

Two weeks ago, I launched us back into what we call here at the Village the Nine Pastoral Prayers. When we dream about, think about and long for the community of faith here at the Village Church, these are the things that we're asking God to do. These are the truths we want drilled deep down into the core of our beings. And so we consistently pray for these things. I framed that up two weeks ago like this. When I dream about and think about my kids, I have these things in my heart and these things that I pray that God would do in them, develop in them and move in them as to shape them to a certain point. And as true as that is for the way my wife and I feel about our kids, it is true for the elders and pastors of this church concerning you and the direction of the church. So we started two weeks ago with the Nine Pastoral Prayers and I covered the first four. So I'm going to recap those four, and then I'm going to finish out with the remaining five. Now I don't think all nine will resonate with you. I think a couple of them will. So if you're a covenant member of the Village, if you're in, then I'd like you to listen, and the ones that stir up your heart, the ones to which you go, "Yes, let that happen," just join us in praying for that here. And then if you're not and you're kind of a spectator, there's nothing wrong with being a spectator for a season, but you eventually have to play. I don't care if it's here or not, but you need to plug in and belong somewhere, because that's what the Bible means when it talks about church. So maybe these nine prayers will clarify that this isn't the joint for you, and then you can go find a great place where you can belong. Or maybe you'll go, "Yeah, I'd like to be a part of that. Yeah, I'd like to see those things too," and then come join us. But let me go over the first four we covered two weeks ago, and then I'll get into the remaining five.

Prayer number one is that we would see that the greatest problem in the universe is not mere moral failure – but a failure to honor God. Now let me tell you why that's so important for you to get. Let me tell you the problem with identifying morality as the issue that needs to be solved. It's simple. The most moral, upright people that ever lived viewed Jesus Christ as a threat and delivered Him over to be crucified. When it comes to external goodness, the Pharisees would roll you up and smoke you. You are nowhere near as externally clean as they were. Has anyone memorized the Torah in here? Does anybody have Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy memorized? You just got smoked. They washed ceremonially before dinner and said extended prayers before dinner. It wasn't just, "God, thank You for our food." But it was this kind of extensive deal before dinner to make sure all attention went to the Lord? Anyone? No? Once again, you got smoked. When it comes to external righteousness, nobody did it better than the Pharisees, and they saw Christ as a threat to that and had Him killed. So the greatest problem in the universe is not a moral issue. It's that in your heart you love things more than you love God, and that then leads to moral issues. So if you're fixing the moral issue but don't address the heart issue, then you'll never be free. So you can't see the problem in the universe as just cussing too much, not being a good enough husband or not being a good enough parent. Can I tell you the most freeing news in the world. You're not. That's right. You do stink. In fact, any acknowledgment you have of your guilt is shallow and incomplete. You are far more guilty and far more of a failure than you think you are. Welcome to The Village.

Now the reason that's such good news is that, in Christ, He has made provision for your shortcomings. So when you understand it's not a moral issue but a heart issue, you'll understand and long for a Savior rather than trying to be your own savior. Let me be straight with you. You stink as a savior. You have not been able to do it for as hard as you have tried. The law was given to show you that you can't. That's what Paul tells us about the law. "I know I'm a sinner because of the law. I know I fall short because of the law. If it wasn't for the law, I wouldn't even know I was a sinner. But the law was given to you to show you you can't." And that can't-ness should sent you into Jesus. It should not paralyze you. "Oh, I

screw up so much. There's no way He'll love me." No, you screw up so much, so He made a way to love you. Now that's freeing. So we want you to get that. We want you to understand that. It's why we're going to constantly point you towards the cross here. Because the cross will release you from being paralyzed at your shortcomings. So that's the first pastoral prayer, that you would see, understand and get that the biggest problem in the universe is not a moral one – but rather a failure to bring glory to God, a failure to love, pursue and know Him like we should.

Pastoral prayer number two is that you and I would deeply understand that discipline will never bring about love – but love always brings about discipline. To make this simple in everyday terms, there are a lot of reasons for me to not cheat on my wife. The first one is I'm not going to do that well again. Let me be straight with you. It's just not going to happen again. The fact that it happened the first time is kind of mind-numbing. So I'm not doing that well again. Second, I have a Bachelor of Arts in Theology. That means I'm doing this or I'm biggie sizing stuff. There are not a lot of other options for me out there with my educational background. Number three, there would be a lot of people who would use that as an excuse not to love and follow Jesus Christ. They would use that as an excuse to discredit the name and fame of Jesus Christ. But let me be straight with you. None of those are the reasons I don't cheat on my wife. I don't go, "Oh, look at that woman. She's beautiful. You know what? I'd have to find another job, and I don't have any skills." That's not how it works. Do you know why I don't? Because I love my wife. So I can go, "That's a beautiful woman, but Lauren is my beautiful woman." So discipline is created out of love. Love is not created out of discipline.

Let me tell you why this matters. Because I absolutely know that some of you are trying to discipline yourself into love of God. It doesn't work. So let me clarify so I don't confuse you. I do think we can position ourselves under the waterfall of God's grace. We can get around things that stir our affections for the Lord. Lauren and I go out on dates. We talk to each other. How crazy is that? We drink our coffee in the morning after we do our little Bible reading, we talk about the text, we talk about where we are, we talk about the kids, we talk about what's going on in my heart and talk about what's going on in hers. Sometimes I've got to be the man and go, "I have no idea what's going on. You're going to have to ask other questions. I don't know. It's Spring, it's nice out and it's cool. I feel great. So if you want more than that, you're going to have to ask pointed questions." But we dialogue, we talk and we pray. Now what does that do? That fuels that love I have for Lauren. Lauren is not a stranger in my house. I could tell you right now where she is, where she is with the Lord, where she is in our marriage and where she is with our kids, because we talk, we date and I love her. And that love has created discipline. In the same way, you gather around yourself kindling and pray that the Holy Spirit would ignite that. When he ignites that, then love breeds more discipline, and not begrudging discipline. You want to be obedient. I want to go out with Lauren. I want to get away from the kids. I want it to be just her and me. I want to sit over a meal and talk about life, talk about her heart and talk about what she wants to see accomplished. She wants the same. Now just to be fair, I'm not saying there aren't times in our house that are tense or there aren't times that we are in strong disagreement with one another. She is wrong often. And the Bible says I've got to be the guy who points out her erroneous ways. So I've got to go, "Boo, I love you, but no. You're wrong." I'm honestly terrified of her. When all is said and done, this is how it works. Some of you are exhausted because you want to love God, and you're doing all these things so that you might love Him, and you haven't come to understand yet that you're in desperate need of the Holy Spirit to ignite that spark. So you plead with Him and pester Him until He does. Think about that. God has asked us to do that. God is the antithesis of us as parents. Because I don't ever encourage my kids, "Just bother me until I say yes. Just pester me until I give in." We're the opposite. "Ask me again. I dare you. Ask me again, and I'll take it into the back yard and catch it on fire. Are we done here? I think we're done here." That's us. But God goes, "Pester Me. Bother Me. Keep asking Me. I want you to ask Me. It's good for you to ask, and I'll be gracious and give. Pester Me. Bother Me, and I'll hear you. I'll answer you." You've got permission to go, "Help me. Speak to me. Stir up my affections for You. I want to love You so much that reading the Word is a joy to me, that telling of Your love is a joy for me. I don't want it to be begrudging submission." You've got to ask. You've got to plead. He'll hear and He'll answer.

The third pastoral prayer is that we would realize that children of God are not under wrath – but mercy. If you'll get that, then you'll be able to rejoice, regardless of circumstance. If you don't get that, you'll always view God as some sort of angry bearded man in the sky who is just waiting for you to screw up so He can light you up. But the Bible says, as children of God, we're not under wrath, but we're under mercy. So no matter what comes into my life, joy or sorrow, it's the mercy of God. God is doing something, accomplishing something in my life, in my heart, for my good and for His glory. So we want you to get that, we want you to understand that, we want you to grasp that so that you might rejoice in the day of trouble.

The last one we covered two weeks ago I that we would find that the fullness of all things – including life and joy – is in Christ and Christ alone. There is something in this area of the country where we are consumed with things that are going to be in a garage sale or in a dumpster twenty years from now. There is something spiritual, something intoxicating about new stuff, isn't there? New gadgets, new toys, new houses and new cars, there is something spiritual that happens and we just feel better about life because of the trinket. It's distracting, it's good and we like it. But Ecclesiastes says there's always going to be a ceiling on that stuff and it's not going to last. So you get caught in the trap of pursuing what you already possess in the hopes that it will satisfy you. It's never going to satisfy you. Only Christ is an inexhaustible well. Only Christ is a mountaintop that won't be reached here on earth. We want you to know that your deepest joy is found in Him and not in anything else, so you would put your energy in a pursuit of Him rather than in the pursuit of other things.

Now that brings us to the fifth pastoral prayer. Pastoral prayer number five is that you live in and walk with a holy discontentment in spiritual matters. Now I didn't say fleshly matters. I want you contented in fleshly matters. So when it comes to your house, when it comes to money, when it comes to stuff, we want you content with wherever you are and whatever you have. This is what the apostle Paul is talking about in the book of Philippians when he says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That has nothing to do with sports. The text right before it says, "I have been in plenty, and I have been in want. I know what it's like to be healthy, and I know what it's like to be sick. I know what it's like to have money and to be poor. I know what it's like to have a nice place, and I know what it's like to not. I can do it all through Christ who strengthens me." So we are to be content at the fleshly level but discontented at the spiritual level. Let me try to unpack that. I'm going to do that with Romans 8. Let's look in verse 18. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now." Now I just want to stop there, because this leads me to that first section of discontentment. You do not have to look far to understand this text. The apostle Paul is talking about sin entering into the universe and fracturing everything. The world you and I live in is not the world as God created it and longs for it to be, and He is one day going to redeem and make all things new. This text is saying that the world is broken. All you have to do is look around.

So yesterday morning I ran in my first 5K ever. I'm not a runner. I will turn and fight you before I'll run from you. I'll just take my beating if I can't beat you. I may like to sprint 100 yards. But trotting along for mile after mile is just a nightmare idea to me. A friend of mine from college signed me up and built a Team Matt Chandler for this Head for the Cure 5K in Frisco that raises money for brain cancer research. She knows I hate running, so she sent me a little e-mail going, "Ha ha ha! You're going to have to run now." So I went and ran this 5K. I set a personal best of 48 minutes. I don't know if that's good or not, but I crushed. So I'm running in this 5K with 25,000 other people. And then at the end of the race, after everything was done, they called ten of us up who are what the cancer community calls "survivors." Which just basically means we're alive for now. So we're in different stages of where we are. One lady had just had surgery five days earlier. One guy had a grapefruit sized tumor removed from his left temporal lobe and basically has half of his brain gone.

The doctors told him he'd never walk again. He got out of the wheelchair, moved on to a walker, moved on to a cane and is not basically telling the medical community that they're number one. I'm up there with those guys, and there were a couple of things that stood out. One of the ten was a four-year-old little girl with an inoperable glioma on her brain stem. And then the other was the faith award given to a man for his wife who died two weeks ago. He had his two small children by his side. Everyone up there is young. Nobody up there is even gray-haired. They're a bunch of 20 and 30-year-olds who are on the precipice of eternity. And here's what I'm thinking when I'm up there, "Here it is. The world being broken." Four-year-old kids should be running, playing and enjoying. They shouldn't be fighting for their lives. Eight-year-olds and five-year-olds should have the ability to hop on their mom's lap. But when you look at it, you can just feel that it's broken.

Now is there a great deal of encouragement in 25,000 people going, "Let's run and try to beat this thing"? Yes. Are we going to beat it? Probably not. And if we do, doesn't history tell us that something else shows up to kill us? Isn't it true that the death rate is 100%? We might beat this, but something else is coming, right? Do you know how they just kept churning out those Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> movies? There was always one guy that makes it through one movie, and then at the beginning of the next, he gets killed. It's like that. We're not going to beat it. It's coming. But the good news is summed up in Paul's celebration in 1 Corinthians 15. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" There is this thing that Christ is going to do upon His return where all suffering loses its weight and we're caught up in the shalom that is restored to our bodies and to our world and that peace that He created us to walk in, live in and experience is restored. So I want you to look and see that the world is broken, and I want you to want it not to be. I want you to be discontented with the amount of sorrow that's in the world. And don't isolate yourself from it, because that's what most of us do. "Let's isolate, let's pull away." And I don't want you to pull away. I want you to be in the thick of it. I want you to feel that the world is broken and long for the return of Christ, because we don't long for the return of Christ. Jesus even said, "My disciples will fast for My return when I'm gone," but I don't see a lot of that. In Revelation, John says, "Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus, come." But I don't hear a lot of "maranatha." I hear a lot of, "Maranatha after I get married. Maranatha after my kids grow up. Maranatha after I live my life. Maranatha after I get this stuff. Maranatha after I get this promotion." It's like, "Yeah come, but let me get some stuff done first." So I want you to feel the weight of the world so that you'd want all of this to be set right and made new.

But there's a second piece to this holy discontentment. Look back in Romans 8:23. "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." If there is not cap on intimacy in our relationship with God and joy found in relationship with Christ, if there's no ceiling on that, if that well can never run dry, if there's always more of Him to be had, why would any of us ever be satisfied with where we are? If it's true that Christ is inexhaustible and His joy is infinite, why would any of us ever be satisfied with where we are? Now can you celebrate where you are in Christ and where He has brought you from? Yes and amen, but not to the point where you think you've arrived. I'm friends with a lot of big-name evangelical guys who are in their 60's and 70's. If we all could hop on a plane and flew out to North Carolina where Billy Graham lives, if we sat down with Billy and asked him where he was with the Lord, do you know what he'd talk about? He'd talk about how far he has to go, how much more he has to learn, how much more he wants to know the Lord and how much more he wants to know and worship Him. Now think about how crazy that is. Didn't Tullian say the same thing last week with his weird friend who writes like an 18<sup>th</sup> century poet? He wrote, "The closer I get, the more I know and the more I grow, I simply feel far away." Can anybody relate to that? Yes, we can. So we want holy discontentment because there is more of Jesus to be had. We don't want you to develop some sort of moral checklist where you check everything off and go, "Okay, I'm done." No, you're not done. You'll never be done. The book of Ephesians says it will take the coming ages for you to understand and grasp the joy found in Jesus Christ. So we should always want more. We should always be longing, wanting and desiring.

And that leads us to the next pastoral prayer. The sixth pastoral prayer would be that we believe in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and desire them earnestly. Wait a minute. We're charismatics? No, we're biblical Christians, which means we believe in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. So we are not just mathematical and linear in our approach to life, but rather we walk in a matter of power. Now, it's important that you hear me say this. There is nothing more amazing than the saving work of Jesus Christ. There is no gift that trumps that. There is nothing more spectacular than a dead heart made alive. My concern always with the gifts is that people start to ogle over them instead of the saving work of Christ. As if people walking in the gifts are somehow varsity believers and the rest of us are junior varsity believers. "Oh, they have the gift of prophecy. They must be legit." No, God uses dummies in every gift category. God's glory is not in anything other than Him utilizing us to make much of Him. His glory is infinitely found in that place where He can say to the universe, "Did you see that? Did you see what I did with that?" Do you remember MacGyver? He would build an airplane out of a paperclip and a pencil, three friends would hop on and they would fly out just in time. That's like God. You're the paperclip, and He's taking the paperclip and building a skyscraper. The glory is not yours. You're a paperclip. What God does is spectacular, and we believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now don't get all geeked up on me and start pursuing this rather than pursuing the grace and mercy of Christ. Gifts come out in that pursuit. "Well I thought all the gifts ceased with the death of the last apostle." Okay, the problem with that is actually the Bible, because the Bible doesn't teach that. In fact, Paul addresses the church in Corinth, which is a train wreck, specifically around the gifts. Every abuse imaginable, when it comes to spiritual gifts, was occurring in Corinth. And listen to what he says to them in 1 Corinthians 14:39. "So my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues." So if it's all going to cease in ten years and Corinth is so jacked up, why didn't he just go, "Just stop it. Just read the two letters I've given you over and over again, maybe pick up Luke's Gospel and leave all this junk alone. It's going to die here in a decade anyway. So just leave it alone." That's not what he tells them to do. He says, "Pursue it earnestly and don't forbid speaking in tongues." "Well that stuff weirds me out." Hey, it weirds me out too. There are my cards. Do you know what else weirds me out? Sharing the gospel with people. Do you want to hear something crazy? It works. So let's not let our fear and our spotting of abuses take us away from what the Word of God commands. I have seen men take the Word of God and abuse a congregation with it, shackle them, chain them, beat them up and steal from them their joy from lifeless, gutless pulpits using the Bible. I have never heard anybody go, "See that? That's why we shouldn't use the Bible. Because guys take the Bible and they abuse people with it. So that's why we shouldn't do it." Nobody does that. So you shouldn't do that with the gifts either.

Pastoral prayer number seven is that we would develop a taste for truth, even difficult ones. There is nothing wrong with and there is everything right with a baby breast feeding. Now there are locations for that, but that's natural and it's the way God designed things to work and be. It's not natural for a teenager to be doing that. Aren't you calling the cops if you see that? Because it's not natural. Staying at a surface level spiritually, staying in trite saying that most of the time aren't even tied to the Bible but some 18th century American political figure is not okay. I've had multiple people quote Benjamin Franklin to me like it's the Bible. "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Nope. Cleanliness is good, but it's not next to godliness. So in this, we want to be meat eaters. Paul rebukes congregations for still being on milk when they should be eating meat. So we want to develop a taste for truths, especially difficult ones that most people want to simply avoid. Why? Because the difficult ones reveal the nature and character of God and your need for Him in far greater ways than just simple ones do. Let me give you two verses that I think start some of these difficult ideas that we have to dig into and figure out. I've been teaching Psalm 115:3 in ministry as far back as I can think. It's one of those psalms that I hit early on that just blew my mind. "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." Now, our culture doesn't like that. We like, "Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever we ask Him." That's what we like. But let me tell you why this is such a great verse. Because you would make a crummy god. "God is in the heavens; He does whatever I ask." If that were true, you would be miserable and there would probably be dead people around you. You would make a crummy god. The greatest news is that we're not god, but there is One and He is working for our good and His glory.

And I'll give you one more that I think should set you free, but this text I'm about to read has literally divided denominations. Romans 9:15-16 says, "For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." Now let me tell you why that should free you. Because some of you are exhausted trying to earn what you already have. Some of you are going, "Oh, I've got to earn the favor of God. Let me do this. Let me get this. Let me stop this. Let me start over here. Let me head to this. Let me head to that." And you're running around like a chicken with its head cut off, and God's going, "What are you doing? I've made you righteous. You don't make you righteous. I did that." Go back to what Tullian said last week. It's by Christ's merit, not ours. It's by Christ's doing, not ours. It's by Jesus' righteousness, not ours. That's where we rest. That's where we celebrate. It's not on our will or exertion. It's by the mercy of God. Am I loved by God? Yes. Does He delight in me? Yes. Do I still have issues? Yes. I display them for you with glee. Has He extended His mercy to me? Yes. How do I know it? The cross and resurrection. The fact that I love Him. The fact that I even care. Do you know how many people in the immediate vicinity of this building have not a care in the world when it comes to Jesus Christ and couldn't care less about who He is? Do you know why we do? Because He's done something in our hearts. So we pray that we would develop a taste for truths, even difficult ones.

Pastoral prayer number eight is that we would embrace biblical Christianity, not American evangelicalism. Let me clarify what I mean by that. Christian Smith, who is a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame, followed a group of pre-teens through their teen years and into their 20's. The research was around what they believed about spiritual matters. At the end of his research, Christian Smith rolls out this reality according to his research, that a bulk of that group, couldn't identify biblical Christianity if their life depended on it. Instead, biblical Christianity has been replaced by what he calls "Christian therapeutic moralistic deism." The idea of the grace and mercy of God extended to us in Jesus Christ justifying us before God by no act of our own was not understood among most evangelicals, but instead what they believed and understand is that the men and women in the Old Testament were given to us as models of how we should behave and as examples of how we should go about life. They see that they point towards Jesus and that they point towards our need and that. To them, they don't have anything to do with Jesus. They think "Hey, be like David. Be like Abraham." They don't understand the Bible. They believe they are Christians, they do good, they don't do bad and they understand morally how to behave. They do those things so they can feel good about themselves, and they believe there is a God who started the world and now He's just watching it work. That's Christian moralistic therapeutic deism. It is not biblical Christianity. It is the antithesis of it.

That last pastoral prayer puts the eight before it into this beautiful little box. We pray that we recognize that God has purposely placed us in this time, in this place for our good and for His glory. How many of you would rather be living somewhere else? How many of you know there are prettier, better places to live than this? Acts 17:26-27 says this, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. . ." You live where you live, play where you play, work where you work according to the predetermined plan of God. So you might have surprised mom and dad, but you did not surprise God. So God has never looked down and gone, "What's Chandler doing here? He wasn't due until '96. All right, scrap the plan. We've got to rework this, because somehow he snuck out of heaven and got down there early." That's not how it works. However old you are, that's however old you're supposed to be. Where you live, that's where you're supposed to live. Where you work, that's where you're supposed to work. Now, if you'll think through this, this has massive implications, especially with the second part of the verse. So let's look at this. ". . .that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us." So according to God, you live where you live, you play where you play, you work where you work so that you might grow in your faith and others might hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So this brings intentionality and purpose to every part of your day. "Well I hate my job." Well you probably misunderstand your job. "I just don't get a lot out of it." Okay, you get a

paycheck, which means you get to eat, and you get to be a part of the greatest epic story the universe will ever know. You just don't see it that way, and that's why you're bored.

Have you picked up on the fact that we're the most entertained generation that has ever walked the face of the earth, and we're bored out of our minds? My kids live in a world that is so different from the one I grew up in that you couldn't go back in time and explain it to me. If you go back in time to a seven-year-old Matt Chandler and try to explain to him the iPhone, I wouldn't be able to understand it. To my kids, it's just Tuesday. So our kids and we are bored out of our minds despite the fact that there is more to do than there has ever been to do. "I'm bored." "Well go swimming." "I don't want to swim." "Well swing on the swing while you play a video game into the pool inside the pool." "Oh, that's old." "Well let's go to this playground." "I don't like that playground." "Okay, let's go to this playground." "I don't like that one either." "Well let's go to this indoor playground with the loop-d-loop slide." "I don't like that one either." They are bored out of their minds, but if we're honest, so are you, so am I. Do you know why? Because we were created for greater things.

The unfortunate part of American evangelicalism is we've become people who love to study the book but we never want to play. So it's my understanding that I'm in the neighborhood I'm in according to the predetermined plan of God for me and for them, which means God has prepared me for them and them for me. So now going home and living in that neighborhood has a distinct purpose to it. I'll be straight. There have been seasons where we've seen a lot more fruit than other seasons. When we lived up in Corinth for the first couple of years we were here, that was a great neighborhood and we saw a lot of our neighbors come to the faith who are still active members here at the Village. The neighborhood we live in now has not been as easy to crack. They know I'm a pastor, so they're a little bit nervous. In fact, I continue to joke that the guy across the street won't make eye contact with me. He just doesn't want to talk to me. But I get that God has prepared them and God has prepared me. I don't know if you know this, but everybody at my work is actually a believer. So it's not like I can go, "Patterson, Bleecker, get in here. I've got to share this with you. The Bible says. . ." I don't get to do that, so I have to find other venues for that, like my son's t-ball game. Let me be straight with you, he's not a good athlete. We're not going anywhere with this. He likes to play and he has fun. So he plays t-ball. And I want to cheer him on and encourage him, but this puts me in the stands with a lot of parents. This puts me near to coaches. In June, when we baptize, we're going to baptize several young men and women who work at Lifetime Fitness. Because we're going up there on purpose. You can tell it's certainly not to get swole. So here's the way I understand the world according to this text. My neighborhood, my son's t-ball game, the gym I work out in, any hobby I have and the interaction I have with the people around me, that's all God wiring me, training me, placing me and setting me free to herald the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ in those arenas. But here's the great thing about this text. It also is stating that, not only has He prepared you for them, but them for you. So there's a reason you sit where you're sitting at work. There's a reason you're drawn towards the activities you're drawn towards. There is a reason that you go to the places you go and do the things you do, and it's that you might both be sanctified and simultaneously herald the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who God has prepared to hear. Now does that mean all of them are going to say yes and amen? You know that's not true. But some will. I have never felt the weight of trying to convert somebody. That's not my job. My job is to herald, and God converts. When you get that, that's so freeing. Now the reason some of you don't is because you're still a little bit captivated with high school coolness. Let that go. You do understand right now that there are a lot of people who are very wealthy who, in a few decades from now, standing in front of God are not going to be wealthy? You do understand that there are people who are very cool right now who, in just a few decades, are not going to be cool standing in front of God Almighty? You recognize that, right? So if we could get why we're here, what we're doing here, what God has asked of us, He's basically saying, "I'm going to save stuff. Do you want to play?" That's a great invitation. If we get that and buy into that, what might we see?

So these are our nine pastoral prayers. This is what we're praying for. This is what we're asking God to do. I don't think all nine will resonate with you, but I think some of them will. So for those of you who are in, those of you who belong,

you're members, you're in a home group, you're plugged in, which ones of these stir up your heart? Which ones of these make you go, "Yes, I want to see more of that. I want to experience more of that. I want to see more of that in my own life and in the life of the church"? Then join us in praying. This is the way your elders pray. This is the way your pastors pray. This is what your ministry leaders pray. Join us. For those of you who are just spectators right now, does this sound like something you want to be a part of? Then quit piddling and join the fight. But as we pursue the Lord as your leaders, as we chase after Him as those given charge of care to you, this is what we're asking for.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for the opportunity to talk about our hopes, to see You move our hopes, to watch You work our hopes to see what You would accomplish among us, in us, through us and with us. I pray that there would be an excitement in us about the possibilities of what You might do in us as individuals and as a corporate body and through us in the cities and neighborhoods I which we live. I pray You give us new eyes about our neighbors, our neighborhoods, our coworkers and friends. I pray even for the man or woman in our services who is not a believer who was invited by a friend. I pray that You would really lay on their hearts the reality that, in Your love for them, in Your pursuit of them, You put next to them someone who could herald to them Your righteousness and love made available to them in Christ. So thank You for grace, mercy and Your love for us that is not dependent upon us, but rather on You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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