

Well, good evening. It's kind of weird but also kind of cool to be here. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Matthew 16 is where we're going to camp out tonight. Any time I've been gone for an extended period of time, I kind of always just want to remind along the same lines... For the last four weeks, my family and I have been on vacation. The elders of the church very graciously gave us some time off.

It has been (probably since I got sick) the busiest season of ministry we've had. The Lord has given us some tremendous opportunities outside of The Village to really do some significant things. I'm involved with an organization called Acts 29. That's over 500 churches on six continents, with several hundred men in the pipeline even now to plant within the next few years, so I get to participate in that, and I get to kind of lead that organization, so that requires me, often, to kind of go and do things.

Sometimes it's during the week, and I'm not out from the pulpit at all, and sometimes that means I'm out on the weekends, but one of the things I just always want to lay before you and always want to say to you, because it continues to be true, is when all is said and done, my heart and the joy of my life is serving the Lord here at The Village Church. What I think about the most, what I dream about the most, and what get my primary affection and my primary attention are the people of The Village Church.

There's no place I'd rather be. Well, let me say it more honestly. There's not a group of people I would rather be with than the people of The Village Church, and I have actively asked the Lord... You've heard me say for years now the Lord might give me 40 years with you, just to pour my life into the kingdom of God alongside of you, so I find within me this kind of encouraging reassurance and love for you in that when I'm gone for too many weeks, I get a little heartsick, so vacation was almost too long!

I got to be antsy, and I've trimmed down my notes like 14 times because I know I'm going to be just so geeked up about being back I'm going to try to say everything I ever wanted to say to you in tonight's message, and since there's no clock, I might go for it. No, I won't. I've been good all week. I'm going to continue to try to be good this weekend. So just hear me say this: I love you, and I don't even know all of you.

I mean, I'm not trying to pretend like I know each one of you personally and the type of love for you is an individual-type love where I'm aware of all of the details of your life, but I can before God honestly say I

actively pray for you. I have yearnings in my heart for you. I feel the weight of what God has asked me to proclaim to you for you. My hopes for you run parallel to my hopes from my own heart, my own life, and even my own family, so when I stand here and say I'm in this with you, I love you, and I plan on doing this until God takes me home, I really mean it, so just hear me say I love you and I'm glad to be here.

Now if you have your Bibles, we're going to be in Matthew 16, a phenomenal passage of Scripture. I know I'm bound as a pastor to say all passages are phenomenal, but for our purposes tonight, this text in particular is amazing. I'm going to say something you can't argue with, and in fact, if you try to argue with it, you will simply prove my point, all right?

*You are constantly talking to you. No one talks to you more than you talk to you.* In fact, every moment of the day, whether you're aware of it or not, you're talking to you. See what I did there? Right now, if you're like, "Uh-uh, I don't always talk to me," *bam!* You're just talking to you! All right? So you are constantly whispering things to yourself, speaking to yourself, and driving yourself in certain directions by what you say to yourself.

On top of that voice that's constantly going in you... And I can tell you when you hear it the most: It's talking to you when other people are talking to you. It's talking to you when you're listening to music. It's talking to you when you're watching movies. Probably when you're most dialed into it is when you finally put your head on the pillow at night. That's when you probably most clearly dial into that voice inside of you.

So when you finally shut your laptop or turn off your TV or whatever, get in bed, catch up on Vine, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, realize it's 1:00 ("Holy crap! I have to get up!"), and set that device on your table stand, at that moment then, now all of a sudden we're able to hear us. That voice inside of us, paired with what I'll just call our *gut*, the way we *feel*, combines to form what's called *intuition*, all right?

Intuition is the loose thoughts of our minds and the feelings in our guts by which we make most of our decisions. Now intuition can be a really good thing if you're intuitive, but even if you're intuitive, intuition should have a warning label on it, so let me explain it like this. I'll be 39 this summer. That's hard for me to even get my mind around, knowing some of you are like, "No way! You look so young!" I know, right?

When I was a young man, my dad smoked like a chimney. He would smoke and take a drink of a drink without taking the cigarette out of his mouth. He'd just work it over to the corner, drink, and then inhale and exhale. I mean, he just was like a chimney, constantly going, but back then there was no warning label on the cigarette pack. I mean, they hadn't come out yet and said, "This could be dangerous," so that's why if you watch *Mad Men*... Any *Mad Men* watchers?

It's okay. I'm not about to go, "Shame on you!" I'm just asking a question, all right? If you watch *Mad Men*, the reason they're just constantly smoking everywhere...at meetings, work... I mean, can you smoke at work right now? You're just in the board meeting, inhaling and going, "Tell me about that again, Charles. Cue up that PowerPoint." You can't anymore. Why? Because scientists figured out this could end badly.

Do you know there used to be a smoking section on airplanes? Think about that. It's an enclosed aluminum tube that recycles air, and yet we're letting certain people smoke on the plane, but we're separating others who don't want to be close to it, right? There used to be smoking sections and non-smoking sections in restaurants, and that's almost gone now. In fact, the state of Texas even passed a law that you can't even smoke in a bar anymore. I mean, what's the world coming to, right?

So now you have this. On the side of cigarettes, cigars, or whatever, you're going to find a warning label now from the surgeon general of the United States of America, who, based upon scientific data, is saying, "This isn't healthy!" All right? "If you do this too much, if you partake in this, particularly if you're a pregnant woman, bad things could happen." Now when it comes to our intuition, when it comes to that voice that's talking to us and the feeling in our guts that drives the direction of so many of our lives, there should be a warning label, and that warning label is found in Proverbs, chapter 14.

Proverbs is a spectacular book of the Bible. It's written from a father to his son. Repeatedly in the book of Proverbs, you'll hear, "My son, my son, my son..." and ladies, I know you're like, "What about Proverbs 31? It's about the '31 Woman.'" You're absolutely right. It is, and he's writing to his boy, "This is what you want, dummy, all right? Not the harlot I've been writing about through this whole book. You're to avoid her."

If you will read Proverbs, it's "Avoid her, avoid her, avoid her..." Yes! That's Proverbs! So now in the book of Proverbs, the warning label for our intuition is found in Proverbs 14:12, and here's what it says: **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."** Now the writer of Proverbs so believes this is true that he repeatedly says that nearly identical sentence throughout the book of Proverbs. You can look for it yourself. I'm not going there. In fact, if you flip over to chapter 16, just two chapters later, he says the same thing again.

If you flip over and go a couple more chapters again, he says it again, so he's putting the warning label on his son's life. "There's a way that's going to seem right to you, there's going to be something in your gut and a voice in your head that says, 'This is the way we should go,' and I want you to be careful in listening to that. It's not always going to be wrong, but I want you to be careful in listening to it, because there's a way that's going to seem right to you, and it's going to be the way of death. Be careful."

Now I would argue (and there have been plenty of philosophers and theologians, whether secular or Christian, who would argue the same) that we are all, by nature of being human beings, hedonists at our core. So if you grew up in the 60s, and you're like, "I'm no pervert!" that's not what I'm talking about, all right?

*Hedonism*, just by definition, means to pursue your own pleasure, so really, by your default and my default, the action of our lives, that thing in our guts, and the thoughts of our minds are leading us toward and driving us to what we believe is going to most satisfy us, give us the most pleasure, and give us the most life. Every decision you make is leading you to that end. There is *no* decision you have made that is contrary to that.

In fact, I have rarely (if ever) met a brother who is like, "You know what I'm really pursuing? I'm pursuing my own misery here. I'm trying to do what my gut is leading me to, just sorrow and depression. That's where I'm trying to get. In fact, in all the decisions I'm making, I'm trying to get to despair." No. We don't do that. We are driven toward fullness of life, toward happiness, and toward pleasure, and toward all of those things in ever-increasing amounts.

Look at me. That's what drives your gut. That's what that voice is telling you, even when you lie in bed at night and your head starts going, "You know what you should have said to her when she rolled her eyes? You should have said, 'I'll snatch that eye out...'" That's you thinking that would make you happier, and that would have brought you more joy than just not doing anything, so that's your gut. Your intuition is saying, "This is how to be glad. This is how to be happy."

In fact, Blaise Pascal, who was a French mathematician, philosopher, and theologian (doesn't that sound like a guy you'd want to party with?) says it this way: "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

So Pascal here is making a *very* bold statement. It says even the man who would take his life is taking his life because he believes in taking his life he'll finally be happy, that every action we do... Now follow me. That means the thoughts of your mind and the feelings of your gut are leading you toward what you perceive and believe to be the route, the path, the roadway toward fullness of life, joy, happiness, and contentment. That's what's driving your gut.

Now here's my point for tonight. In fact, I'll just take all the drama out of it. I'm directionally challenged. My wife is not. I mean, she's Davy Crockett, all right? She can just *feel* directions. If you can put her in a room and spin her around, she'll just go, "This way is north." I mean, she can just feel it. I'm not that way, so I'm a slave to the map app on my iPhone. Does anybody ever notice that sometimes will dump you into places that are incorrect? Has that happened to anybody else? Okay.

So I have to rely on that, and just a few months ago, I was headed to this meeting down in Dallas. I get so turned around down here, all right? It just all looks the same to me. I need a Chick-Fil-A, and by that Chick-Fil-A, I can then... Chick-Fil-A is here. Chili's is here. I go through here, down to the... All right? I need chains of restaurants on corners, and I know how to get around. I get down here, and I just get confused. So I'm following the map app, and I start to notice, "This is different than I remember."

It literally said, "Arrived at your destination on the right," and it was just a field. I just thought to myself, "This is a weird place for a meeting," so I actually just hung out there for a little bit, waiting for the meeting to get started, and then I was like, "You know what?" and I typed the address back into it...the same exact address. You know, I put 1 in, and then 1818 came up, the address I typed. Same address. *Search*.

It takes 12 minutes to get to it now, so now the map has changed its mind. The map has decided this address has changed from the five seconds ago it actually brought me to this field for this meeting, so now I'm late to meetings. I don't know if you know me. I am a "hurry up and wait" guy. I do not like being late. It wigs me out, all right? I just feel stressed. I probably just need to trust the Lord more, but I... Like, I want to get to the movies 30 minutes early, or I'm late, all right? If we're not watching the pre-show, we're not going!

So I'm panicked here, and the map has absolutely betrayed me. Now since you have an internal processor, you have your guts and your mind saying, "This is the way to life. This is the way to fulfillment. This is the way to joy. This is the way to happiness." My contention with you tonight is your intuition is *off*, and if you trust your intuition over and above the Word of God, you will repeatedly end up not in the place you had hoped to go, but rather, in a place altogether different, and not knowing quite how you got there.

I know some of you already... That inside of you is arguing. "You're not in a field of despair." You might not be. Maybe you're just en route, all right? But eventually, that's where you're led. You can't trust your gut and your mind, the voice in your head, when it comes to the kingdom of God over and above the Word of God. Now I want to show you this happening because intuition sounds right. That's what makes it so deadly. It's intuitive because it sounds right. It *feels* right. It makes sense.

Let me show you that happening here. We're going to pick up in Matthew 16:21, but right before verse 21, Jesus asks this question: "Who do people say that I am? What's the word on the street?" so the disciples answer him. "All right. Well, here's the word on the street. Some say you are a prophet, others that you are a teacher, and some that you are a reincarnated prophet." That's a paraphrase. They list, I believe, John the Baptist and Elijah, both of whom were dead at the time, all right?

So, "...reincarnated prophet," and then Jesus flips it, right? **"But who do you say that I am?"** Peter, who is quick to throw out what he's thinking, quick on his intuition, says, "You're the Holy One of God! You are the Messiah!" and Jesus blesses him and says it's not his intuition. He says, "Blessed are you, Simon, among men, because God has revealed this to you."

All right. Way to go, Peter. I mean, you're always in trouble, but here you go. Jesus is blessing you. Then, directly after that, we pick up in verse 21. **"From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."**

Look at verse 22. **"And Peter took him aside..."** I love that move. "Jesus, get over here! Come over here!" He pulls him away from the other disciples. **"...and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.'"** Now I want to stop there. Don't move, because this is intrinsic reasoning at its finest.

Jesus had just said, "I *am* the Messiah, Peter! You nailed it! Congratulations! Blessed are you. I am the Holy One of God. I am God in the flesh, sent to take away the sins of the world. Peter, I *am* he," but then he goes, "...but the Scribes and the Pharisees... They're going to get me. Then they're going to beat me, and I'm going to suffer at their hands, and I'm going to *die*."

If I had been there, I probably would have gone, "Jesus, get over here! Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind? I mean, I've seen you work these Pharisees and Scribes over! I saw you tell a dead little girl she wasn't allowed to be dead anymore. I saw you tell a storm to stop, and it *listened* to you. How are these guys who you are constantly intellectually checkmating going to finally one-up you?" I mean, if you read, he literally silences the Pharisees and Scribes at every turn.

It always gets to the point in the argument where they have to retreat, gather back up, and think of another question. I don't know if you've ever been in an argument, and you've gotten it to the place where the other person is like, "*Oh*," but that's what Jesus does throughout the gospel. I mean, he just checkmates those guys, and now he's going, "They're going to get me. I'm going to suffer at their hands. I'm going to be turned over to them, and I'm going to *die*, and I'm going to be raised."

If you're wondering to yourself, "How did he not hear that part?" they *never* heard that part. None of them did. I mean, he repeatedly tells them on the way to Jerusalem, "I'm going to die. I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be killed. I'm going to be raised," and then when he gets arrested and is killed, they scatter to the wind.

They're like, "Where'd that come from?" all right? It's a case study in our ability to hear what we want and ignore what we don't want to hear. So this is just... I'm not even going to dog Peter for this. I think I would have done the same thing if I were there. "How is this possible? If you're the Son of God, how are you going to die? If you're the Son of God, how are you going to let these guys who you have called a brood of vipers...? How are you going to *lose* to the bad guys here, Jesus? This will *not* happen to you! Surely this *cannot* happen to you!"

This is just intuitive reasoning at its finest, and it fails Peter miserably, because watch how the kingdom works. Look at verse 23 with me really quickly. **"But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.'" Now, praise God, we just got some insight into what has gone wrong with our processor. All right, so let's get past the "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me."**

I think it's significant, but what I think is *more* significant is Jesus's response to Peter is, "The reason you don't get this, the reason your intrinsic reasoning, your gut, and what seems to be playing to you is *betraying* you in this moment is your mind is off. Your mind is on the things of man; it's not set on the things of God." I want to unpack that. I want to kind of create two big buckets in order for us to define what it means to have the mind of man. The mind of man in its depravity can really be summed up with two ways it thinks, all right?

1. *The mind of man thinks only of itself.* It has a consumerist approach to life that gains what it wants when it wants it at the expense of reason and wisdom. It thinks only of itself, and it will use and abuse all of those around them to get exactly what it wants. I think some of the ways this works itself out... This kind of self-centered, self-seeking, "I'm the only thing that matters..." Listen. Nobody thinks they think this way.

In fact, you're arguing with yourself right now that you don't think this way, so I'm talking to somebody else. In your mind, you're hoping that guy you brought with you is listening right now. That's what you're saying to yourself. "I sure hope Tom is listening." Nobody thinks they think this way, but by our lives, we do. Can I give you a couple of ways? I'll try to make this somewhat contextual for being down in Dallas.

I think one of the ways we see selfishness really take root is how we treat other people, and that can be everything from how you treat your waiter or waitress to how you treat other people you feel are below you, and how you treat other people at work. Do you see other people as having souls, or do they exist for your gladness and the increase of your pleasure?

I'll tell you another way I see this, specifically among singles. Now I don't know how many married people we have and how many unmarried people we have here, but let me chat with singles in particular; men and women, not just men. I'll say this: I think another way we're self-seeking that is most visible among single evangelicals is...and I'm going to go both ways here, so if you have an urge to cheer, I would just wait...when young men with no respect for the soul or the emotions of a young woman begin to flirt with no real intention of anything other than trying to get them to like them because they're an insecure little boy.

No intention of pursuit for marriage, no intention of being careful or cautious with their soul, just "I'm insecure. Let me try to get you to like me and care for me so I can puff myself up at your expense." Ladies, you're part of the problem. Now do they need to repent of that? Absolutely, but you're also part of the problem, because in your failure to really trust and believe in what God says about you and has for you, you'll let them!

I know some of you are like, "Well, Matt, I live by myself, and I have a cat! Matt, this ends with me being by myself with a lot of cats! I don't want that to happen to me, Matt! Please! I don't want to be the cat lady! Please don't do this!" Okay, listen. For your own good, young woman of God, please listen to me. They can't do it if you don't let them. Just go, "What are your intentions?"

"Well, Matt, that's going to make them run away!" Sometimes it's good for a brother to run away! Listen, please! I know we're giggling here, but young women, if they have no intentions, then why not find out early? If they're the type of young men who have not thought at all about the sacrifices necessary to love you, walk with you, encourage you in your walk with Jesus Christ, and lay down their life for you, then find out early.

Then if you go, "What are your intentions?" and the guy goes, "Man, I just want to get to know you better. I want to watch you flourish in your relationship with the Lord, and I want to see where this goes," then go out in a group until he asks you to marry you. That's probably a little strong, but I'll keep it there. I'd rather be too strong than too light in this dysfunctional environment we're in.

Seriously. I mean, I watch young men do this all the time. God help me, when I was a young man, I acted like this. Then you just kind of wreak havoc on a young woman's soul, a daughter of God's soul, and to

placate your own insecurity, you would damage a daughter of the King. And girls, *stop it*. Don't let them. "Matt, remember the cat thing." Listen to me. I've said this so many times. I'm going to keep saying it.

Your loneliness now is monumentally better than your loneliness with a man in the house who has no intention of loving and serving you like Christ loved the church, no intention of pouring himself out for you and the lives and souls of your children. Just wait. I'm pounding on these young dudes, all right? I mock them all the time. I'm trying to motivate them to quit being boys who can shave and grow up, but you have to wait. You have to call them. You can help me help them by just calling them on it, man.

I just love stories where a dude is pursuing a young woman, and they're like, "You know what? What are your intentions?"

"I don't have any."

"Well, go on then, and when you grow up and become a man of God, come back and see me, and maybe we can talk."

You don't think that will rock that dude? You don't think he'll just go start reading his Bible? You know? "Okay, honey. Let me see what I can do here, all right?" So you can help the process of sanctification by being a woman of God who says, "Christ *is* enough for me, and Christ *does* satisfy me. Sure, I'll have these longings, and he who finds a wife finds what is good, and marriage is a good thing, but it's not an ultimate thing."

Jesus is enough. Trust him when he says that. "That means I'll be an old maid." If you end up being an old maid with a bunch of cats, the presence of God will sustain you to glory. It's still better. This is one of the ways being just about you plays itself out. The second bucket isn't just that the mindset of man just thinks of itself, but...

2. *It thinks only of today*. It thinks only of itself, and it thinks only of today. Now if all you think about is today...look right at me...then you have no capacity for self-sacrifice. None. If today is all there is, the great virtue of laying down your life for something other than you becomes impossible because all you have is today. It's all you have.

When you don't see past today... Listen, I get that you could die at any time, but come on, man. If you're 25, 26, or 32, statistically, you have a lot more time left. Now could you die tomorrow? Yes. Listen, I've been in ministry a long time. You could die tonight. You could keel over right now in the middle of my talk. /could! But more than likely, statistically speaking, most of us, looking around this room, have a couple

more decades, a few more decades, or a lot more decades left on earth, and when all you think about is today, really, self-sacrifice becomes impossible.

The understanding of building toward tomorrow is missed on you, so you begin to lack discipline. You begin to lack a seriousness about preparing for tomorrow. You build up serious amounts of ridiculous debt. I don't think all debt is bad. I don't think you can make a case from Scripture that all debt is bad. Don't tell Dave Ramsey that. He'll want to fight me. But I'm telling you I don't think you can make the argument faithfully from Scripture that every bit of debt is bad debt.

But there is a type of silly debt that is birthed out of insecurity and wanting to be viewed as something we're not, so instead of taking the long-view approach where we say, "I want to live in such a way that honors the Lord, and I don't want to live in such a way that I'm trying to purchase how other people see me by going into debt to look a certain way, drive a certain thing, or live in a certain place. I want to lay that down before the Lord, and I want to build for what is my future and what the Lord would have for me in my future," so the mindset of man thinks only of itself and thinks only of today.

That's going to be a disaster. Now let's go back. I don't want to lose you at any point tonight, all right? So you and I have a voice in our heads, and we have a feeling in our guts. Our intrinsic thinking is leading us toward what we believe is going to be fulfillment, life, and happiness, so the decisions we're making and the relationships we're in, whether that be friendships or with the opposite sex, are leading us toward what we believe are going to be satisfying, fulfilling, God-honoring, God-exalting, joy-filled, happy days.

The Bible put a warning label on that and said, "Be careful, because if you're not careful, that way is going to end in death." We see Peter, who is a follower of Christ. He left nets, left his father, left the boat, and is following Jesus. His intrinsic reasoning has taken over, and he's beginning to rebuke Jesus because his mind, according to Jesus, is set like the mind of man and not like the mind of God.

Now we get to watch Jesus flip intuition on its head. Look at Matthew 16:24-26. Now here's what I want us to do. There are things we do in the church all the time that are actually rooted in history. What I mean by that is... You know that part in the service where we kind of turn and say, "Hi," to everybody, and some of you are just paranoid as all get-out during that time, and some of you meet everybody in that 22 seconds?

Well, historically in the church, that little period of time in a worship service was called the passing of the peace. That means we're literally, together with one another, saying we are family, and we're in this. So we're turning and saying, "Peace to you, brother. Welcome into this place. God has called us as a family, and we're celebrating the call of God on our lives as a local covenant community of faith."

The other thing that has occurred repeatedly when the people of God have gathered since day one is a public reading of the Word of God by the saints...not just by the dude up front, but by the saints, so we're going to practice that. We're going to start reading Matthew 16:24 together, out loud, *with gusto*, and then I'm going to bow out, and we're just going to let you fill this room with your voices, reading the Word of God as Jesus takes your gut and your voice in your mind, and he turns it on its head in regards to how we land in joy, fullness of life, and depth of life.

So let's get going. Matthew 16, starting in verse 24. **"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?'"** Amen. Thank you.

When all is said and done, Jesus just flipped it, because what Peter has done is... He's fighting for life. He's fighting for what makes sense. He's pushing for... "No, no, no. This cannot be true, Jesus. My gut is telling me this is true. My mind is telling me this is what's true, Jesus. If you're the Messiah, if you're who you say you are, then surely what you're saying can't come to pass."

Then Jesus follows that up with, "You have *your* mindset. Your processor is broken. Let me fix your processor. You want life? Die. You want happiness? Take up your cross and follow me. You want purpose and fulfillment? Don't lose your soul for the trinkets of what's transient." I mean, this is intuition flipped on its head, so what Jesus is asking for, if I could just stick with the analogy I've been with this whole time, is an acknowledgment in you and in me that our processors are broken. We can't get ourselves there.

Now most of you, really... What I have found is around the age of 26, 27, or 28, you kind of start to have this "Aha!" moment, because up until this moment, you've had these milestones to look forward to. What I mean by that is you're like, "Oh, at 16 I get to drive." Then you get your car, and you're like, "Oh, then I get to graduate from high school!"

"Oh, okay, I get to go to college!" Then you go, "Oh, I get to graduate!" Then you graduate. "Oh, I might find a spouse!" You find a spouse, and then you kind of hit this age where kind of all the big milestones are there, and you're just like, "Oh. All right," and so you start waking up to some things in your mid- to late twenties and early thirties, and what you wake up to if you'll slow down and think enough, and if the Holy Spirit of God will open up your heart and eyes...

Here's what you become aware of: "My way is not working." Here's what's crazy for me about this sermon. I know right now you're arguing with me in your head. "My way is working. I'm not in a field of despair. I'm at

Six Flags!" That's you in your head right now, right, just arguing with the Word of God? "This is *not* true. My way *can* lead me there. I *am* content with my life. I *am* in a place where I'm experiencing the fullness of joy in all things."

I mean, I've met plenty of brothers who can argue themselves out of the truth of God's Word, but it doesn't change the fact that even the Bible itself is saying, "You're going to make that argument." There's an acknowledgement that we can't get there our way. There's an acknowledgement that that voice inside of us...look at me...will oftentimes lie to us.

That voice...you talking to you...lies to you often. So, man, I'm just putting my cards on the table. My internal, intrinsic gut lies to me all the time. No one is harder on me than I am. Anybody else? *No one* is harder on me than I am, so I will condemn myself for any little thing if the Holy Spirit doesn't breathe life into the Word of God I have read and feasted on and remind me of what's true and right before God.

So there has to be an acknowledgement that I lie to me a lot, and now that I've acknowledged that I can't get myself there and I lie to me a lot, the next step is for me to say, "Then you can get me there, Jesus. You don't lie to me. Your Word doesn't lie to me, and I'm going to come into submission to your Word as gladly as I can, and when I'm *not* glad about your Word, I'm going to confess it to the family, and I'm going to walk boldly, trusting that you're going to get me there.

There's a confession that I can't get me there, there's an understanding that I lie to me, and then there's submission to the headship of Jesus Christ so death will bring about life. Now look at me. We all know this is true. You see it all the time, so if you've ever seen a marriage you're kind of drawn to... Here's what I mean by that. If you watch a man loving his wife in such a way that makes you go, "Aw," and you watch a woman interact with her husband in such a way that you went, "I'd do that! I would like to do that," you see a model of marriage that isn't, "No thank you. I kind of like where I am."

You see a model that goes, "I'd like some of that. I'd like to be in something like that." You are looking at a picture of life springing from death, not life grasping for life. Are you tracking with me? Because if you come into marriage saying, "This is what I want, and this is what I need, and this is what I need you to do, and this is what you're going to do to make me..." you come in with the mindset of man, it's going to go *bad*, but if you come in dying to yourself...

Look. If you come into marriage as a man, saying, "I want to pour my life out for you, boo..." You know what? That's really my wife's nickname. I didn't know that years later hip-hop was going to make that slang, so I feel gypped in this, all right?

If in the end you approach your spouse, or you watch a man approach his spouse with this attitude: "You are a gift from God to me, and you have been given to me by God to steward well in regard to seeing (as best I can) your gifts and the desires of your heart grow as much as they can to honor the Lord. I'm going to create in our budget, and I'm going to create in our time, and I'm going to create in our lives opportunities for you to flourish as a daughter of the King. I'm going to lay myself down repeatedly to see that that happens," then you have a real shot.

Then when a woman comes under that... I mean, that's unreal. That's spectacular. That's both dying, and when both are willing to die, you have a shot at something really, really beautiful. To use my own marriage... If you know my wife (some of you in here do), she is just a ridiculous woman, and I'm not just talking about the fact that she's physically beautiful. She is a very physically beautiful woman. I know this. I like that about her, all right? But here's the thing, and I'll just be straight.

She's much smarter than I am. I have kind of this sweet spot of gifting. I just have to stay in it, and if I get outside of it, really bad things happen. I mean, the reason I've staffed The Village Church like I have is I have some really weak links. I don't know if you know I don't run The Village Church. A guy by the name of Josh Patterson runs The Village Church. I study my Bible, I pray my guts out, and then I herald the good news of the gospel, but I have found godly men who are far more gifted than I am, and I've turned it loose.

So in my family life, Lauren is summa cum laude in 3 1/2 years with no summer school. She made two Bs in her entire life and will *to this day* tell you why that's the professor's fault, all right? I have yet to find something she's not good at... Well, putting up laundry is about it, all right? Then on top of that, she's ferociously godly, knows her Bible forward and backward, and is a consummate servant to our children and to me, and repeatedly in our marriage, she has said, "You make the call. Here's my input, but you make the call."

That's dying to self. She knows she's smarter than I am! She *does* know she's smarter than I am, but she dies to herself and says, "You make the call, Matt. I'm in. I'm following you. I mean, you're going to have to reap the repercussions of your decision, but go ahead." I'm just kidding. She has never said that, but sometimes I feel that. Okay, Lord. Really speak to me. I need an audible which way to go here.

This is an example. I look at my marriage, and so much of my marriage was difficult in the early years, and what's happening now is we both just try to die to ourselves as often as possible, and then life springs out of that. When I watch parents interact with their children who are older than, say, my wife and I are now with our kids, the cool relationships I watch happen are almost all birthed out of death.

They're birthed because a daddy came home tired but understood second shift and got on the floor and went after the hearts of his children. He got in bed with his daughters, and he cuddled up, and he asked them about their day, and sure, he might have fallen asleep. He's not a perfect man, but watching men and women go after the hearts of their children... That's about death leading to life. I mean, I've stayed home with my kids all day. I know what my wife has to deal with. You lose your mind!

Yet she just constantly lays down her life, lays down her agenda for the day to engage the hearts of our children. We've watched couples older than us do that, and then we watch their grown-up children love them and love being around them, and, in fact, have the opposite complaint of them: "You were too light on us." I mean, how cool is that? When a 25-year-old accuses their parents of... "You were too light! You shouldn't have let us date so soon!" That's a true story.

That's just mind-blowing. I have no category for that, all right? That's what happens when they go after the soul, and they're always available, and they're kind of staying in tune with the temperature of their children and pouring out their lives, not for their children in a way that's idolatrous, but rather, in a way that points to there being a God in heaven who can save them.

As imperfect as they are, they die to themselves to see that life would spring up. In fact, the apostle Paul said this very thing when he talked about how he would labor for the church. He said, "Death was at work in me so life would be at work in you." This is how God works. This is how God replaces our intuition so what would lead us into a field of despair is replaced by the Holy Spirit of God through the Word of God now into wisdom where we submit to him, God help us, as best as we can with the Holy Spirit and the covenant of community of faith all around us.

We don't pull Jesus aside and rebuke him...because some of us still do that. We still kind of pull Jesus. Jesus goes, "Okay, this is the game plan. This is what I have for you in this area of life," and you're just like, "Oh, Jesus, come over here." You have to get him away from the rest of the disciples. You don't want to sound like a fool in front of everybody, so you kind of pull him off to the side. "Jesus, you know..."

Here's the other cool thing (not a cool thing, but a horrible thing) about that internal voice of yours. It's always telling you how awesome you are. You know that voice in you never tells you, "You're wrong." It tells you why if you *were* wrong, you were justified in your wrongness because of the other person, so you kind of pull Jesus aside and begin to rebuke Jesus.

"Now you know this isn't going to work. You know my background. You know what I've been through. You know what this situation is like. You know I've been living by myself for two years and I have three cats. You

know it's time." Right? We pull Jesus out, and we rebuke him like he doesn't know what he's talking about, like he hasn't proven himself "o'er and o'er."

If you have a church background, you know that song. He has proven himself over and over, so Hardin, in the last service, looks over at me and goes, "For 20 years, Chandler, we've been running. I mean, you know, the service isn't ever over. Has the Lord ever let us down? Has he ever failed us?" Now here's what I'm going to say: "*No!* He just hasn't, *ever!*"

In seven years of *very* difficult marriage (I mean lie in my bed, stare at the ceiling, and, "Oh my God, is this the rest of my life?"), did he abandon me? No. Terminal cancer in my brain... Did he abandon me? No. He's closer than ever. Trying to pour my life out in this place, way over my head, trying to lead Acts 29, way outside of my capacity...

Has he ever failed me? *No*. Have things always gone like I wanted them to? No. Have I at times often pulled him? "Jesus, get over here! You know I can't do this. You have to send somebody over here to..." Yes, I have. God help me. Then here's what's crazy: Even when I do that, his grace and patience are lavished upon me.

Here's how I want to end tonight. I just want to lay before you the invitation God lays before all of us in this place tonight, whether you're a believer in Christ or not, and that invitation is, "Come." If you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, and you were just invited into this place by a friend or a coworker, or a family member dragged you here... Maybe you got the talk from daddy. "As long as you're under my roof, you're going to be..." and you're here.

If that's you tonight, here's what I want you to hear me say. My prayer for you coming into this weekend is at some point something would go off in your soul, and you'd go, "My way is not working," and as I'm laying out for you what Jesus taught, you would go, "Oh, okay. That's why my way is not working," and you would be able to move to a place... "Well, if my way doesn't work, maybe God's way will work," and you would seek to submit your life to Jesus Christ.

In just a few minutes, I'm going to pray, and there is going to be a group of men and women who are up here, and man, if you want to say, "My way is not working," here's my promise to you: You will not be judged for that here, and I can promise you that you would confess nothing about your life that would shock any of us, that would make the blood leave our face, that would make us gasp.

I mean, you might be a jacked up mess, and I'm telling you the pastors who are standing up here will hug your neck, love that you're willing to submit your life to Jesus Christ, and welcome you home. So if that's

you, that's my hope for you, that in just a few minutes here, we're going to pray, and it's going to be awkward, because I'm going to leave everybody seated.

If you want to come down and pray with these pastors, I'm going to invite you to do that, because I believe if the Spirit of God is really churning in your heart, you'll have the courage to get up out of that chair, go, "Excuse me. Excuse me," and come down and go, "I don't quite understand everything he said, but I think my way is not working, and I need Jesus."

But I think most of us are here... Here we are at the 7:15 service on Sunday night. I think most of us are believers in Christ. I think most of us are like Peter, but I also know enough about my own heart and enough about what the Word of God teaches to say a lot of us have areas of our lives right now where we've pulled Jesus aside, and we're kind of rebuking him.

Some of us are in relationships we know aren't right, and we know we should get out of them. We know they're not healthy. We have Jesus off to the side. You know. Some of us have decisions to make on where to go for work or what to do at work, and we know what's right and good according to the Scriptures, and we have Jesus off to the side. We're explaining to him why he's wrong and why we're right.

Some of us, when it comes to our sexual relationships, have Jesus off to the side. You're like, "You know that's ridiculous! It's 2013!" Some of us with our money, and some of us with... It doesn't matter. It could be *anything*. We've got Jesus off to the side, *correcting* him...*correcting* the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world.

I want to give you an opportunity to confess you're doing it, to confess that in this season of your life, you're not quite sure how it happened. You have Jesus off in the corner, rebuking him. Where he has come that you might have life and have it to the full, your intuition is saying, "No, he doesn't. He doesn't want my joy. He's not after the fullness of life for me. In fact, he's trying to *take* life from me," because when you rebuke Jesus, that's what you're believing.

You're believing God does not want fullness of life for you, but rather to take from you what you perceive to be rightfully yours, and that's a sham. That's a lie your gut is telling you, so I want to give you an opportunity to confess and repent. Now I always want to say this. The seed of confession and repentance always grows stronger and bolder when it happens in the light.

What I mean by that is here in a second when I pray, the pastors will be up here, and maybe you need to come down and just get some prayer because you're not a believer, and you're going, "My way is not working, and I need Jesus," but some of you just need to come down and grab the hand of a pastor

because there's nobody here tonight who you know well and who you do life with, and say to that pastor, "I'm rebuking Jesus in this area of my life, and man, I just need to confess that right now, and I need someone to hold me accountable, and I need help with this fight, because I'm getting worked in it."

Maybe you don't need to come up because you're sitting around people who you do life with deeply. Maybe the four or five minutes I'm going to give you might be served best with you just turning to the friends you came with who you do life with and going, "Here's an area of my life. I'm rebuking Jesus, refusing to submit, and believing I'm smarter than him."

So I want to give us about four or five minutes here just to do business with the Lord, and then I'm going to come back up and lead us in Communion, and then we'll get after the Lord in song and head out from there. So again, I've already said it up front. I'm not going to make this easy. I'm just going to pray for us. While I'm praying, there will be men and women who come up here and just sit who are able to hear from you, pray for you, and love you.

Then I'm going to pray and say, "Amen," and if your life is like, "My way is not working. I'm going to give it to Jesus Christ. I'm going to submit my life," then come on up, grab the hand of one of these men and women, and confess. Just say that, and they'll walk you through what you need to be walked through from there, and maybe tonight you just need to turn to someone who you came with who knows you, who has walked with you, and simply say, "Man, I'm rebuking Jesus in this area of my life."

If you're not here with someone, the pastors are up front for you, but I would encourage you to not delay that. Here has been my own experience: The longer you sit there and debate with yourself... "Should I really...? Is he talking to me? Is he right?" That internal voice is not your friend. I've already laid that out for you. It's going to lie to you. It's going to say I'm *not* talking to you, that I'm talking to someone else, that the Word of God is *not* talking to you, but talking to somebody else.

In fact, if you're not careful, you'll start to hope other people in this room are hearing what I'm saying instead of listening to the Holy Spirit of God bear his weight on *you*. So I'm going to pray, and when I say, "Amen," you just move as the Spirit is moving. If you have nothing to do, then just enjoy four or five minutes of quiet before the Lord tonight. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters. I thank you for those who soon will be our brothers and sisters. I pray you would move upon the hearts of my friends in this place. I pray for those who are walking in unbelief, that you might grant, by your mercy, the gift of belief. I pray where obedience has waned, where we just have lost the ability in this season to trust what you have for us is better than what we have for us, you would remind us of your goodness and grace, you would remind us of your deep and abiding

love and concern for us, and God, we would find freedom in coming clean with where we've been arguing and rebelling against you, and we might find the true soul rest that comes from being totally surrendered to you. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

You move as you feel led.

I know the Lord is just continuing to move. Let me encourage you this way. If you're going to serve Communion tonight, would you go ahead and head to the elements? Then there might be some up here who are supposed to serve Communion who are getting prayer, so if you're a covenant member... I don't want all of you to head back there, but let's just see what happens.

While they're serving Communion, let me chat a little bit about why every week, week in and week out, we end our services with the Lord's Supper, with Communion. The Word of God, when it's proclaimed and when it's preached, has a sharp edge to it, and what I mean by that is I don't know how you interact by the Word of God, but most often when I read the Word of God, I can feel the weight of my shortcomings in light of what it's commanding of my life.

Maybe you're the opposite of that. Maybe it just always encourages you. I think I get to encouragement, but most often when I read the Word of God, I see how far short I fall of what God's ideal is for me, so even a word like tonight where we open up Matthew 16, and we begin to say, "Hey, we have a tendency to rebuke Jesus," can feel weighty and feel overwhelming, so that's why, regardless of what we're preaching, at the end of every message we kind of gather back around this table, and we remember God is aware of our shortcomings.

He's aware of our failures, and even in the middle of those shortcomings and failures, he bids us to come, so regardless of what your confession has been tonight, regardless of how you've failed or how you've stumbled, the reason we keep coming back to this table is the one thing we need to remember more than we need to remember anything else, and that's by the blood of Jesus Christ, we are made righteous before God.

There are those who would say, "Well, hey, if you do Communion every week, doesn't it kind of get routinely, and doesn't it kind of get rote?" It *shouldn't*, because listen. This is what we need more than anything. The Word of God has engaged us tonight. The Word of God has said, "You're falling short." The Word of God has admonished us to greater obedience, and now we get to gather around the Table. After our Father, Abba God in heaven, has said, "You can do better than this by the power of my Holy Spirit inside of you," now he's gathering us around the Table, and he's saying, "I've made you righteous. I love you. I delight in you, and I delight in you despite this past week, and I love you *regardless* of how you

struggle, and I'm for you, *even* in this. That's why Communion becomes so important for us. That's why we *should* do it every week. It's why we come after the Word of God is proclaimed, and we gather around the Table. It's God's invitation to us. "Come, all who are weary and heavy laden, and find rest for your soul."

Let me chat a little bit about this here. I probably should have said this first. I've made this mistake in every service now. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, tonight you are welcome to the Table. If you're not a believer, if you haven't come to that place in your life where you say, "I trust you. I love you. I'm going to follow you, Jesus Christ," then here's what I would ask. I love that you're here. You won't find any doors here closed for you.

We would love for you to dig in and just kind of figure out who Jesus is as you walk with us, but here's what I would ask. This is a really serious thing for us, and for you it's just juice and bread. It is not going to forgive your sins. It is not going to make you and God cool. It is bread and juice. For us who are believers, the Table is about a reminder of our union with Christ and the righteous imputed to us by Jesus in that he'd take all of our sins from us: past, present, and future.

To an unbeliever, the only thing it will accomplish is what biologically occurs when you drink a shot of grape juice and eat a little piece of bread, so will you abstain? This isn't a form of us saying we're better than you. In fact, I would invite you to surrender your life to Christ and join us at the Table, but for those of us who are in Christ, this should never become routine for us. This should be our favorite part of the service.

I love the proclamation of the Word. I love to sing, man. I'm hoarse, just blowing with Isaac. I'm probably bothering him, getting through his ears, screaming up here on the front row. I love to sing. Sometimes I feel like I don't have enough strength to express the way I want to express, but this is it, man. Gathering around this Table...

You love me like this? You've covered my sins like this? All of them, past, present, and future? All of them are paid for? You delight in *me*? I have union with you that I'm in you, that *you're* in me? That's the Table. That's spectacular, and that's only for the people of God. So if you're a brother or sister, come on. Let's celebrate the Lord tonight. If you're not, there's an open invitation to join us for dinner.

You're just going to have to get tired enough of yourself and have to acknowledge you lie to you more than you want to admit. You have to acknowledge Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by him. So let's enjoy the Lord together. The Bible says on the night Jesus was arrested, he took the bread, and he broke it. I mean, it's just a symbolic act of what was about to occur. "This is my body broken for you." Don't go ambiguous, high-level *you* right now. Don't you do that. "You is all Christians."

No. You is *you*. "...broken for you. Not just you, Peter. Not just you, the rest of the apostles. My body is broken for *you*." You in this room tonight, me in this room tonight... His body, broken for me. He says it. Don't forget it. "Do this in remembrance of me. You get together, and you remember this. You're going to need to remember this. My body, broken for your sin."

**"Do this in remembrance of me."** Then, after dinner, he took the cup, the cup of what he called the blood of the new covenant. I can't help but preach just a little bit when we get to the blood of the new covenant. The book of Hebrews says by the blood of Jesus, the altar is closed once and for all, so that little, "Oh, let me lay this down for you so you can love me..." The altar is closed. There isn't anywhere to lay that.

Christ has died once and for *all* for those who are perishing, which means this little cup, this part of the Table is my glad delight in the fact God sees me as spotless, blameless in his sight, beloved as an adopted son. Again, Jesus said, "As long as you get together, when you gather as a family, when my people come together, this is what you're going to need to remember. Yes, let the Word of God ring out. Yes, let it bring about conviction. Yes, let it bring about transformation, but here's what you need to gather around at the end about: I love you, and my blood was spilled for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

God has given his bride the delight of making much of his name in song. We are a singing people. We are a people who will sing throughout eternity how wonderful God is, how holy he is, how spectacular he is, so we get the opportunity now in closing out the night by doing what we will be doing for eternity, albeit later on unfettered by physical weariness or hoarse voices. Before tonight, with all the energy we have left...most of us are off tomorrow...let us leave what we have left on the altar of delighting in our God as we sing and make much to God.