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The church is not an institution for perfect people; it is a sanctuary for sinners saved by grace, a nursery for God's sweet children to be nurtured and grow strong. It is the fold for Christ's sheep, the home for Christ's family. The church is the dearest place on earth.

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If you have your Bibles, would you go ahead and grab them? Philippians, chapter 2, is where we'll be. I have some work to do to get us there, but that will be kind of our anchor text in our time together. This is the last week of our *Dearest Place* series. We've taken the summer just to kind of look at what the church is and who the church is made up of and how the church is wired and ultimately what the mission of the church is. That's what we've done.

Up until this point, we've said, "Okay, this is what the church is." Then we moved on from there. We asked the question...*Is membership to a local body biblical at all?* We showed that it is the expectation of the Word of God that as believers in Jesus Christ, we belong not just to the church universal, but to the out-working of that in the church local. We looked at the nature of that relationship, both of God toward his church and therefore us toward one another, that relationship being covenantal, not contractual.

That means we're not demanding that other people be something. Rather we're seeking to become for the good of others. Does that make sense? That has to make sense or we can't move forward here. Our relationship is covenantal; it's not contractual. That becomes important, because we will fail each other. We will disappoint one another, right? That is right. If you don't think you're going to disappoint anyone, you live alone. You're going to.

What makes us unique as a people is we just acknowledge that. "Yeah, we're going to be disappointed, but we're not going anywhere. I'm going to seek to become what God would ask everyone in the church to

become for the good of the church." When I show up, I'm looking for somebody to greet. I don't show up going, "Somebody greet me." That's not how it works. When I show up, I'm looking for someone to serve. I don't show up going, "Somebody better serve me." That posture is un-Christian.

The relationship we have with one another is one of covenant. "I'm in even though you bother me." That's covenant, isn't it? Is not covenant, "I give myself to you for richer or poorer, better or worse; I'm yours"? That's covenantal language. That's the whole point of Ephesians 5. That whole husband-and-wife thing ends with, "And this is the mystery of Christ and his church."

Then we got into how God has ordered these relationships. We went from there and talked about membership. Then we moved into elders and what elders are. They're not some sort of hyper-spiritual, Jedi council. Rather, they're a group of men who have modeled at home an understanding of self-sacrifice for the good of others. The call of an elder is not a call toward power. In fact, a man who desires power disqualifies himself for the elder room.

A man who wants authority that he might wield it is disqualified from the governing role of elder. What God wants is a man who loves his wife in such a way that he goes, "I'm exhausted. How can I serve you, honey?" A man who comes home weary and says, "Kids, let's get on the floor. Baby, I'll tuck them in." That man, a man who is willing to give his life for the flourishing of his wife and his children is in that domain, revealing that he understands the gospel in such a way that he would be qualified to serve the church.

Because a man who is not willing to die for his wife certainly won't die for somebody he kind of knows. A man who is not willing to do the hard work through exhaustion to fulfill the biblical mandate on him to point his kids toward Jesus has no business in the elder room. He will never be able to serve people he does not esteem if he can't do it to his own children.

Then from there we talked about the mission of the church being to bring glory to God. That primarily occurs in two ways. We bring glory to God in how we interact with one another (they'll know we are Christians by our love), how we press into the one-anothers, and we try to become for the good of others, how we serve one another. You want to badmouth somebody at The Village Church. I'm going to be real quick to jump in there and freely admit that that person is imperfect but also marvel at the sufficiency and grace of God to be able to rescue such an idiot as that. So I may call you an idiot, but it will always be in that context. Okay?

From there, we said the other way and the primary way we bring glory to God is by making disciples. You have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed by God. Out of that Acts 17 passage we were in, we saw he set the boundary lines and dwelling places of your life. You have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed

by God. The text went on to say, "...that men might seek him and find him, though he is not far from each of us." We looked at that in light of the way God is not far from anyone as he has put you there.

That should be the eradication of boredom for any evangelical, because your neighborhood, your workplace, and your hobby carries with it the weight of eternity, because God has placed *you* there so he could say, "I'm not far from anyone." "You don't know my neighbor, Chandler. He is far from God." Not if you live next door, bro. If you live next door, God's right next door. You just have to open your mouth. Open up your front door.

That's what we covered last week. That was kind of individual. Now I want to talk... This is the question that's kind of dangling at the end of this series and how I want to land the plane. I want to talk to you about how we as a church intend to serve you as you mature as a disciple. The role of the church is to make disciples, but we can't make anyone be serious about maturation. What we *can* do is come alongside of you and serve you. Here's what I want to do today. I simply want to tell you how we are hoping to serve you in your maturation, and then in that, maybe have the Holy Spirit reveal maybe some areas in your life that, in not paying attention or not being serious about, maybe you have affected your maturation.

See, you didn't arrive here today intellectually developed as you are and physically developed as you are with just one component. It was a bunch of different components that came together and created the you that is so awesomely in here today. In the same way, spiritual maturation isn't a silver bullet. Discipleship is not a silver bullet. It's not a, "Do just this one thing and you're in." I hear people say that all the time. It's ridiculous. Someone will say, "No, all you really need is the Bible." Well, except the Bible says that's not all you need.

You're going to actually have to be obedient to the Bible, be in glad submission to the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. On and on I go. You need to walk in community. That's what the Bible says. On and on I go. You can't just go, "All you need is the Bible," because you need to *do* the Bible. Then there are others like, "We just need accountability." By what standard are you holding one another accountable? You need the Bible. Right? It can't just be one component.

God help us. I've even seen some places that are like, "We're going to go through these three books, and when we're done with these three books, you're a disciple. We're going to call up Paul and Timothy, and when we're done, no more struggles, no more worries. What's going to happen is Jesus himself is going to get you up. Don't even worry about... Throw away your alarm clock, because Christ is going to be like, 'Hey, man. The gospel of Luke, all about me, in the dining room. Let's go. I made you coffee.' Once we get done with our process, that's where you'll be."

One of the things I tried to hard press last week is our arrival date is glory. That's our arrival date. We will be ever maturing until there is no longer a need to be maturing, and that day is not in your 60s; that day is in glory. I have sat down with many 60-, 70-, and 80-year-old now who still talk to me about the longing they have to be more lined up with how God would have them walk and live. We don't arrive until glory.

If discipleship is multifaceted, and if discipleship never ends until glory, how is The Village Church in particular going to serve you as we seek to see maturing disciples made here? Let me say this just so you don't hear something you shouldn't here. Our way is *a* way; it's not *the* way. Look at me. Eyes on me. Our way is *a* way, not *the* way. The reason I'm saying that is because I might say some things that have you go, "Oh, he's trying to hate on people."

I'm not hating on anybody. I'm telling you through a lot of prayer, fasting, seeking the Lord, and difficult decisions, this is how the elders of The Village Church have said, "Here's how we're going to serve you in an attempt to make you a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ." It's holistic and multi-faceted and doesn't require you to be a part of something different every night of the week.

With that said, let's look into how we plan to serve you here at The Village. All I want to do is define things and then tell you where they take place in the life of the church. We have a simple statement that governs how we seek to serve you in making disciples. It says The Village Church exists to bring glory to God by making disciples through... There are four ways holistically that we seek to serve you and you maturing in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. *Gospel-centered worship*. When we use the term "gospel-centered worship," we're basically saying an enjoyment of God that ends in praise. It's our understanding biblically that gospel-centered worship is the fuel of discipleship. By the Holy Spirit, it's what empowers and enables obedience, a gladness of heart in God, and leads us into everything else well. It is the fuel of discipleship. It is an enjoyment of God that ends in external praise.

Let's talk about that. If we believe God wrote the Bible... We believe God wrote the Bible. Did he do it through men? Absolutely. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, men wrote the Bible, the very words of God. If that makes us too fundamentalist for you, then I'm glad we caught you early. That's what we believe, but that creates some problems. One of the bigger ones is honestly, if God wrote the Bible, then God seems to be a bit egotistical.

The entire book of Psalms is, "Sing to me! Praise me! Make much of me! You better clap your hands for me. You better shout to joy for me. You better dance. You better play that cymbal louder." You have this God who is just on repeat. "Sing to me. Praise me. Make much of me." Isn't that a bit unsettling? In fact, C.

S. Lewis, who most of you probably know from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, was a professor and Cambridge and Oxford...not an idiot.

When all is said and done, before he was a believer, he said that God in the Psalms sounded like a little old lady begging for compliments. After his conversion, he started to try to unpack what was happening in the Psalms as God was like, "Praise me. Praise me. Praise me. Sing to me. Praise me. Clap your hands for me. Make much of me. Serve me with gladness. Be glad in heart toward me," these kinds of phrases. I'm going to read for you quite a few Lewis quotes here. He puts together sentences as well as any man I've read. Here's what he says:

"It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men. It is not of course the only way. But for many people at many times the 'fair beauty of the Lord' is revealed chiefly or only while they worship Him together. Even in Judaism the essence of the sacrifice was not really that men gave bulls and goats to God, but that by their so doing God gave Himself to men; in the central act of our own worship of course this is far clearer – there it is manifestly, even physically, God who gives and we who receive.

The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments..." It worked its way into his post-Christian writing. "...or a vain..." I love this line. "...author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard him, is implicitly answered by the words, 'If I be hungry I will not tell thee' (Psalm 50:12). Even if such an absurd Deity could be conceived, He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify His appetite. I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books."

Lewis probably couldn't comprehend that we consider dogs as members of our families and actually have outfits for them, but what he's saying in this text is he doesn't need his dog to affirm him. In the same way, God, if he is God, doesn't need us, the lowest of creatures, to affirm him. God is not lacking, but the real thing you need to take away from this is what Lewis is concluding, post-conversion, from the Psalms, is that God's demand that we praise him, make much of him, sing to him, rejoice in him has nothing to do with him and has everything to do with us.

God is not lacking in such a way that we sing to him because he has had a tough week, but rather that in our praise of God, God meets us where we are. As we gather together corporately, and as we hear the Word and sing the Word and have our affections stirred by what is true, God meets us in that place.

Then he goes on and says, "But the most obvious fact about praise – whether of God or anything – strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never

noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it.

The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses..." For instance, Romeo praising Juliet and vice versa. "...readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars... Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible."

I *love* that line! Here's what he just said. He just said "Our ability to enter in and praise God... When the music begins, our ability to engage and delight in God in that is inner health made audible." Could it be (just asking the question) that the reciprocal is true? If our ability to enter in into singing praises to God is inner health made audible, could it be possible that the inability to enter into praise might just be a sign that all is not well in our hearts? If we find a barricade to delighting in the Lord, would that not be evidence that all is not settled in our hearts?

Now don't take that too far. I don't think all worship is emotive and smiley. I'm not talking about Spirit-sprinkle worship. That's not what I'm saying. I think there is a way to delight in the Lord when the world seems to be burning down around you, and that delight is found in his sovereign will and his grace, that he has not let you go through that storm. I'm not talking about fake smiles. I find that stuff to be ridiculous. There is a time to weep, a time to mourn, a time to be perplexed, but not crushed, a time to sit and wonder, but even in that, our steadfast hope remains our sovereign King.

He goes on from even there. You *have* to believe this is true. "I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: 'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?' The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value."

We are by design worshippers, and we want to draw people into what we value and what we worship and what we love. Never was this more clearly seen than at the creation of Instagram. Let's do it. We're going to do it. How many of you have taken pictures of your food and sent them to people? Raise your hand. Don't be ashamed; just get it up. "Oh, God. Look at this bagel. Check this out, world. *Bam.*" What is that? That is, "I'm enjoying this. People need to know."

It's absurd, right? If you could stop and think, "I'm taking a picture of my food, and I'm showing the world what I'm eating," you would be like, "Eh, that's kind of weird." Because it's just the era we... This is us. If you've ever taken a bite of good food, what do you want to do? "Oh man. You have to taste this." If you've ever seen something spectacular, "You have to see this." Right? This is what we do. In fact, we're just months away, not even months away from football season kicking off. Thank you. You did it for me. I didn't even have to press. I appreciate that. Thank you. It happened in every service.

Here's what is interesting to me about football season. First, it is by far the largest religion in our state. This has always been interesting to me. I've used this illustration repeatedly at The Village. I oftentimes meet a lot of men who tell me, "I don't read well. I'm just not good at that kind of stuff. Praise and worship and those kinds of things are just not natural for me." Then August rolls around. "Who is the third-string back for the Cowboys?" "Oh here's who he is. Here is where he went to college. This is how many yards he rushed for as a sophomore, and he was recruited out of this high school in Illinois."

Wow. All of a sudden, you're Rain Man. All of a sudden, you're a genius. The guy who couldn't read his Bible last week now is all... You know what the issue is? The issue is your affections, not your brain. I'm not anti-football. I am excited myself. I already have tickets to a game. I'm not a hater. "Go write poetry then, nerd." That's not where I am. I'm just saying when your affections are lit, you're a studier, you're a thinker, and you're a rejoicer. The inability to praise is diagnostic of what you truly value, because what you value, you will share.

Lewis goes on, and this is...God, this guy can write. "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." Listen to this. "It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed." The delight is *incomplete* until it is expressed. The delight is incomplete *until* it is expressed.

In fact, he goes on to say, "It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur..." Dang, that's a sentence. "...and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with."

What Lewis is saying in this moment is that we as children of God have experienced the goodness of the grace of God, express that via praise, primarily through singing and posture and hearing and rejoicing in the Word of God, and that the consummation of that enjoyment occurs at the singing of the praise itself. I

think Lewis really dials into the human nature well here when this is true. We *know* this is true. It's not complete until we express it. It's flat until we can express it. By nature, we are sharers. It's by nature.

In the end, how do we facilitate, how do we serve you in gospel-centered worship? Primarily, what we want to do is on our weekend service, we're gathering. We are a very simple church. We really are. I speak for probably longer than scientists would say you have an attention span for, and then we sing. That's our service. Welcome. It's not complex. I'm not a creative man. When we preach the books of the Bible, we just call them whatever the book of the Bible is called. This is us.

Not against those things, it just has more to do with how I'm wired. Then when all is said and done, we want to gather in this room. We want to preach the Word of God so your affections are stirred with truth. Then we give you the opportunity to praise God via song, because God has commanded us to praise him via song. We're going to sing the Word of God.

There is nothing we sing that you won't see at the bottom of the screen or maybe right in the middle of the song, the text we pulled the song from so you're singing what is true and right about God. We're going to sing to God, and we're going to sing about God. We're going to sing vertically, and we're going to sing horizontally, because we need it. That's the primary place. It's why the gathering is so important. It's why it can't be secondary.

We have elder-led prayer once a month where we gather, and once again, we're just going to get after the Lord. We're going to pray. We're going to humble ourselves before God. We're going to ask him to do what only he can, and we're going to sing. Starting this year (in fact, the first one is in September) we're going to call what we're just calling *nights of worship*. See, there's that creativity at work again. Nights of worship. We're going to gather here at the Flower Mound Campus because it's the largest auditorium. All campuses are going to come here, and we're just going to worship. It will just be a night of worship.

Some of you are like, "Well, I'm just really a bad singer." Okay. We're not asking you to sing a solo. When all is said and done, God was very clear that we are to make a joyful noise. He didn't say a harmonic one. He didn't say, "Make a melodic noise to me." No, he said, "Make a joyful noise." So much of praising God without being inhibited has to do with getting over oneself, has to do with getting over the desire to look a certain way.

This is that point that is made when David is dancing before the Lord, and it is embarrassing to his wife, so his wife rebukes him, and his response is, "Woman, I'll become more undignified than this." I don't recommend that, men, but that's what David did. It's just the Bible. I don't recommend you playing that card ever. In the end, that was his response. "Woman, I'll be far more undignified than that." It's that

clinging to a false dignity that will at times block our ability to really enjoy the God of our salvation. This is where we kind of serve you in gospel-centered worship, the fuel of discipleship. Discipleship also has a context. We move from the idea of gospel-centered worship into the context of discipleship.

2. *Gospel-centered community.* Community that is birthed by and sustained by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Maybe it's because I got saved a little bit later in life. It appeared to me just learning, not from preaching, but from watching Christians operate that it was commonly understood that what we do is hang out together on the weekends, and then we move on to our regular lives. We come to Sunday school, and then we go to church. "Hey, Bob. How are you?" "I'm fine." "I'm fine too." "Praise God." Then we sit in church for... In those days, I think the sermon was 22 minutes or something like that. We still were uncomfortable. From there, we would move on to whatever our life was outside.

The biblical version of our faith is completely different than that. In fact, the Bible paints a version of our lives together that has us so woven into one another that we can speak and encourage into one another's lives day by day by day. In fact, when the Bible talks about how the church functions, it almost always references a daily interaction with one another. (We're not moving to daily services, nor am I encouraging your group to meet seven days a week.)

Now, with that said, let's read a couple of texts here. You're still in Hebrews 2. We'll get there in a second. Hebrews 3, starting in verse 12, it says this. **"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another..."** What does it say next? **"...every day..."** There was zero confidence in that. **"...as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."**

Again in Acts 2:46-47. **"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."** See, the portrait, the picture of gospel-centered community is not that we just worship together on the weekends; although, as I've already said, that's important and huge to fuel this next component.

The next component is that we walk with a group of people who are serious about pursuing Jesus Christ. When we talk about gospel-centered community, we're simply saying, "Who are you pursuing Jesus Christ with?" At The Village Church, the way we do that is really through group ministry. We have two kinds of groups at The Village. One is recovery groups, and the other is home groups.

The best way to explain this is if you're in a decent spot with the Lord... You're not perfect, but there are no massive hang-ups or hurts. You're not struggling with addiction. Your relationships are doing about as well

as relationships do. Maybe you have some that are great and some that aren't so great, but there is not a lot of carnage in your world, then enter into home groups. That's the place.

But maybe... I'll say it this way. Maybe you have a flat tire. Your sweet-looking car, beautiful paint job... You just got a flat tire. Man, you just can't get up to speed without the whole thing starting to shake. Maybe that's your marriage. Maybe that's an addiction. Maybe that's a secret sin. Maybe... On and on I could go. Then we would want you to enter at the recovery-group level. This is where we connect.

Let's be straight with one another. How many of you have found it very difficult to find a great group? Raise your hand. It's okay. It's safe. Unless you're sitting with your group. If you're sitting with your group, don't do it. Don't let them know this way. "I was going to tell you guys at lunch, but... I'm out." Right? Absolutely. I think for a couple of reasons. A couple of things. The first and I think primary reason is maybe an over-romanticizing of what life together actually is. I think we get there, but we never start there.

To come into a group with this kind of picture of Christian, euphoric maturity already in place is walking in wrongly. Can you get there? Absolutely. Will you have to get there together? Absolutely. Oh, what God might do with his people if they could get out of their heads just to the end and begin to embrace the process. Do you know how you get to maturity? Growing pains. Do you know how you get to maturity? Iron sharpens iron. Sparks fly. There are disagreements, and we disagree with one another in a uniquely Christian way.

Your drift is going to be toward homogeny. You're going to want people who look like you, think like you, act like you, and spend money like you. That's what you'll be drawn to. Look at me. That's not what's best for you, but that's what you'll be drawn to, and that'll be the fight. Community is hard primarily because there are so many sinners involved. What I'm telling you is it's worth it. Keep grinding. Keep trying.

The second reason I think this is true is because of lack of effort. What I mean by that is... My son is riding his bike now. It took a while. I'm not tied up into his gifts and abilities. I love the kid. I don't need him to be developmentally ahead of everyone for me to feel good about myself. He's just kind of getting there, but he falls quite a bit. We have a lot of blood on our driveway. I don't know if you've experienced that, but he just fell a lot. The only way he's ever going to ride that bike is to get up, wipe the blood off him, and get back on the bike.

This is absolutely true about Christian community. You have to get back up. You have to give it another go. "Well, I might get betrayed." Listen to me. You'll *probably* get betrayed. I don't want to say you *might*; I want to say *probably*. "I've tried a group. Other people aren't as serious as I am." Be patient with us, brother. We're trying to get there. Be gracious with us. We'll get to where you are, but just give us time.

In fact, here's a great idea. Why don't you graciously lead us toward it rather than making accusations about where we are not? That would be the mature Christian thing to do. We facilitate with Group Connect and these types of things. This is how we want to usher you into community. Now let me just say this. I need you to dial in here. You're going to think I'm saying something I'm not saying.

In the end, it would be our hope, if you are a covenant member of the church, that the primary group of men and women you're pursuing Jesus Christ with are also members of this church. I'm not saying, "You shouldn't be hanging with people who are your friends who go to other churches. Those Fellowshipers... You stay away from them." I'm not saying that. Don't hear that. All right? "Those Valley Creekers make me sick. You should..." That's not what we're saying!

Your good friend who worships at another church... Praise God for that relationship. Enjoy that relationship. Allow that relationship to be all God would have it. Confess your sins if that's where you feel comfortable. Hang out. Have them in your home. What our hope would be is that the primary relationships in regard to your developing maturity would be found here because what you're saying as a member is, "I am covenanting with this group of men and women to be serious about pursuing Christ, but I'm going to do that with these people over here." See, that breaks things down for the good of the church and ultimately for you.

If this is where you worship and are being challenged, then does it not make more sense to do life with people here who, after the Word of God is preached and proclaimed, can then circle up and go, "Hey, man, are you walking in obedience to that? Where are you lining up on what the Word of God is bearing weight on us in this season?" Again don't hear me say, "I want calls to be made after service breaking up with long-time friends who love Jesus."

That's not what I've said at all. In fact, I've tried to encourage you in those relationships. Enjoy them. Drink deeply from them. Our hope would be that over a period of time, the primary relationships that you're pursuing Jesus Christ with are also members of this church. You have the *fuel* of discipleship, which is *worship*. You have the *context* of discipleship, which is *community*. That leads us to the overflow of discipleship.

3. *Gospel-centered service*. Now, let's look at this. Philippians 2, starting in verse 1. **"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."** Listen to verse 3. It's nearly impossible. **"Do nothing from selfish ambition or**

conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Nothing about those two sentences is natural to us. We are trained by the default mode of our hearts to immediately and unconsciously size up others to see how we are more significant than them. No one's default is humility. No one. No one's default is, "Everyone is better than me." Everyone's default is, "Let me find the area that I am better than. Even if they're beating me here, I'll find the place I am beating them, or I'll justify their goodness in this area by some kind of nonsense."

For Jesus to command us in regard to how we walk with one another to consider each other more significant... How hard is that? Let's be straight. That's nearly impossible, if it weren't for the next verse, verse 5. **"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in..."** Where? **"...Christ Jesus."** Where does this mindset come from? It's not natural. It comes from Christ Jesus. This text goes on to use the illustration of Christ, the Son of God, part of the Godhead. "Emptying himself, and taking on flesh, and becoming a servant obedient to death, even death on a cross."

The mindset of Jesus who was equal to God (although not living as though equality to God was something to be grasped) poured himself out. He washed the disciples' feet. He allowed men to spit on him and kill him...*allowed* it. According to the Bible, the whole universe is held together by the power of Christ. He is the creative force God has created all things by and with or by and to, according to the book of Colossians, which means the glands necessary to work up spit and the muscles necessary to fling that spit on the face of Christ during his crucifixion were all held together by Jesus Christ.

What humility is that? He is the only one ever who could say, "In every way, I'm better than. I am more holy. I am more powerful. I am eternal. I have always been. I will always be. Everything is holding together right now because I am telling it to." Yet he emptied out all of that and went to the cross on our behalf. The Bible is saying we have the mind of Jesus Christ that enables us to consider others as more significant than us, and that works itself out in service.

How do we do that here? There are hundreds of ways for you to serve the body here, some that are so unique to this church that you could do it at no other church. Only at The Village Church could you drive a shuttle bus with an airplane on the side of it. I know of no other church where that is a possibility. For those of you who are like, "When are you painting those?" the answer is never. We will never paint those. We like the confusion in the community about what we do here. "Can I get a ride to the airport?" "No, we don't give rides to the airport."

You can drive shuttles at the Dallas Campus, at the Flower Mound Campus. You can greet. You can park. You can be a group leader. You can get involved in recovery. You can work in preschool. You can work with first through fifth graders. You can work with sixth through eighth graders. You can work with ninth through twelfth graders. You can help us. You can... On and on and on I could go. There are hundreds of ways for you to serve.

In fact, the whole point of Connection Central is to help connect you to the body and show you opportunities we have for you to consider others as more significant than yourself, because that's what everyone who has served you today has done. The people who got you into the parking lot, all they have done today is say, "You're better than me." They didn't have to do that. They could have just parked, come in, and sat down.

The ones who handed out things to you, they didn't have to do that. The ones who helped you find your seat, they didn't have to do that. The bands that are playing across all our campuses, nobody is getting paid. They're up here just to serve you. In Flower Mound, the band got here yesterday at 2:00 and left last night at 9:00 and got here before 8:00 this morning, and they'll leave after 1:00 this afternoon. Why? You're more significant than they are, so they believe.

When we were at the old HV Campus (if you were a part of those days), our parking lot would flood. It would flood in the back when it would rain. It's a good thing it only rains like three times a year here. The back three spots would flood pretty badly, and then up front toward the stairs would flood pretty badly, if you were in those days and remember that.

I remember one of the things that really made me really love Michael Bleecker, our worship pastor here at Flower Mound, is when it would rain and flood, he would park his car (he was one of the first ones here, because they rehearse in the morning) right in that middle spot where he would get out and be nearly ankle-deep in water. He would trudge in his wet shoes and wet jeans in and begin to prepare the band to help you engage the Lord in worship.

Why did he do that? He's a man of God, walking in humility who understands, "Somebody is going to park there, so let it be me." This man has won awards for the songs he has written. He was the ASCAP Song of the Year Award winner last year for "Glorious Day." Guys, he's a ferocious man of God, almost famous in certain circles, and he's going, "I'll park in the wet spot." Why? The overflow of discipleship is to serve brothers and sisters. That leads us to the last one, and that's the *result* of discipleship.

4. *Gospel-centered multiplication.* Last week, we talked at length about Matthew 28:18-20. I want to read it to you again. **"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been**

given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Now, as much as we can be a sending church, we are going to be a sending church. What I mean by that is the best of our resources and the best of our energies are being built up to get you out of here to engage a lost and dying world. Let me show you some of the ways we do that. We have a sending program here. If you are interested in planting a church, or if you are interested in going overseas, either kind of mid-term or long-term, we have a program built out to train you and prepare you for that.

We are a church-planting machine. In fact, this year, we'll plant a church in Chicago, and we'll plant a church in Bryan-College Station. We're going to plant one other one. We'll announce that in September. What we're going to do is go, "Does anybody want to move to Chicago? Does anybody want to head down to Bryan? Does anyone want to go?" As we launch campuses and church plants around the metroplex. We've already done it in Frisco. We've already done it in Capelle. We've bought campuses in a couple of other places.

We're saying, "Hey, go." We use a lot of the money you give to push out into other gospel ministries. We run dozens and dozens and dozens of short-term trips all over the world. Do you want to go to Kenya? Let's go to Kenya. Do you want to head to Southern Sudan? I know that's on some of your bucket lists. It's like Paris. Southern Sudan. We have trips in. Let's do it. Want to head down to Guatemala? Let's go. We do short-term trips, and some of the most beautiful things ever have come out of those short-term trips.

We were in Kenya several weeks ago. We were in the slums of Kijabe, and we came across a project that some of you guys did. It wasn't an organized thing from the church. *You* did it. We walk into this school where 148 little boys and little girls are being educated and being fed two meals a day. That place exists because a home group here at The Village went on a short-term trip together and walked through the slums of Kijabe and saw that these kids are digging through trash to find food, and there is no education.

They came back and got with a couple of other groups and raised \$50 grand. There wasn't some kind of fat cat going, "\$50,000? *Boom*. There it is." It was a group of people just kind of getting what they could together, gathered it, got \$50 grand, built this building that serves as a school Monday through Friday and a church on Saturday of 148 little boys and little girls, little Audreys, Reids, and Norahs are being fed and educated because you went on a trip with your home group, took your vacation time.

I'm not an idiot. I know the secular world is not going, "Oh. A mission trip to Kenya? You know what. Just take the two weeks. Take it. Take that ten days and go." They gave up vacation time and got on a plane to

Africa. There is no quick way to get to that continent. There are no direct flights that I am aware of from Dallas to Nairobi. You're going to spend some time on a couple of planes. You did that, got there, saw a need, raised money, and the gospel is going out in the slums of Kijabe because of you.

That's the heartbeat of our church. If you're here long enough, I'm eventually going to ask you to leave. As far as our money goes, you will not be seeing a lot of upgrades. This is the nicest Albertsons you have ever been in. You have never been in a nicer Albertsons than this. You have great chairs that are comfortable. There is decent enough space here. We're not going to spend our money perpetually upgrading your experience here. We're going to be inward only as much as we need to be to make maturing disciples.

Everything else is going out. We're going to plant churches with it. We're going to give to gospel-driven ministries around the world. We're going to train other young men to plant churches. That's where it's going to go. In fact, you annually give away hundreds of thousands of dollars to other global initiatives all over the world to make much of the name and renown of Jesus Christ. We have no intention of ever changing that.

We believe God has blessed us like he has financially because that's how we steward it. We're not going, "Oh, look at all he gave us for us." No, we're going, "Look at all he gave and entrusted us to steward for his name and renown." There will be a day that no one gives two cents about The Village Church, but there will never be a day where the name and renown of Jesus Christ is not exalted and lifted, so I want to sow into what is eternal. The Village Church is not eternal except for the saints who are members in it.

I want to sow into the kingdom of God, and you want to sow into the kingdom of God, because you give so freely to those things. With that said, those are kind of the things we lay before you in regard to holistic maturation. I think you have to look long and hard at your life. You can't just be coming on the weekends; you have to be connected to other people. Has that led to an overflow of service? Are you to a point where your personal preferences can die?

There is some other connective tissue here, so let me talk about that quickly. I know I'm going long. I apologize. There are some other connective tissues here. There is not a lot, but let me explain other things that are going on that fall outside of these things. Two times a year, once in the fall and once in the spring, we will put on training classes at each campus. They are six to eight weeks long, and they are built around training.

We've had a class on parenting. We've had a premarital class for those who are engaged. We've had a class on singleness. We've had Ephesians for women, not that Ephesians is just for women, but someone teaching the book of Ephesians particularly to women. We've had business in missions for those of you

who are businessmen, high entrepreneurs. We had a class on how you can leverage that for the global mission of God, to see men and women come to know him and love him. We have done... I'm just looking at other classes we have done. I think I've already mentioned parenting. These are classes, and there are more slated that we do at all campuses once in the spring, once in the fall, two or three classes per campus. Those are available to you.

The last lingering question if you're new here or don't quite understand how we operate is,, almost all of you, if you have a background in church, growing up in church, were dropped off at AWANA or RAs or GAs or children's choir or children's drama or children's hand bells. You were dropped (you're giggling because it's true) off at something that was age specific for your child, and I'm not anti-programmatic. I think those things are helpful.

If you were in Bible Drill, I bet you found Galatians really quickly last week. I bet when I said, "Let's get to Philippians 2," you smoked the rest of us. I'm not saying those things are unhelpful or wrong. In fact, I think in many ways, they can be beautiful, but I'm also painfully aware of our context. Here's what I mean by that. I want to, as much as it depends on me (parents, listen to me), make it impossible for you at this church to punt your responsibility to me. I'm not catching the ball. You will not punt your responsibility to disciple your children to the staff in charge of Next Generation here.

What we *will* do though is we will come alongside of you and serve you in every way possible. Let me explain just simply how. If you have a first through fifth grader in particular (this is true if you have a newborn to kindergartener too), when you go pick up your son or daughter here in just a few minutes, there will be this sheet next to their door. Here's what they have learned. While we've been in here learning about this, they have been learning the parable out of Luke 18 about the tax collector and the Pharisee. That's what they've learned.

What they've learned in that is that we need to be aware of our need for God, because God enjoys someone who cries out in need for him but despises the one who praises their own goodness. That's what they'll be learning. Guess what. You can pick this up, and you can find out just in that short sentence, key point. "This is what they learned. Look what we did for you. We literally gave you questions to ask them on the ride home." Just in case you're like, "Chandler, that's not where I am, bro. If they're like, 'We learned about the tax collector and Pharisee,' all my kid is going to know is that I'm biblically illiterate."

We got you, man. We answered the questions for you. All right? Listen. I love you, man. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to make you look like a moron in front of your kids. We gave you the answer. Right after that, what we've also done is given you something so you can dig deeper. We've given you a family devotional to do this week, just one. We've even helped you out. Look. It's like, "After dinner one

evening..." *Bam*. Done. Just one night after dinner. Here it is. Here's the text. Here is what the text means. Here are questions to ask your kids about the text.

Again, we've given you the answer, because it's not romantic. When you pick up your first through fifth grader, you're going to say, "What did you learn today?"

"I don't know."

"You don't remember? I just picked you up. We're seven minutes out from what you just learned. You don't remember *anything*?"

"The Bible."

(See, we got you.)

"You didn't learn about the tax collector and the Pharisee?"

"Oh yeah, we learned about the tax collector and the Pharisee."

"Tell me about the tax collector."

"Yeah, the tax collector really needed the Lord."

"Yeah, yeah, he did. He really did need the Lord. What about the Pharisee?"

"Well, the Pharisee thought he was so good that he didn't need the Lord."

"You are killing me. You're right. You're right. He did. So what was kind of the point?"

We got you. We're helping you. There is a memory verse for the month, a small memory verse for the month that you can do as a family. Every week, week in and week out, right there. Here's what you get to do, dad. Here's what you get to do, mom. You get to, on the car ride home, teach your children, "This matters. For this family, we're serious about Jesus Christ."

You get to do that, and more than I will ever be able to do that and anyone in that room will ever be able to do that, God has asked you to do it, so we're going to serve you. On top of that resource, you have musical

memory verses that we post once a month on the website with Bleecker singing like a little kid verse just so that we might memorize the Bible through song.

Your kids are memorizing every other song. We might as well fill one up with Scripture. Then we've given you things like (we've done this every summer) the summer family guide that will help you lead well, men and women, in your homes. We crush this book in our house. Our family fun night is Thursday. That's when we do it. We don't have a worship service in my house every night. Thursday nights are family fun night. I've done the research, and by research I mean I've read this.

I sent calendar invitations to my wife with the title of what we would do. This past Thursday night, we took all the blankets in our house, and we built a fort in our living room. Then all five of us climbed into that fort, and I opened up my Bible (I could hardly see) and read Psalm 46:1, "**The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**" We began to talk about what a refuge is.

Again, I'm not a genius. I can just read. In that, we talked about what a refuge is. Reid came out of the gate strong.

"It protects us from zombies."

"Yes, yes it does protect us from zombies. What else?"

"From bad weather. From evil things."

This is the theme. Then my superbly theological wife came from behind me with like a theological haymaker and just said really for me, "The Lord is my refuge and strength when I feel tempted to sin, when I feel tempted to do things that aren't pleasing to the Lord. This is when he becomes for me my refuge and my shield."

Then we talked about God being a very present help. He doesn't show up after bad days, but in the middle of it, he's with us. He never lets us go. All of this is taking place under a comforter around our chairs. I'm not a genius. I just read. We've given that to you so you would have all sorts of things to you. Again, I never want to over-romanticize this. Parents, all you have to do is do it. If you have in your head that your kids are going to sit around and go, "Feed me the Word of God," then you have much better children than I have.

Last week, we were trying to go over Ephesians 6, the armor of God. We started the evening with water balloons and squirt guns. As we sat down to have a devotional, we had just amped them up a little too much. We didn't even get through it without somebody getting whipped. We had to change the text

halfway through to Hebrews 12, "**The Lord disciplines those he loves.**" Don't in your head think this is going to go smoothly.

Look at me. They're kids. It's not going to go smoothly. You just have to do it, because daddies, what you're doing in that moment is you're staking a ground in your house and saying, "As for me and this house, we'll serve the Lord." I don't think... You just just have to do it. It is difficult? Yes. Are there all sorts of complexities? Always. Do it, dad. Do it, mom. It's worth it in the end. You can't light any heart on fire, but you can put a lot of wood around it. We're just trying to serve you in that.

Seventh through twelfth grade is the same thing, except for you will find us, the older your student gets, trying to draw them into this room, trying to create not a ton of age-specific activities simply for them, some, but not a lot. Some because they need it, not a lot because they don't need it. Here's what I mean by this. In every aspect of statistical information, you lose people at transition points. I think you lose them at transition points because kids have never been taught how to belong to the church. They've always been "siloed" off into something else.

We want your seventh grader in here. We want your sixth grader in here. We want your tenth grader in here. Is that ideal for you? Maybe not, but we want them in here, because we believe it will be ideal for them. "Well, I like them to have silly songs and fart jokes so they can tie that to the gospel." Well, not here. They can come in and sit and be proclaimed to. Will that be difficult in some spots? Yeah, I think I'll probably say some things that aren't helpful at times for your kid. I think they'll start calling people idiots, and I apologize for that.

A second thing is... I've had several parents say this to me. I've experienced it myself as a parent. When we do baptism weekends, that can be highly problematic for a sixth grader. It's true, because God keeps saving people here, and he's saving them out of the muck and the mire. When they testify about God's glorious goodness, part of their story is included in that.

Very true story. My 10-year-old daughter was completely confused by a woman's testimony who felt a ton of shame around her swinger lifestyle. That's so confusing to my daughter. She's like, "Why would she feel guilty about swinging?" I got the opportunity not to explain swinging to my 10-year-old, but rather just simply lay out that God saves from all sorts of darkness, and there isn't a type of darkness God cannot save from. Would it be difficult? Yeah.

The second thing I would say (again, I promise you I'm never intentionally offensive) is that I think you're naïve if you don't think your sixth grader is probably a little bit more educated than you think they are. I could be wrong. Maybe you're the first parent in the history of the world to lock out all coms, but I'm

guessing that at school, even good Christian schools, your kids know probably more than you think they do.

We don't want to be foolish, but at the same time, God saves people from dark places, and that should be celebrated. We temper back those testimonies. If you're thinking they haven't already been edited, then you should read the original versions. This is what we're doing. This is how we want to serve you. This is where our energy goes, our minds go, our prayers go, our training goes, our hopes go in this place.

The Bible says in Romans 8 that God is conforming us into the image of his Son. How beautiful is that? God is actively making all of us more and more and more and more like Jesus Christ, and I am more like him today than I was 20 years ago when he saved me, and I will be more like him 10 years from now than I am right now. That's awesome.

What I want to lay before you is...*Are there defects in your maturation at this point? Are there areas, are there components, that you have not been serious about and therefore have found yourself hitting ceilings you probably shouldn't be hitting right now?* There are on-ramps into every aspect of life here, and there are on-ramps into every aspect of life at other churches. If it's here or not, I'm okay. My hope is that you would just mature somewhere. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, for the grace you have lavished upon us. I thank you for the ability to make much of your name, to praise you and enjoy you, and I thank you for the community you have given many of us to walk in. I pray you would give us a servant heart and that more and more and more we would lay down our personal preference for the glory of your name. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.