

## What Are We Doing Here?

MATT CHANDLER, *October 31, 2010*

We were terribly young at one point. Now you might be looking around going, "I still think we're young." We're not. There was a time where nobody at the Village Church shaved. That really ran the gauntlet until we were close to 3,000. And we started getting some salt and pepper at that time, and that was directly related to us begging God for it. Because when we started the church, we were going, "God, send us the broken, send us the hurting, send us those who hate the gospel." And He just started doing it, they started getting saved and it wasn't before long that we were like, "Please send us someone who owns a Bible, who is somewhat stable, who maybe has some life experience." So we prayed some of you in, but on the financial end of things here, we were always a church that was monumentally larger than our budget because of our age. We were counting the tithes with change machines. At 3,000 weekly attendees, we had an operating budget of a church of 800-1000. Our executive pastor was making \$16,000 a year. We were just always that kind of place that was always strapped.

Now it's funny for me to think about those days, because on November 14<sup>th</sup> we're going to vote on next years budget which is \$11 million. We continue to operate at a surplus despite the fact that the economy is down. We have not had to cut programming, even though we don't do a lot of programs. God has just richly blessed this place over the last eight years and continues to do so. We've had close to \$11 million of facilities just given to us, deeded over to us. People always ask, "What is your multi-site strategy?" I'm like, "People give us buildings?" That's our strategy. But with an \$11 million budget looming and that vote coming in November and so many of you being new to the Village, I thought it would be a great just to stop and take a break from the Authority series and talk about what we're doing here. What are we actually doing here? What are we about? Where does our money go? At the end of the day, what's the goal? What are we after?

I'll just show you our mission statement. We pulled every part of it from the Scriptures. This is our mission statement. When all is said and done, this is what we're doing. "The Village Church exists to bring glory to God through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ." That's what we're doing. So let's just break it down. We'll be in Acts 2. "The Village Church exists. . ." So let's read what a church does. Starting in verse 42, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." So as simply as I can explain the Village Church, we exist, we are 501c3, non-profit institution. And this is what we do. We are incarnational in our practice. We're not attractional in our methodology. So you don't pick up your kids with a retina scan that shoots him down a slide. If you're drinking coffee right now, you're drinking it because you bought it and brought it here. There is no coffee shop in the lobby, we don't have a basketball court, there isn't a rock climbing wall and there is no paintball course. None of that exists. Now I'm not saying having any of that with the hope to reach people with Jesus Christ is wrong or bad; I'm saying that's not what we do here. We meet in homes, we invite people into our homes, we befriend our barista, we play in the basketball league at our local gym and we want to be in the world and not be of the world. We don't feel like we need to spend millions and millions of dollars on facilities to have them come to us. Why? Because you live with them, you work with them and you're neighbors of theirs. In the end, we're not trying to save people to church. That's not the goal. In fact, there are a whole bunch of

people in church that aren't saved. The Scriptures talk about that all the time. Preachers don't, but the Scriptures talk about it all the time. And so we're incarnational in our methodology, which means we want to be in the world but not of the world. We want to model what we're seeing here. We want to love one another so deeply that the world watches how we love one another and is intrigued by it. We want to handle our money, our homes, our jobs, our commitment to one another in such a fashion that we begin to be a counterculture, not a rip-off culture. Do you know what I mean by rip-off culture? Abreadcrumb & Fish instead of Abercrombie & Fitch. We don't want to be a rip-off culture; we want to be a counterculture that offers something different than what the world offers. And this is our hope. Are we perfect at it? Not at all. Are there some areas of it that we are horrible at? Absolutely. Will we ever be perfect at it? No. Sanctification is a dirt path that lasts until God kills you. You're on it, I'm on it, and we're walking uphill on the dirt path. Ten years from now, we'll look back to now and go, "I've grown!" Most of us feel like, "I've got a long way to go." Because you do. Unless God kills you this afternoon, and then you've made it.

So "The Village Church exists. . ." What do we exist for? This is going to be huge, and I think it sets us apart from a lot of Evangelicalism. I'm not trying to judge harshly. I'll often comment today about things I think there are nothing wrong, but just that we do differently. We exist to bring glory to God. We don't exist for us. That's not what we're about. I am not about the Village Church. I'm going to die. You're going to die. There is coming a day where the Village Church no longer exists. But do you know what does? The church of Jesus Christ. There will be new names, new pastors and new movements. Eight years ago, we were nowhere on this radar. We were 168 people trying to get out of \$40,000 in debt with a budget of about \$300,000, just trying to survive a lot of bad things that occurred. And no one in this area was going, "Oh there are a lot of good things are happening at the Village Church. . .You can't get in if you don't get there early. . .The Village Church has those cool shuttle buses." No one was saying that. And then in eight years, God has flexed His muscles. For us? No. He did it for Himself. And it is our understanding of that that has us planting churches all over the US, some in this very town, some right next to places where we have campuses or we have our own building in place. Why? Because the hope of the world is not the Village Church; the hope of the world is Jesus Christ crucified. So every time you give money to the Village, a portion of it is leaving the Village to support other churches, some even in this area. There are some as far away as southern Sudan. There are some as far away as Guatemala. There are dozens of churches across the world that you guys are touching and empowering.

And really we've had a shift of organization over the last couple of months because all of this has been going on without you knowing it. And in the end, that's not a good thing. It's not biblical and not gospel-driven for you to be able to write a check and say, "I've done my part." So what we're going to do with all of this, both on the international and local levels, is slow down the number and get them in front of you so you will know. So we're going to plant a couple of churches in the metroplex this year and we're going to let you know and ask you to go there if it's closer to your house. You can do ministry better there than driving however far you are driving to get here. Just to let you know, Afshin Ziafat has just taken the pastor job at Providence, which was our first church plant. So if you live out in the Little Elm/Frisco area, he is now pastoring Providence church. And I can't encourage enough to stop coming here and start going there. It's closer to your house and he is a ferocious preacher of the things of God. It's smaller and you'll be able to find community easier. It's a great idea to consider it. We'll be fine. We'll mourn your loss, but we'll be fine. You'll hear about more places that are already in the works, but I've been told not yet.

Now, when talking with all the pastors at these church plants, one recurring theme is this idea of the glory of God. "For the glory of God in Ft. Worth. . .for the glory of God in Philadelphia. . .for the glory of God. . ." This is this refrain that you would find in the Scriptures constantly. In fact Isaiah is not going to give you anything that wasn't for the glory of God. "You moved from this city to this city to this city to this city for the glory of God. . .God keeps you alive for His own glory. . .God forgives you for the sake of His name. . .for the glory of God. . ." Just read the book of Isaiah and you'll find this constant refrain of everything being about the glory of God. Now the problem with that is we love that but few of us have

any understanding of what it means. "Yeah, give God glory. . .glory to God. . ." This is church life – big words that we can't define. "Oh you know what it is. It's glory, like the stars." So I want to try to define it. I got a lot of this from Tim Keller up in Manhattan. The definition of "glory" is simply this: weight. Glory means weight. There is a robustness to, there is a thickness to, there is a weight concerning glory. So when it says that all glory is God's, the Scriptures are teaching that He is weightier than everything. He is ultimate reality. He is more important and more powerful than anything else that is, regardless of what that thing is. So here is an illustration that might help. If you took a large boulder and rolled it off a cliff into a pond of water, when that boulder hits the pond the water moves and maybe even floods out of the pond. Why? Because the rock has more glory than the water. Glory is weight, thickness and girth. The glory of God.

Now here's why I always want to try to help you doubt your salvation and I want to come back around and strengthen it where it needs to be strengthened. But here's reality, guys. Most of you know God as a concept. And when you know God as a concept, you are heavier than Him and He is lighter than you. So since you don't understand His weight, you can twist Him and contort Him to be whatever you want Him to be. Just listen to people talk about God and you'll find that God is not as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. In fact, people distance themselves very quickly from the God of the Scriptures. They'll put all these caveats on it of, "Well, I don't believe God would do that." "Well, what do you base that on?" "Well, I don't think. . ." Do you know what you've just said? "I'm heavier than God. I have more glory than God. I'm smarter than God as He's revealed Himself to be for over four thousand years." We become those kinds of people who go, "I am heavier, I am due more glory." Glory is just weight. And ever time the glory of God falls in the Bible, the earth and whatever it falls around quakes. Isaiah walks into the temple, the glory of God falls and the foundation and the pillars shake. Moses heads up on the mountain, the glory of God falls and the mountain quakes to the point where the Israelites wouldn't go up there. Moses is like, "Come on, guys. Let's go," And they're like, "Why don't you go for us?" Moses sees the glory of God after God goes, "You can't look directly in it. So get into the cleft of the rock and I'll let you see My robe." And upon him seeing the hem of His garment, Moses glowed so profusely that people made him put a veil on his face because it freaked them out. This is the glory of God, the weight of God, ultimate reality. Most of us know Him as a concept and not reality. Because when He becomes our reality, that changes everything. You see, when God is a concept and not reality, how you spend your money doesn't change. When He's a concept and not reality, how you live your life doesn't change. When He's a concept and not reality, how you treat your wife doesn't change. When He's a concept and not reality, how you teach your children doesn't change. How you handle your neighbors doesn't change, how you work doesn't change when He's a concept. And that's where a lot of us lie. He's simply this concept with no concrete reality. But when He's a reality, it changes everything. When He's a reality, you're undone. When He's a reality, things that don't make sense to anyone else start to make sense to you.

This past week, Lauren and I sat down with Meredith Land, who is this NBC reporter, and they were wanting to know about the church and about our little battle with cancer. So we were talking about that, and at the end, she doesn't think our story will relate because Lauren and I have just come to terms with the fact that I'm mortal. So I guess the rest of the world doesn't relate to the fact that we will some day die. Yeah, I'm going to die. I was always going to die. Last Thanksgiving didn't put that on the radar. That was always going to happen. Now how do you walk through that and be shaken to the point of not being able to move? One day, the fact that I can preach won't mean anything because we won't need to preach anymore. One day, Lauren won't need a husband anymore because she'll be dead too. One day, I won't be Audrey's, Reid's or Norah's daddy. One day, everything in my bank account will be somebody else's. One day, the cars that we own will be crushed into little cubes, melted down and made into whatever is next. Here's what's not changing. God has extended His mercy and grace to me in Jesus Christ. I am an adopted son. He took every shortcoming, every failure, every screw-up, past, present and future, and for no other reason except that He is merciful, He took all of it and put it on Jesus Christ and took Jesus Christ's righteousness and gave it to me, so when He sees me at my worst to this day, He sees me as lovely as an adopted son and He rejoices over me. So if I die young (which I don't want to), then I just get that much more of God forever. You see, my identity is that I'm a child of God. It's not being your

pastor. My identity isn't being the pastor of the Village Church. One day I won't be that anymore. My identity isn't being able to preach. For goodness sakes, I had surgery in November with the possibility of not being able to talk again. I'm not wrapped up in my ability to communicate with you. Do I love it? Yes. Does it define me? No. Because it's not eternal. It's temporary, as is everything else. And how does this happen? Weight falls on it, you get crushed and all of a sudden, "Yeah, I'm mortal and there's nothing I can do about it." I eat spinach, I stay away from sugar, I work out, I stretch out my hamstrings, I eat berries, I get enough sleep, I don't stress out very much, I like quiet, I like to laugh, I like those things and have built those things into my life but despite all of that we're in a broken and fallen world. It's the gravity of, the weight of the glory of God that says, "Even in this, God is good. Even in this, let Him be known. Even in this, I'll praise His goodness, might and mercy." And it's only the weight of God, the reality of God that sustains that, not the concept of God.

So anytime somebody bails on the faith and goes, "I don't believe that anymore," they actually never believed it. They believed a concept of it, but they didn't really understand the reality of it. Because once you understand the reality, you cannot walk away. It's impossible. Can you get frustrated? Yes. Can you grow weary? Yes. Can you have a lot of questions? Absolutely. Can you walk away forever? No. If you can, you understood conceptually, but you did not understand as a reality. The glory of God, the weight of God that makes Him a reality transforms how we live our lives. This is very simple. If you come to church on the weekends but nothing about your life is different, then you have a concept of God but He is not your reality. This is not complex stuff. Pay attention to how you live your life. This should affect how you engage your neighbors. We live in Dallas. There are no mountains and no oceans; all we have is us. We can't go hiking because it's 190°F outside. We can't gaze upon anything spectacular, so we gaze up on us. And this entire culture is about external beauty and showing what you have. It will eat you alive if you don't know this. If you don't know the weight of His glory, this will own you in this city. It's why the glory of God has to be the central component of what is taught, what is exalted and what is made known among the people.

It's why you also don't do a lot of self-help sermons. Here's how to be a better man you understand the glory of God. You understand that you're small, incapable and need His mercy and help. Do you know how you love your wife better? You understand the weight of God, who is going to hold you accountable for loving her like Christ loved the church in that He died for her. Do you know how to be a better father? You understand the glory of God and see how He fathers you. On and on I could go.

So the Village Church exists to bring glory to God through lives changed. Sin wrecks everything. It destroys everything. Everything that is was designed by God perfectly in its mechanics. Here's the one I always use because our culture is obsessed with it. God designed sex. It was God's idea. So God created certain cells to secrete chemical to swell certain cells. That's God's idea. The mechanics of sex were created by God for the glory of God. Now sin takes what is right in its mechanics and it perverts it and twists it so it causes destruction. And so what was given as beautiful and right and to lead to worship is taken and abused and destroys the souls of men and women. Sin ruins everything. It has us putting our identity in something other than our Creator God. And when that happens, it's only a matter of time before it breaks down. So maybe it's your physical body that is your identity and people look at you and think you're pretty, you spend a lot more time in the gym than you should and your entire identity is wrapped around your physical beauty. Beauty fades. That's what Proverbs 31 tells women. Don't bank on that. It fades. Do you know that your nose and your ears never stop growing? If you live long enough, you are a carnival freak. Basically the Scriptures would say that if you put your identity in external beauty, in your job, in the money you have, the car you drive, the house you have, your wife or your husband, in your kids, then all of that will betray you because it doesn't have the weight to sustain you. Because your kids are going to leave your home. Unless you're like, "I just wish they would stay forever." In which case, I feel sorry for your kid. Your job is to train them not to need you, it's not to be codependent and get your worth from them. So in the end, train them to leave your house. Extended adolescence flies in the face of what the Scriptures command you to do as parents.

If your son is 23 and has mastered nothing but the X-Box, you kick his tail out of your house. Now if there are extenuating circumstances, then you seek wisdom. But he needs to get a job and find a wife, because that's what the Bible says a man is. Anything else is just a boy who looks like a man. And I'm well aware that extenuating circumstances can cause issues and problems with guys living at home a little bit longer, but as a rule, grow up, man. The world is just filled with little boys in men's bodies. It's killing us and killing our girls.

So we're all banged up. It's true about everybody. So what we want to do is see those lives that are banged up by sin changed. So here's what you have to do. You have to acknowledge the fact that this is true, that you and I and everyone in here is still a bit raw. We're not there yet. Did anybody sin this week? Keep in mind this is the first day of the week. Has anybody sinned this week? Yeah. That's universal. If you don't have your hand up, you're a liar and that was your one. Everyone in here has sinned. We all have fallen short, we are all imperfect and we're all in need of redemption. So the most horrific, grotesque thing that can happen to a church is for everyone to get pretty and pretend they're not broken. There is a swagger that starts taking place when that happens that is just unacceptable before the eyes of a holy God. So we have to be a place where it's okay to not be okay. We have to be that place because it's true. But if you don't believe me, let's look at 1 Corinthians 6. We'll pick it up in verse 9. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Now that is a devastating verse. Because I've reviled. I don't know what that means, but I'm sure I'm guilty of it. I've been an idolater. I have loved things more than I have loved God. We could go through this list and most of us are guilty of almost everything on this list. This is very bad news if people like us aren't going to inherit the kingdom. But look at what the next line says. "And such were some of you." That's such a great line. So he's saying, "Some of you were, but you no longer are."

Now this is where it gets really, really weighty and big and you've got to understand where we're going next. So we exist to see the weight and glory of God established through the changing of lives. We show testimony videos here all the time. They are everything from as serious as, "I was sexually abused as a kid and have had a rough relationship and my first marriage was miserable because of it, but God has saved me and redeemed me and healed those places so that I'm walking in genuine, rich, real relationships now" to "I grew up in church, was baptized sixteen times and finally the gospel has become real to me." So we'll show the full range of testimonies. We exist to bring glory to God through lives changed. Now here's where everything hinges. What are their lives changed by? If you miss this, we're done. Everything I've said up to this point doesn't matter if you miss this. So let's keep reading this verse. So all these people who were revilers, thieves, homosexuals, idolater and adulterers, all these people that are doing this, what happened to them that they've moved from being outside the kingdom to being inside the kingdom? Verse 11, "And such were some of you. But you were washed. . ." Are you the passive agent in that sentence or the active agent? You are the passive agent. It did not say that you pulled yourself up by your bootstraps. It did say that you washed yourself. You did not wash yourself. That's not how this works. To think otherwise is to pervert the very message of Christianity. "But you were washed, you were sanctified, . ." Once again, you are the passive agent. You did not sanctify yourself. You didn't. You are not the answer to the problem of adultery, idolatry, homosexuality and reviling. You are not the answer. You were washed, you were sanctified and "you were justified. . ." This goes back to what I was talking about on the weight and glory of God. I get to stand before God as holy, blameless and spotless in His sight, and I did not clean myself and I did not sanctify myself. I did nothing to get that. Let's look at how it happened. ". . . you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." So here's what happened. The Holy Spirit opened up my heart, opened up my mind, opened up your heart and mind to the weight of the glory of God as seen in Christ, that He knew all of your shortcomings and still went to the cross so you would be unable to walk in pity for yourself. So in that moment when I've failed again and I just feel like shutting it down, I remember, "No, I'm justified. I'm His. He's not less pleased with me today than He was yesterday when I had my quiet time and didn't do this." That's not how this works. I have been washed, I have been

sanctified and I have been justified by God who adopted me as His Son through the act of Jesus on the cross who took all of my sins on Himself and bore them. Remember Isaiah where He bore our grief and was stricken with our sorrows.

And then Hebrews 4 takes it to this whole other level where it says that we have a sympathetic high priest, which means when I stumble and fall, Christ isn't going, "I can't believe this kid. Can We kill him? No? How about next year?" That's not what happens. It says that He is sympathetic and that He knows what it's like to live in a fallen world. He knows what it's like to be confused by things. Have you ever followed the life of Jesus Christ? He is betrayed by someone close to Him. Has that happened to anyone else? Friends of His die. Has that happened to anyone else? His family thinks He's crazy (until He resurrects from the dead and they all become believers, one to the point of being martyred). Does anyone in here have a crazy family? Have you ever been persecuted unjustly? Have you ever been lied about behind your back? On and on I could go. And Hebrews 4 says Jesus knows, and when He sees us living through this battered and banged up world, He's sympathetic and He's sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for you. How unbelievable is that, that right now Christ Himself, at the right hand of God is going, "We need to strengthen Matt. You know what's coming in his future. We need to strengthen him. We need to encourage him. Why don't We press on the heart of this saint to just write an encouraging note? Why don't We give this guy a dream where he can contact Matt and encourage him?" You've got Jesus at the right hand of the Father interceding for you. It's you He is interceding for. Not Moses, you! Not Isaiah, you! "Matt, you don't know my life." Well I don't have to know your life. I know everybody's life in the Bible and they were a bigger mess than anyone else in here. "Well, I don't know about that." Abraham lied and said that his wife was his sister and basically pawned her off on Abimelech to save his life. So unless you've given your wife away to someone else, unless you've committed murder and adultery like king David, unless Jesus has called you the devil like He did Peter. Very few people in the Bible get out clean. In fact, it seems like God likes to show His weight by saving the unsavable, by using those He probably shouldn't use.

But this goes back to the whole point of the Bible. Everything is about God, not you or me. It's about Him. That's that switch that everybody has such a hard time with. God is about God. God is for God. Everything God does is for, about and in the will of, for the glory of God. When you don't understand that, you're going to grow very disenfranchised with a god who you have been lead to believe is all about you. Now does He love you? Yes. That's the weight of His glory, that He loves you, that He loves me, that He loves us. To the point that He sees all that we are in all of our shortcomings, He gladly bruises His own Son. Isaiah prophesied that it pleases the Father to bruise the Son. That's an unreal love.

So we are going to preach and proclaim the gospel week in and week out. You will never come into this building where we don't address this fundamental message, that we have rebelled against the Creator God, that He is good, just, holy and right and that, in His love for us, He has made a way for reconciliation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross. And teaching anything else is folly, because it doesn't matter. It's like mowing the weeds in the Spring. They just shoot right back up, don't they? I mean you mow your lawn and it looks great for an hour and a half before those things just pop right back up. No, He removes them altogether. So this is what you're going to get, the gospel over and over again. Because it's all we've got. It's why Paul constantly preaches the gospel to people who already knew it. Go read through Pauline literature. In Romans 1, he immediately tells them, "I wish to come and preach the gospel to you, brothers." He's preaching the gospel to Christians. So apparently, the gospel is not just for unbelievers to get them in, but it's to sustain those of us who are already here.

And that brings us to 1 Corinthians 15 that says, "By which you were saved," which is past tense, "in which you now stand," that's present tense, "and by which you will be saved if you hold fast," which is future tense. So the gospel of Jesus Christ, this message of the death, burial resurrection of Jesus Christ taking the weight of our sins upon Himself and giving us His righteousness is what constantly sustains us in our walk with Jesus Christ. It's not, "Get the gospel down

and move to what's next." It's, "Everything is about the gospel." So we stay in there and we keep turning the diamond and looking at other sides of the jewel. That's what we do.

So we exist to see lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and bring glory to God. Everything we do goes through that filter. How we spend our money, how we hire staff, what we allow to happen in our buildings, that is the filter by which we engage the world around us. So maybe you go here but you don't belong anywhere. Here's my encouragement. Find a place that is gospel-centered and Bible-preaching and plug in and belong. If you're older and mature, you do that in order to pour into the generation behind you. Older men and women are not to be pastured until they die. They are to be in the fight until God calls them home. If you're younger, that means you identify older men and women who are more mature than you, and you get underneath them and let them teach you and lead you and guide you. But you belong to a community of faith; you don't just go to church. That is a modern version of church that is borderline if not outright sinful. So you plug in and you belong. Is that going to be uncomfortable? Yes, if it's done correctly. Is that going to be easy? No, not if it's done correctly. Are you always going to enjoy that? Not at all. Is your personal preference going to have to go by the wayside sometimes? Constantly. Are there heavier, weightier and more beautiful things that occur if you do? Absolutely there are.

Let's pray. "Jesus, I thank You for Your grace and mercy shown to us. I thank You for Your weight. I thank You for that weight that transcends any circumstance or any situation. I thank You for how lovely You are, how mighty You are and how beautiful You are. My hope is that You would just fall on this place in such a way that we would be aware, that we would realize and that we would be moved. Help us. We need You. We love You. Hear our hearts and our praises. Some of us can't find You and we can't feel You, so help us. Some our hearts know You are good and You do good, but some of our hearts say we feel betrayed by You and we need You to clarify why we're in the mess that we're in. And some of us want to believe and we just haven't got there yet. So help us believe. Give us the gift of belief. We need You, Jesus. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."