their lives. They are what I would call a bum and women should avoid them. And then I told the girls that at some level they need to be the godly women God has called them to be and they don't need to settle for bums. And I told them that if a guy who comes off like he's godly flirts with them without the intent of pursuing them, they need to call him on it, tell him to grow up and tell him to take it somewhere else until he's ready to grow up and be a man. So afterwards, we did a Q&A with several hundred of them, because you can't do relationships in an hour. It's just impossible with all of the complexities in that. So as I'm walking

into this room with about 300-400 twenty-somethings, this girl just runs up from the right side of the room and goes, "Hey, my name is Megan. You don't know me, but I'm a covenant member of the Village Church. I actually lead a home group in Denton. I'm just in Sydney studying for three months. I'm glad to see you, pastor." And then she runs back into the crowd. So here I am in the Blue Mountains and hour and a half west of Sydney, Australia and I met for the first time one of our covenant members. How crazy is that?

Here's what struck me throughout the whole thing. Here's what I really came away with. The other speaker at KCC was a guy by the name of William Taylor. He is a pastor in St. Helen's in London, near the financial district. Within five miles of his church on any given weekday are 350,000 people. And he's very English. He might be the most English Englishman I've ever met in my life. He's ferociously polite. I like abrasive aggression. I just operate in that. He's just way too polite and nice and sweet for me. But he is brilliant with the Scriptures. So I got to sit down with him and hear about all these things God was doing in London. And then I got to sit down with this guy from Africa and hear about his life and how he was converted to Christ, and now he's in Sydney studying. I got to see what God was doing in Australia, and then I got to know in my head what God is doing here. I was just struck by the sense that God's doing it. By that I mean He's doing exactly what He said He was going to do. He's doing it now.

And so if you don't know, if you're with us tonight and you don't have a lot of church background, the Bible is not 66 different stories. It's one story. This book has one story, one story alone. It's only those who are really confused that try to pick this and pick that. It's all about one thing. It's about God reconciling the world back to Himself. So the Creator God of all things creates and it's beautiful, but then the Fall occurs and it fractures everything. And so God clothes Adam and Eve, kicks them out of the garden, and mankind grows very, very dark. So you get that really chipper children's story of Noah and the ark where God kills all the humans on earth. And Noah and his family come out of the ark, and it still goes dark. So God comes to a man named Abram and says, "I know it's a mess. Here's how I'm going to heal the whole thing. Here's how I'm going to reconcile all things to Myself. Through you, Abram, I'm going to create a people. Through that people, I will raise up a Messiah. Through that Messiah, I will reconcile all things unto Myself in heaven and on earth by making peace through My blood shed on the cross." Because we're going to get the Law and the Law is going to reveal to us that we need an atoning sacrifice. So the whole Old Testament is about God reconciling all things to Himself. So the Law shows us we're going to need an atoning sacrifice a sacrificial Lamb and David in the Psalms, "Let the nations be glad. There's going to come this great and glorious day where the nations worship Him." The prophets talk about this great and glorious day of the Lord where all nations are going to worship Him. Jesus shows up and goes, "I'm that guy in Genesis 12, in Psalm 22," and He begins to fulfill all the prophecies and go, "I am the One." He is crucified as an atoning sacrifice that both the Law and the prophets said would have to come. He atones for our sin so that those who by faith repent of their sin. You have to have faith and repentance. Where you have one without the other, you've just revealed that what you have is illegitimate. We'll talk about that in two weeks. Those who put their faith in Christ and repent of their sins are justified before God by no act of their own but by His act in the cross. And then He tells His disciples, "Go into the all of the nations, making disciples." And then they take off. They take off to the east, they take off to the west, and it's been spreading ever since.

And so maybe you don't have much church background in here and you're not really a Christian kind of person and you have your doubts. Well I'll tell you that you're one of the few left that have any doubts of whether or not this is happening. Because there are two books that have been written by secular minds, both who worked for and researched for the United Nations. The first was a book that just came out that is called *God Is Back* about the resurgence of religion in Europe. Because if you remember, especially if you're an atheist, the big trump card is that we're all headed to Europe. Eventually in the future, we're all going to look like Europe. We're going to be this enlightened group of people that wants nothing to do with church who is technologically savvy and self-sufficient where God is completely dead. We were all supposed to go there. The only problem is that Europe has not stayed there long. They're moving back

very quickly to being a very extremely religious people, not so much those 40-50 year olds, but the twenty-somethings are flocking back to religion in droves. It's very confusing to the secularists. The second book that came out is a book called *The Coming Global Christendom* about the explosion of Christianity in China, South America and Africa, three soon to be economic powers on the world stage. And the UN is saying, "At the worker level, these nations are extremely Christian." So we've got a coming global Christendom where the West no longer leads the way.

So what you have happening is exactly what God said would happen in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth... So all these promises of what God was going to do, He's doing them. And here's the crazy part. We get to play. We get to be a part of this thing that God is doing. Colossians 1 says that God is "reconcil[ing] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven." He's not reconciling all things up here, but you yourself. "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death." This is what God is doing. It's happening, and it's happening now.

Which leads me to Romans 12. Let's pick it up in verse 1. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God,..." I need to stop. The book of Romans is the Mt. Everest of books. I don't know how else to explain it to you. It is so dense and thick in its meaning that to try and go line by line through it would take forever. Some of the best preachers in the world have tried to do this. John Piper up in Minnesota, it took him nine years. I believe John MacArthur did it in six or seven years. Line by line, exegetical teaching through the book of Romans is a monumental task. I'm going to try and do the first 11 chapters in three minutes, okay? The first three chapters of the book of Romans are very simple, and you need to hear me because I'm going to say this exactly like it's supposed to be said. You, on your best day, are a God-belittling, God-mocking, glory thief who God is going to rightly and justly (because He is holy and good) judge. And some of you can now go, "Well thank you. I'll avoid those three chapters of the book of Romans."

Now, from there it moves on to the next section of Romans where he tries to attack and unpack religion trying to be able to save you. You see, in the Bible Belt, people get very confused about what biblical Christianity is vs. what religion is. So we end up having these party years in our lives (for those of us who don't have strong backgrounds in church and for some of us who do) where we go to college, we get high a little bit, we sleep around and do these things, and then we get into young adulthood and we do a little bit more. And then we get a little older and decide we're not going to do that anymore, so we stop getting high for the most part, we stop getting drunk for the most part, we stop doing all this and then we start going to church where we're like, "Yay, Jesus!" We've cleaned ourselves up so we're good. Now the next three chapters of Romans simply attacks this idea as being insufficient. There is nothing in regards to behavior modification that you can do to get yourself right standing before God Almighty, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." You're not going to be able to modify your behavior.

Now, the book turns and we get this good news. We get the fact that God in the flesh, God incarnate comes and becomes the atoning sacrifice. He absorbs the wrath of God towards those who would repent and believe, so that we are, by no merit of our own, justified, right standing, perfect before God Almighty. Then he gets through Romans 9-11, which is not three chapters on predestination; it's three chapters on God's metanarrative. Now that has a lot to do about predestination. I'm not trying to remove that; it's just that a lot of people think those three chapters about predestination. They're wrong. It's not about that; it's about the metanarrative and what God is doing in regards to reconciliation.

So he then turns it in chapter 12 and says, "Therefore in view of God's mercy..." What mercy? That you at your best are a sinner, that you have no ability to heal, fix or get right standing with God, that God through Christ Jesus, particularly His perfect life, His cross and His resurrection, give you right standing by no merit of your own, that's the mercy. So therefore, in view of that, let's keep reading. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your

bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Now this is a turn on phrases. In chapter 6 of the book of Romans, he says, "Do not present your members [of your body] to sin as instruments for unrighteousness." Do not present your mind, do not present your hands, do not present your eyes, do not present your mouth, do not present any part of your body as instruments of unrighteousness. So chapter 6 is "don't do this," and chapter 12 is "do do this." So, don't present the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness, instead do present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Hopefully you're grasping this at this point. I teach with a great deal of repetition on purpose, because I'm pleading with God that He'll just singe it into your brain forever. So everything that exists has the potential of being life-giving and worship-driving or life-sucking and soul-killing. Everything. A glass of wine has the potential to make us grateful to the Creator God of the universe, to be enjoyed with good friends, to celebrate all that God is and the life that He's given. It also has the potential to become alcoholism, debauchery, drunkenness and shamefulness. The same thing goes for food. I'll give you a popular one that we have to deal with. Take Facebook. Facebook is a great means in which to connect with people, to keep up with your friends, to encourage them throughout the day and to keep track of people you would lose touch with without it. But it can also be used to look up old flames, to elevate some romance when you were an idiot 17 year old kid well beyond the covenant relationship that you're in now so that you create this imaginary romantic myth where you betray the vow you made both to God and to your family and to your spouse and run off into adultery. And this plays itself out constantly everywhere right now. So Facebook isn't evil. The Internet isn't evil. Wine isn't evil. These things aren't evil. They just have the potential to be one or the other. So the text is saying, "You had better watch your eyes, you had better watch your mouth, you had better watch your ears, you had better wash your hands, you had better watch your mind and you had better submit those things and submit your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

Let's keep reading. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,..." Both of those words are monumentally important there. He didn't say, "Don't be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be conformed to a pattern of religion." That's not what he said. He said, "Don't be conformed, but be transformed." So there's something inherent in the mercy of God shown to us by the Holy Spirit in the cross of Christ that transforms our mind and heart so that we have a new heart and a new way of seeing. It's why you can't muster it.

Let's continue. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." So Paul, in almost all of his letters, is going to say something like that, and he's pleading with you and me to see our lives rightly. Here's what that means. If there is anyone on planet Earth that should not hate their job and should not ever be bored, it's the Bible believing Christian. Now I know some of your are going, "You do not know me, and you do not know my work. Do not take my hate from me. It's all I have. I can righteously hate my job." Well, I think one of the problems is that many of us are trying to find our purpose in our job rather than having a purpose that leads us to our job. Because those two ideas are very different. Here's what I mean. The Scriptures in Psalm 139 say that God has uniquely wired you. He has uniquely designed and wired you. Hopefully you're to that place in life where you're beginning to understand that you have certain aptitudes and that there are certain aptitudes that you do not possess. So there are some things that are very easy and natural for you. Maybe that's reading, maybe that's math, maybe that's business, maybe you're great with people. There are just certain aptitudes that you don't even quite understand about yourself. They're just naturally there. And then there are certain parts of you where you could work tirelessly for months on a project and when you turn it in, it would be worse than a that of a guy who has that aptitude and just threw his together in 15 minutes. So you have been uniquely designed by God, which

means God is not after cookie cutters. In fact, the array of personalities, the array of colors, the array of characters is really a reflection of His beauty and brilliance.

So He's uniquely wired you, and Acts 17 says He has uniquely placed you. He has placed you in two ways. The first way is the time in which you would live. So your mom and dad might have thought you were an accident, but you did not surprise God. God did not look down at the world and go, "What in the world is he doing down there? No, no, no. It was supposed to be '87. We told you this." So the times in which you would dwell is purposed by God. And then Acts 17 takes it a step further and says not only were the times in which you were to dwell but the boundaries of your habitation or the places in which you were to live are purposed by God. So you have been uniquely designed by God and you have been uniquely placed by God according to gifts, time, place and aptitude within the place, as Acts 17 would say, so that men might seek Him and find Him though He is not far from any of them. Which means this. The mercy of God is lavished upon us, we become part of the church universal, and we immediately become not only beneficiaries of the gospel but agents of it within the domains of society that we walk. Which means that your work is no accident, but God has placed you at your work as a minister of reconciliation. I believe Josh covered that pretty well with you guys while I was gone.

And I want to say this. Do you know that cute little phrase, "Preach the gospel everywhere. When necessary, use words?" That is a really dumb, unbiblical idea. Yes, live out the gospel, but it's eventually going to require you to speak up. It is a Bible Belt myth that you not ordering a beer at dinner is going to cause someone to go, "You have something I need. Please tell me what it is. I noticed at dinner that you didn't order a Scotch over the rocks. Will you tell me about Christ and His eternal life?" It is a Bible Belt myth that's not true. It's going to require your mouth. Your life? Yes. But your mouth too. So if you have a coffee cup with that on it or a t-shirt, please get rid of those things. It's silly, and it's not true.

So we live out the gospel with our lives, with our mouth, in our workplace and it's also why you're in the neighborhood you're in. You don't have neighbors on accident in how God sees and designs the universe. You've been placed there on purpose as a minister of reconciliation. You don't have hobbies, aptitudes, things you're drawn to on accident. Do you know who doesn't like to play basketball at the gym? A guy who can't chew gum and breathe without blacking out. That guy doesn't go, "You know what I want to do today? I want to play some ball." He doesn't want to do that because he has no aptitude for it. He's going to want to collect stamps or do what he's been wired to do, what his aptitude is in. So even your hobbies are a part of God's reconciling power, what God's doing in the world. This is stuff we talk about all the time. When you do missions emphasis at a church, it's usually a niche of missions emphasis like, "Here's what we're doing internationally," but our whole lives are about mission and where you fail to understand that, you fail to understand what you're caught up in. But it's also a very American thing to think that the gospel is about us. And Paul is saying here, "Whoa, whoa! The movie is not about you, bro. The movie is about God. You're a bit player at best. In fact, you're only in the film for a frame and a half, and you're behind a guy in the back drinking a cup of coffee and reading the paper. If we had to pause the screen so that your friends could see you, you wouldn't be able to push the button fast enough to see yourself on the screen. You're a bit player at best. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought." And so he's talking about how this is what we look like outside of the church. We're on mission. Whether that's job, whether that's hobby, all of those things are about mission. And I think you become bored and your Christianity becomes weird where you don't grasp that.

But that's what it look like outside. What it looks like inside is what we have to talk about tonight, and I want to talk very directly and straight to you. So let's go. Verse 4, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love

be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord." So outside of the church, all of us have different aptitudes and we've been placed in different domains. Some of us are in business, some of us are in agriculture, some of us are in education, others of us are government. We could go on and on. We have these different aptitudes, we live in different neighborhoods. We've been shown the mercy of God and sent out on mission into all of those domains, but we've also been called together locally as the church local. And the Scriptures say that although outside of the church we have unique missions, inside of the church we're inseparably interwoven. If you are going to be all that God would have you be, you need me, and if I am going to be all that God would have me be, I need you. And where we cease to understand that we need one another in community, we retard the community. That's what he just said. We are individually members of one another. That means that I can never be all that God intended me to be if you're not playing your part and that you cannot be all that God would have of you if I don't play my part.

Okay, so here's what you need me to be. You need me to submit to the elder body. Nothing is more horrible than a pastor who is king. Absolute power always goes bad regardless of the domain of society, whether it's religion or business. You need me to lose votes from time to time. And I do (even though I'm always right). I'm willing to give it a couple years and then go, "See? I told you so." But for now, I just go, "Okay." You need me to love this staff, push them to holiness and hold them accountable to not waste your money. They'll work long, they'll work hard, they'll love their families well and they'll live holy lives. And where they fail in those, they'll need to be engaged by us, encouraged and handled biblically. You need me to love my wife very well, encourage her, romance her. wash her in the water of the Word and let her grow into her giftings. And you need me to love my children well and to impart to them the glory of God, because Timothy and Titus clearly say that if I fail at that, I'm unfit for this. You need me to love, preach and proclaim the Word of God, even when you don't want to hear it. You need me to not care about numerical growth but care about spiritual growth and let God take care of the numerics. You need me to guard our lives and doctrine closely. And I know some of you are going, "I already think we're too doctrinal." Well, you're at church. That's what we do. It's not we're at tennis and I'm trying to bring doctrine into tennis (which I think I could do). We're at church. Trying to say that someone is too doctrinal at church might be one of the goofiest things I've ever heard in my life. Of course we're guarding doctrine. We're a church. It's what we do. Where churches don't guard doctrine, they're actually not churches. They're just a gathering of humanity that might mention Jesus' name every once and a while. And you need me to understand that I am your servant, not your king. This is what you need from me. You need me to preach fearlessly, and you need me to do it in a way that you can understand and apply. And I'm doing all that I can with all the grace that God has given me to be just that.

But the weight put on me is not much different than the weight put on you. As God expects me to give to this body as well as live in my neighborhood, He also requires that you give in to this body so that we might all become what we were meant to become. Now this has been the fundamental understanding of what the church is for centuries. Everybody has a part to play and everybody has something to give no matter how simple or how big. And when everybody is playing their part well, the church flourishes, people grow in depth and lives are changed. The problem is, over the last two or three decades, the consumeristic bent of the Western world has perverted this view and now church doesn't mean this at all, and even an understanding of this is hard to find. Because far too many men are pastors who have never dealt with their daddy issues, we've convinced you that church is all about you and that we should have all of the programs that you want, we should make it as easy as possible for you to get in and everything should be built around you having a pleasant experience. And you're taught that almost constantly. The problem with that is it's an unbiblical, wicked model of church that would have a man being validated by your presence rather than by his calling and teaches and trains you that the gospel is about you and not about God reconciling all things to Himself. So when this environment is created, you create monsters.

I'll give you the two biggest monsters that come out of this mindset that church is about me. The first monster is the monster of the referee. Do you know what a referee is? Do you ever watch basketball? A referee doesn't play in the game, he doesn't score any points and he knows nothing of the joys of the win or the agony of a defeat. He simply runs up and down the court blowing his whistle and pointing out everyone's error. And when he retires, no one cares. Oh, and we've got them here. "Oh, that's wrong. You guys should do that better." "If it was me..." And my favorite are the ones who will even actually go, "You know what you need to do?" Because I always appreciate that one. I mean it's not that God revealed it to you for some reason; it's you telling us what we need to do. Now at some level, feedback loops are extremely important, and if you're going, "This is what we need to do," you'll always find an open ear. But this is what I would encourage if this is you. If you're involved in nothing but critical of everything, you're a ref, and here's what I want to encourage you to do. Get involved, leave or shut up. I find you to be a slimy coward and have no comprehension of how you can sleep at night. Where men and women pour out the hours of their lives for the sake of the gospel, you sit in the stands and judge how they do it. You are a coward, and I would be ashamed. Put up your whistle. You will find no perfect places no matter where you go. Now the good news is you're in the Bible Belt. So you can dance around from imperfect church to imperfect church. Because I think all churches have a 12 week perfection cycle, which means you can go for about 12 weeks before you start seeing the imperfection. Now some of you are varsity level refs and are like, "Please, I can spot it in like five minutes." Congratulations, you're a bigger coward than the rest. Put up your whistle and play the game. Or go blow your whistle somewhere else. But at some level, that's got to stop here. We've grown by a thousand a year for seven years. Do you think we might have some infrastructure problems? Do you think we might have some assimilation problems? Do you think we might have some parking lot problems? So you can help us or find some other place to complain or I would even take at this point you just shutting up. But I think those three are really good options.

The second monster that gets created is the giant, life-sucking leech monster. This is an interesting monster. This is a monster that really does believe that the church simply exists to serve them. And it's interesting because this monster doesn't just live off of one victim. He usually dances around multiple victims. And so the leech treats church unbiblically. They treat it as if it's some sort of ecclesiological buffet where he takes what he wants and leaves the rest. He doesn't understand that you don't go to church, you belong to a group of people. You don't sit in a comfy chair and watch a show. That's not church, that's a movie. You pay \$10, you get your popcorn, you watch a show and afterwards you critique it. That's sort of the leech/ref. But in the end, the life-sucking leech is someone who attends constantly and does nothing to give back to the body. So that's why all across the states you have churches that operate in the 20/80 rule, where 20% of the people do 80% of the work. What do you think that attitude is? That attitude isn't Romans 12. That attitude is the opposite of Romans 12. It is, "I am better than the rest of these people. They need to serve me." Now you would never say that with your mouth, so you simply live it out with your life. It's got to stop. So I know that there's a great deal of you who go to multiple churches. Here's the way I would encourage you. Stop it. Pick one and plug in. Listen, we're not building a kingdom here. If you don't want it to be here, we will not weep over that. We will be okay without you. But do it for your own sanctification. We grow more and more holy as we die more and more to ourselves, not as we exalt ourselves more and more and more. It's in pouring out that we grow into holiness, not by just drinking in. Some of the reasons some of you guys have bogged down in your sanctification is you're spiritually obese. You just eat and eat and eat and eat spiritually and never give anything to anybody else. This has got to stop too. Find a place and plug in. There are others of you that have joined us and used to be really involved in church, but you've been burned real bad and so you've been here healing. I hope we've been a place of healing for you, but it's time for you to plug back in. Some of you have been coming to this church for years and you've done nothing but come to this church for years. That's got to stop. Because it's killing us.

Next week, we'll do 14 services across three campuses. Let me unpack for you what that means. That means next Sunday morning at 9:00, 11:15, 5:00 and 7:15 we will need three parking teams, three fully staffed preschools. And we

don't babysit here at the Village. If you have infants, they're prayed over while they're in there. If you have preschoolers, they're taught one of five doctrinal truths. If you have 1st graders through 5th graders, they are taught not moralistic deism, "Don't lie. God doesn't like that," but rather who God is, what His glorious gospel is and what they've been invited into. If you've got teenagers, they work their way through doctrine. After you leave this service when you leave your Starbucks in here and your trash and the notes you're taking right now instead of listening to me, there's a group of men and women that come in here and clean all that up. There will be anything from 250 to 350 cards filled out and turned in this week. A group of volunteers will look through those. Those that have prayer requests on them, they will literally stop and pray. They will contact them and make sure they're okay and see if there is anything we can do to help. I could go on and on endlessly here with the needs of the Village Church. As of next weekend, with the launch of the Dallas campus, we will be 500 volunteers short of running at optimal man power. . .500 volunteers short. Which is unacceptable.

And I know, if you're not a believer in here, we're laying it out. We're as dysfunctional as could be. You would fit in really well. You see, I think there was a naïveté piece when I got here when I was 28. The naïveté is I thought that if I taught the Bible ferociously, just said, "This is what it says. This is what it is" and loved you enough to say the hard things and if men got saved, then we would never have to teach on money, we would never have to teach on service because there would be this natural overflow of the converted heart. It turns out I was the silly one. Because it just hasn't been true. It definitely hasn't been true in this area. The bulk of you are absolutely consumers when it comes to this place, and it's unacceptable. So some of you are going, "Well Chandler, I just don't really have a lot of talent." And I might meet with you, sit down for a cup of coffee and at the end of that cup go, "You really don't, bro. I want to be honest. I really don't know what to do with you. I don't know how you function. How are you alive?" That might happen. It never has happened, but it might. I think you have a misunderstanding of the importance of the little things.

You got in this place tonight because a group of men and women, whether it's hot, rainy, snowy, hot or hot, put on orange vests and stood out there and got you in this parking lot that was never designed to hold as many cars as we put into it. They'll do it if OU is on, they'll do it if the Cowboys game is on, they'll do it if UT is playing, they'll do it no matter what because they see and understand that there are certain things that are more important than trivial things. Men and women get in here by the thousands because other men and women sacrificed their time, energy and effort to pray for their kids and teach their kids while they're in here. You came in, were given a bulletin and greeted because someone gave up their Sunday evening to do that. The worship team, we don't pay our musicians here. I find that idea baffling to me, why churches pay their musicians. You don't get paid for greeting. You don't get paid for parking. Why are you paying your musicians? It just baffles me. That's just me. If you're listening to the podcast right now, don't start a revolt in your church against paid musicians. Now in the end, they lose their whole weekend. They just finished playing six services. That means they got here at 2:00 yesterday, got home last night at 10:00, got here this morning at 8:00 and are finally heading home now. Why? Because they consider you better than themselves and they're outdoing you with honor.

So seven years ago, I walked off of the Prestonwood stage (you've seen it. . .from here). I'm just kidding. I love P-wood. It's just a really massive building. I'm jealous. I walked off that stage and said goodbye to 3,000 people. I got in my car, drove out to Abilene and said goodbye to a couple thousand people out there. And I walked onto this stage with 160 people. You see, preaching is a means to an end. It's not an end in itself. Preaching should create. If it doesn't create, it's an end in itself. So I didn't just want to speak to people. I wanted to build men. I wanted to spend my life challenging men to be men of God, to grow up, to find godly wives, to marry, to have babies, to raise them in a godly fashion, to work hard and to be agents of reconciliation in the world around them. And I wanted to spend my life on that. I did not want to do an ecumenical gathering of people where I preach and then we all just go home and there's no accountability and there are no processes for help. I didn't want to do that, so I came here to try to build that. So I find myself in this really precarious position seven years later where I've got that show back. And I'm not really sure what to do about it, because

that's not my bag. It's not what I'm going to spend my life doing. So we've got to figure this thing out between the two of us. As a staff, we're doing everything that we know how to do to model servanthood to you. From our cars being parked all the way at the back (there's no pastoral parking here) to us leading this congregation in regards to financial giving, in regards to how many hours a week we spend with you, we're leading out on this. And for some reason, there's a great disjoint with a great bulk of you, and we've got to figure it out. Because we are between 6,000 and 7,000 people right now, and for the first time in our time here, we're going to have room. For the first time in seven years at the Village Church, we're going to have room. There will be a thousand people bled off of this campus starting next weekend in Dallas, and we're two months away from moving into an auditorium twice this size. For the first time ever, we'll have room. And if we don't get better than 50% of our covenant members serving in some capacity and if some of you regular attenders don't plug in and start serving, this thing is going to implode and it's not going to work. We have already, on multiple occasions, turned away young couples with babies because we didn't have enough workers in the rooms to man them. That is unacceptable.

So what do we do? You've got to pray, and you've got to plug in. But this is hard, because you don't need to do it under compulsion. If you do it under compulsion, all that means is you're riled up tonight and you have no intention of ever showing up after we do the hard work of placing you where you want to be. My advice would be don't plug into some place you know you're going to hate. Like if you hate children, then you should probably avoid preschool. I know that's common sense, but you don't need to go, "Oh, I've got to serve somewhere. It might as well be preschool." Don't do that. As best you can, serve where you're gifted, but you've got to serve somewhere. If we're going to be all that we were meant to be, it will require you giving back to the body from which you are feeding. If not, then you'll kill us off, which would be a horrible way to die, leached to death while a guy stands over us blowing a whistle.

Let me pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for an opportunity tonight to really be pressed by Your Word. Where we are immature, where we are self seeking, where we need to repent, I pray that we would repent. Where we have been overly critical and have not even attempted to lend a hand, I pray that we would repent. Where we have refused to plug in and serve to give back to the community of faith, where we have failed to outdo one another in honor, help us to repent. I pray that we become an extremely healthy body of believers, and I thank You for all You're letting us be a part of. We need You. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."