

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Colossians, chapter 3, is where we'll camp out. I'm going to work us toward that, but that will be our text. This is week 11 of *Recovering Redemption*, and so we're just about done here this week. Next week is Family Worship Weekend and then straight into Advent, so that's what we have coming for us.

I want us to begin to turn our attention to the sustainability of what we've been discussing. We've talked about how God has reconciled us to himself in Christ, and so the relationship that was fractured because of sin between us and God has been made right in Jesus Christ. He has forgiven us. He has adopted us as sons and daughters so we are holy but we are also beloved. We are forgiven, but we are also enjoyed. So the just Judge has said the record of debt has been canceled and the heavenly Father has said, "I have delighted in you as sons and daughters," and so we watch the relationship be restored.

Then the last two weeks the thing we've discussed is since our vertical relationship has been restored our horizontal relationships begin to be ironed out, although both are executed imperfectly, which no one in this room, if you've been a Christian 40 years, would dare have the integrity and guts to say, "Nope, I'm perfect." If you did, that would be your act of imperfection. So we are imperfectly executing upon the work of God in our hearts and God graciously and mercifully covers our stumbling as we pursue complete obedience. So we've talked about that.

Now I want to turn our attention to the sustainability of the ongoing ethic of confession, repentance, and life together, because our entire lives will be filled with that: confession, repentance, and life together. We've already done 10 weeks on the difficulty of those things, on the fact we'll need to confess, we'll need to repent, and we'll need to do life with one another.

All three of those are difficult, and so most of us go in spurts. We'll have a good spurt of repentance, and then all of sudden that spurt will be gone. We'll have a spurt of doing community well with one another, and then all of sudden something will happen there and, "Let's go find another one." So how do we sustain, how do we persevere, in the long run with the ongoing ethic, not the silver bullet that changes our lives, but rather the ongoing ethic that's required to grow in godliness?

The simple answer and one I'm probably most passionate about and I've tried to rigorously test for 20 years is the simple motivation of joy. Here's why I think if you were to distill the teachings of Jesus Christ in

the Gospels and kind of come up with a mission statement for Jesus' life... Let's say Jesus read *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and decided, "I need a mission statement that's clear, that's concise, that drives the actions of my day." There are several that would work well, I believe. So Luke 19:10 says, **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."** That's pretty concise.

Why did Jesus come? What does it have to do with me? What's going on in the person and work of Christ? The most famous man in history... What was he all about? He came to seek and save the lost. That'll work. I'm for that. You'll never sit in this room where that doesn't get preached. Regardless of what the topic is, I'm bringing us back to that point. I'm going to do it today. I'm doing it right now.

Another one that I think works well is John 3:17. Maybe you're like, "Well, I know John 3:16." Okay, keep reading those great verses. There's awesome stuff behind them, and then sometimes if you're not careful, you'll use a verse you think sounds awesome that in context is not. I love when people quote the Prophets without reading them.

You might want to read there, because that's not what he's talking about. You know the "I'm going to do something so amazing in your day that you wouldn't believe it if you were to be told." Do you have that on a coffee cup? God is saying, "I'm going to destroy the people of Israel." Meditate on that while you're sucking on your joe tomorrow. "God is going to kill everyone." Keep reading.

Here's John 3:17. **"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."** That works. We're talking mission statement, the person, work of Jesus Christ. He has come into the world to seek and save the lost, and then another one is, "I haven't come to condemn the world but rather to ransom the world." That's a great mission statement.

We're going to preach that every... You can't come to an event we do where you won't hear this. In fact, I will repeatedly bang the drum on this reality. Christ has not come to condemn you; he has come to rescue you from the condemnation you are eagerly walking in. So Christ has come, not to condemn. If you have that "I get nervous around the idea of Jesus because I just feel so condemned," that's not why he came. He actually came to rescue you from that feeling of condemnation you feel before he said anything. These are good mission statements. They're right. They're beautiful.

My heart has always been drawn to another one, though, and it's really because of some things I read early in my faith that have constructed around me this understanding of what's at stake in regard to our relationship with God. That text is John 10:10. Here's what that text says. **"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."**

If you memorized this verse, maybe in the King James or the NIV, and there's no time to break down different variations of the Bible, but I memorized this verse like this. **"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."** Jesus is saying in this text, "I have come so you might experience the fullness of life."

Here's what I read early on that convinced me this needed to mark my soul in a special way. One of the things you're going to see happen over and over again is you are men and women driven by your appetites and by your belief that your actions will make you happy. You do what you do because you think in doing them you're going to be satisfied, you're going to find life, you're going to experience joy. In fact, even if you're in this room together, it is your desire for happiness and joy that brought you here.

If you're like, "I don't want anything to do with God. It's just my pesky neighbor keeps bothering me, so I'm here," that means you think it's going to make you happy to get your pesky neighbor off your back, so it was your pursuit of pleasure that drove you into this room even if you don't want to be here. Everything you do is driven by your instinctual desire for happiness and pleasure. You do nothing that is not driven by that, even hurt yourself.

Blaise Pascal, who I'm sure is one of your favorite authors, was a French mathematician, theologian. Literally, I've read him. I would not... I'm going to be straight. I respect him. Wouldn't want to hang out with him. He's just that guy. But here's what he says. "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 of 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 those who hang themselves."

You and I are driven by pleasure. Look at me, because if you're a little bit older this will jostle you. We are by our nature hedonists. It drives everything we do. Here's the refrain you're going to find in the Bible that becomes important for us to reorient around. What you're going to see happen in the Bible is a celebration of Jesus being better than everything else, of Jesus being ultimately the place where the most pleasure is possible, that Jesus knowing and being reconciled to God in Christ is the space the most pleasure is possibly experienced.

Let me show you some of this in the Bible. Psalm, chapter 4, verse 7, says, **"You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound."** So basically David here is saying, "Let the wealthy have what they want. Let the world pursue what they want. When they get all they want, you're better still. I've watched their parties. I've seen their plains. I've experienced even some of what they've experienced, and here's what I can say. You're better than when grain and new wine abound."

So grain and new wine are symbols of wealth in the ancient world. They're like, "Jesus, you fill me with greater joy. There's more joy to be had in you than there is to be had in that." That's jostling. That really should unsettle us a bit because of how many hours a week and hours of thought and moments of our lives are wasted by saying, "This is where joy will be found," when David here, who has some experience in a world you might not have experience in, says, "You're better than when grain and new wine abound."

That's good wine. When he says "new wine," he's talking about the good stuff, not the little Franzia box in your fridge. "You fill me with greater joy than when grain and new wine abound." Look at this one. I love this one. Psalm 16:11: **"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."** The Bible says not only is Jesus better than anything else, but then on top of that, now it's saying, "Really the path of life is found with you." Real deep meaningful life is found in being connected to the Son of God.

Since we're in church, we have to do this one: Philippians, chapter 3, starting in verse 7. Right before this verse the apostle Paul gives us his kind of religious résumé in a successful attempt to make our religious, moral pursuits seem not just junior varsity, but like sophomore B-team practice squad, as in, "You probably should get into art. Do you like to read? You should probably take up reading. This isn't your game."

After he walks through his "circumcised on the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law faultless, a Pharisee of Pharisees," he's listing out his moral, religious activities, and here's what he has to say about them.

"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish..." Here's a great word study. That word *rubbish* there means dung. "I count them as excrement." This is graphic language in the text. You and I go, "Oh, rubbish." That's not how someone in the first century would've read that.

"...count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

Here's what just happened here. It's scandalous. He's saying, "If my religious activity doesn't give me Jesus, it's excrement. If all of my frantic religiosity of showing up at Home Group, of going to church, of

reading my Bible, if those things don't get me more of Jesus, then they're rubbish." The goal is not moral conformity; the goal is a knowledge of Jesus, a relationship with Jesus that transforms us from the inside out.

He's saying, "If all I have is all this religious activity, it's refuse. It's excrement. It's rubbish. It's worth nothing." You saw him say that at the very first line. He said, **"Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss..."** That's scary, because that means there are probably some gains to be had by being the good kid. You don't have to be... In churches you can just be a good kid and become a deacon. You don't have to love Jesus; you just have to be a good kid. Just don't watch R-rated movies that aren't about the crucifixion of Christ and you're in. That's all you have to do.

"Just be good. Look how good they are." Wrong. No. Look how much they love Jesus. Unless you go somewhere I'm not going, loving Jesus deeply utterly transforms your moral behavior. Don't tease those out too much. You get the "I love Jesus, but I do this and this." Okay, brother, loving Jesus transforms us, maybe not as quickly as we want, but it does transform us.

There aren't too many people loving Jesus with full-on drunken debauchery, murder, and... It just doesn't happen very often, or ever, so we are sanctified after we are justified. He's saying here infinite joy is made available to those who will find it in Jesus Christ. The deepest possible pleasures, the deepest possible joy available to mankind is found in Christ Jesus. That's where it's found. He's better than life itself.

The rhythm of the Scriptures is the fullness of joy is found in Christ and Christ alone. That's what Jesus meant when he says, "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full. What's the purpose for which I came? It's not condemnation. I haven't come to bring condemnation. I've come to rescue you from condemnation. I've come to save, not to condemn. On top of that, I've come so you might have the fullness of life," i.e., you can't experience the fullness of life without him.

If we will persevere in the ongoing ethic of confession, repentance, and life together, we must be very, very serious about pursuing joy, not cheap, transient, here-for-a-moment-and-gone-the-next-moment joys, but eternal, soul-saturating, life-transforming joys. How? That becomes the question, because we're by nature hedonists, and so how do we navigate past lesser joys to ultimate joys? How do we not spend our one dollar in the toy aisle and instead work toward getting the thing that is of most value? I'm glad you're here. That's what we're here for.

Let's look at Colossians, chapter 3, starting in verse 1. **"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things**

that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

I'm going to stop. We're going to do all 17 verses. That shouldn't make you nervous. I'm going to get this in. In the first five verses, we see kind of our first step toward ever-expanding, ever-increasing joy.

1. *Ever increasing, eternal, legitimate joy cannot be found outside of a serious pursuit of a relationship with Jesus Christ.* Am I saying you can't experience pleasure? Absolutely not. That would be absurd. I'm telling you you won't experience the fullness of joy possible for human beings outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. We must seek him.

How many of you who are Christians would say you've had a season of your Christian life where you've walked through what we Christians call *the desert*, you've been through dry times? Look right at me. I never want to take away from the legitimacy of that. You see it in Scripture all over the place, that God in an act of love will lead his people through a dry season to get them on their knees and on their face and back to the thing they need.

Few things destroy idols like the desert, but let's make sure we're not in the desert by our own choosing. The Lord will lead us there. My fear is many of us decide to run there. If you're complaining about being thirsty when there's water available to you, that's not on God; that's on you. The prophet Jeremiah says it this way. This is Jeremiah 29:13. **"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."**

God is not a cruel Father. He's not playing Hide and Go Seek with you but just not coming out. Do you remember that when you were a kid, where you just finally just give up? "Forget this. It has been like three hours." Your dad is like, "Ha ha," in the rafters, not coming down. You're just like, "Forget you then. I hope you're comfortable," and start watching cartoons.

That's not what God does. God is not playing Hide and Go Seek from you. "Seek the Lord while he may be found." I am utterly surprised and shocked by how many of us complain about being thirsty and complain about being dry and talk about growing weary and do nothing to drink. "I'm so thirsty."

"Well, here's some water."

"I'm too thirsty."

"Here's water."

"Are you not listening to me? I'm thirsty."

"I don't know what to do right now, brother. Here is a giant bottle of water, and you just keep screaming at me that you're thirsty and weary and tired." If you don't eat, if you don't drink, you don't run and you grow weary.

My wife has blood sugar issues, which means I always have food on me. That blood sugar drops, and we have a name for it in the Chandler house. It's called Mom is "hangry." It's a combination of hunger and anger; we've made a new word, *hangry*. So I'm like, "Here's some peanut butter, baby. There you go. Let's get that blood sugar up." She's listening to this right now. "We have to make sure Mama has protein at all times."

In that if you don't eat, if you don't drink, you feel weak, you feel angry, and you will act not like yourself. In fact, has not even our advertising picked up on that? Have you seen these Snickers commercials? It's like, "Eat this, man." "Are you serious right now?" Then all of a sudden he gets straight. If you're not plugged in to the source of life, it should not surprise you that you're not experiencing life. If you feel dry and aren't drinking, you're dehydrated but refuse to come to the well, don't be surprised.

What happens to us...God help us...is a lot of us have enough strength to run awhile on our own strength, but truly you're pushing the car uphill. Praise God you're all yoked like that and able to do it, but eventually without food and drink those legs are going to buckle and the car will roll back downhill and run you over.

I've met far too many people who punted on Christianity before they ever even tried it, not that they tried to be good, not that they tried to quit this addiction or stop doing this. No, that's not Christianity; that's your will trying to triumph over a spiritual power that laughs at your strength. Our first step toward the ability to persevere in the ongoing ethic of confession, repentance, and life together is a seriousness about seeking and finding the Lord, about knowing him, not just knowing about him, but knowing him. From there the text moves to our second step. Verse 5:

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

The first step is we want to know the Lord. We want to seek the Lord. We want to find the Lord. We want to be diligent about that, because our joy is at stake. So we don't want to be junior varsity hedonists. We want to be full-on hedonists. I want all the joy there possibly is. I want the greatest amount of pleasure to be experienced that's found in Christ. I want to be serious about pursuing that.

2. *Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you.* Indwelling, ongoing sin, and the struggle of sin is a very legitimate reality for most of us. How many...? I know this is church, so it's hard to be honest, but let's try. How many of you would say, "I have a besetting sin, a type of sin that has kind of hung around my life for an extended period of time. I'll have seasons in which I'm gaining victory, but it always seems to every once in a while sneak up and knock me down"? Anyone?

Take a look around. This should be encouraging. If you're like, "I'm all alone," no you're not. How many of you have even said, "Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to memorize Bible verses that tell me not to do that in order to combat that"? Come on. You can do this. This is church. So we've done it. We are given one offensive weapon in the Scriptures by which to fight and put to death these things. That offensive weapon found in the book of Ephesians is the sword of the Spirit, which is...what? The Word of God.

We're given the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It's the only offensive weapon the Christian is given to conquer and put to death anything in our lives. I think the reason memorizing Scriptures that tell us not to do something doesn't work is that we're actually wielding the sword wrong. Let me try to help unpack what we do when we sin.

When we walk into sin, what we're doing, because at our core schema we are hedonists, is we're believing the promise that sin offers. Let's take three different ones. Let's take lust, let's take laziness, and let's take anger. All three of those, if you're walking in them, your flesh or something demonic is making you a promise it has no power to keep.

I'll start with laziness. Laziness is saying, "If I could just get a little rest, if I could just get a nap, if I could just have a day to myself, if I could just get some me-time," but can I be really straight with you? Lazy people are some of the most exhausted people out there. They really are. You show me someone who's lazy, and I'll show you someone who's tired.

"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands..." The lie is, "If I just don't fulfill my obligations on this day, if I don't do the kind of monotonous things necessary today to get to tomorrow, I'll be free. I'll get rested. I'll have more energy and vitality." That rarely works. Can I tell you something I

earnestly believe I don't think people like? I know some of you are like, "Besides the stuff you've already said?" Yes.

Let me talk specifically to men, although I do believe it's true also for women. I believe God intends us specifically as men to be tired. I think we're better men when we're tired. Nothing is more dangerous than a bored man with too much energy. Nothing destroys the family like a bored man with too much energy. Nothing destroys the church like bored men with too much energy.

God would wring us out for his name, his renown, the good of our bride, and the glory of Christ in our children. Fulfilling those obligations...no lie...is exhausting, and yet when the Holy Spirit has empowered you to do it, haven't you laid your head on the pillow grateful to God? When you nail a project, isn't there something in you when you've worked hard and wrung yourself out and given yourself over to something and it worked? Does that not create energy, not rob you of it?

Coming home from a long day and going after your wife's heart and then helping her to get the rest of dinner ready and then getting on the floor and playing with the kids... And then this is just personal preference. This isn't in the Bible. Men, take your kids to bed. Cuddle in the bed with them. Pray with them. Encourage them in the Lord. God has put that on you. Do you understand that? I'm not saying...

Nothing in me at 8:00 or 8:30 at night... I don't know how you're wired. At 9:30 I'd better be in a dream inside a dream. Nothing at 8:30 wants to cuddle with my kids and try to go after their hearts. It's exhausting, and I don't know they know what's going on in their hearts, so I have to kind of fish for it. They don't offer that up easily. "What's the Lord teaching you?" "Well, Father, out of Colossians 3..." That's not how it works. "I don't know."

Then I'm going to come and I'm going to sit down with Lauren and again just see how her heart is, what she's dreaming, what the Lord is pressing on her heart, and then I get to go to bed. "When's your time, Matt?" I got married. I don't have any. I get up really early before everyone, and that's a sweet little spot with me and the Lord. Even then that's the Lord's time.

Running, not sinfully tired, but tired, actually lets me rest in the Lord. Resting in the Lord creates energy in a way that a simple nap or a break from work won't. What laziness says is, "Hey, fold your hands. Don't worry about that. That'll take care of itself. That'll work itself out." That's laziness, and it will not, it cannot, deliver upon its promises.

Take lust. The biggest felt need we see in this area is busted-up marriages while people over-romanticize their ex relationships and the sexual encounters they've had in the past and seek out those relationships

because the relationship they're in now is difficult. The lie in lust is, "This is going to be a satisfying experience." Let's be straight. I'm a man, and so let me be... I can absolutely imagine sex with someone new carries with it the unknown and that unknown comes with some excitement, but it will never deliver upon its promises.

In fact, pornography and promiscuity, unless your conscience is seared, always creates shame. You build out the promise, "This is going to be pleasurable in a way that's lasting," and in the end it lies to you and you don't experience that except for the moment, and then when you leave and it's over you feel guilt and shame. The lie is a false promise.

Anger is, "I want justice. Nobody is going to treat me like that," and then you walk in anger. Then all your relationships work out once you speak your mind, don't they? People love just to hear you speaking the truth to them, just grateful for that. No, the promise is, "You need justice, and justice will satisfy," but doesn't justice blow up your relationships?

We talked the last couple of weeks about absorbing and overlooking as far as it's possible. So you explode. The promise is things will be made right, justice will be served. What you actually get is things get all busted up and almost irreparable. If we walk into sin because we're believing deceitful promises, then should we not just know verses that tell us we shouldn't, although those are great verses because they reveal the wickedness in our hearts?

What if we read, memorized, and dove into the Word of God, marinated in it in such a way that we began to believe the promises of God above and beyond the promises of sin? What if we did it that way? What if instead of knowing Job 31:1 that says, "I make a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a woman lustfully," we just fully believed God keeps his promises in a way sin cannot?

How many of you need seven or eight hours of sleep a night? Eight or nine? Ten or eleven? Did you not hear what I just said about laziness? I'm kidding. Put your hands down. Here's something to think about. You and I are weak and frail. Have you ever considered the fact that more than a third of your life will be spent asleep? I've oftentimes thought, "Do you know how much I could get done if I didn't have to go to bed?" You need food to function, and none of that is true about God.

God does not sleep, nor does he slumber. His blood sugar never dips down. He's never weary, and he is able. There's nothing he is unable to do. When the Lord makes a promise, it is unlike the promise of sin, unlike the promises of our flesh in that he is able to accomplish and fulfill the promises he makes his children.

The Bible says all the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus Christ, and so one of the ways I've tried to combat sin and be serious about the pursuit of joy is I've tried to meditate upon and consider the promises of God made toward me as his son, and in that moment of temptation, I want to believe, "No, you're going to keep your promise. That can't keep its promise, so I'm going to believe my joy is on the line here. I'm going to do this your way."

Let me give you just a couple of those. Matthew 5, verse 8, says, "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**" So a simple promise. "**Blessed are the pure in heart...**" Not the perfect in heart, because that dude doesn't exist except the guy who said this. "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**" If I am transformed from one degree of glory to the next, if I am made more and more like Jesus by beholding Jesus, then all of a sudden I have a pretty big verse here.

"**Blessed are the pure in heart** [the innocent in heart], **for they shall see God.**" Let me tell you how this promise changes how I live my life. I never want to give anyone or the Enemy, the Devil and demons, an authority over me they shouldn't possess, which means I'm going to come clean about my heart every time I can spot it. So I'm not ever going to pretend to be strong for people so I can wear the cape. It's not what I need. It's not what people need.

I have good days and bad days. I have areas in my life I still struggle with, sins I still have to wrestle with, and here's what I can say in all integrity with several of those guys in the room right now. I have no secrets. If you walked up to me and went, "Guess what I learned about you?" there would be no panic in me, zero. I'm not going to be like, "Oh my gosh, what did you find? Did you find something on the Internet?" I'm just not going to be nervous.

Three of our elders have seen all of my tax returns. They've seen my budget, know how I spend my money. I have zero secrets, and sometimes it's not even about an action. It's even about something I'm thinking. I've said this before. Sometimes what I think terrifies me. When I dial in to what I'm actually dwelling on, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I shouldn't be a pastor." What I'm going to do in that moment is I'm going to pick up the phone. I'm going to call Josh Patterson. I'm going to call Brad Payne. I'm going to call Brian Miller.

In fact, even this past week, to push it a different direction, Josh Patterson called me. Michael Bleecker, who is the worship pastor... If you noticed, he hasn't been around the last couple of weeks. His father has been very sick. His father actually died last week. Bleecker preached the funeral yesterday, so make sure you love on him. He should be back next week. But Josh flew up there to be with Michael and his family. I was actually in Indianapolis and unable to.

In that Josh calls me. He's like, "I'm in a hotel all by myself. I want to make sure I'm living pure and upright," and so I just encouraged him and then asked him some follow-up questions later and told him to be careful on his computer and be careful with the television because there are things available that are destructive.

This is pure in heart, not perfect in heart. I'm not walking in secrecy. I'm not going to pretend to be strong when I'm not. That's not pure of heart. Pretending you're further along than you are is not pure of heart, and the promise is blessed are the pure in heart for you will see God. If seeing God increases joy, then I'm going to be serious about that promise. I'm going to use that promise to battle sin. Rather than Job 31:1 driving me, it's the promise God is better that drives me.

Another one of my favorites... I'm going to skip the third one just because of time, but I love Psalm 36, verse 8. It says, "**...you give them drink from the river of your delights.**" Quickly, everything that is pleasurable was created by God and gifted to man for God's glory. *Everything*. Food is a gift from God to man.

That food has flavor... Have you thought about that? God could've created just some sort of tasteless bark to eat in which we could sustain ourselves. I know a lot of you organic fools are like, "Yes!" I'm glad you're healthier than the rest of us, but God has given us food, infused it with good flavors and has gifted it to us.

Let me put this in a real... Again, I want to continue to put this into perspectives I think we battle with here in this area. Again, the number of men and women who are caught up in extramarital affairs in this area is baffling statistically. Here's where this promise comes in. "We're going to drink from the river of your delight. You're the Creator of all pleasure, and in all the pleasure he created in his love for us, he put down tracks to stay on lest we hurt ourselves."

Again, to go back to the extramarital affair, for those of you who are running toward it. Nobody falls into it. You choose to walk into it. You'll make a dozen or so decisions that are the wrong decisions before you ever get there. Nobody stumbles into adultery. We choose to walk into it. In that, as I've already said, absolutely this would be a pleasurable experience, but here's what I come with full confidence to tell you.

You're miserable when you're with your mistress because you're guilty about what you're doing to your family. When you come home to your family, you feel guilty with your family because you cheated with this person. You have created in your world no peace regardless of where you go. You're a junior varsity hedonist. You're a sad excuse for the pursuit of joy.

As pleasurable as that 15, 20, 30 minutes might be, there's just no way you would ever be able to say it's more pleasurable than being dedicated to one woman with your whole heart, your whole mind, and your whole soul, guarding your eyes, protecting your heart so you're an expert on this one woman, where you can grow and turn 65, 70, and 80 and marvel at God's work in you and among you.

To compare those two, you'd have to be an idiot to say this 25 or 30 minutes of pleasure, this little jaunt into lust, is so much better than a commitment that says, "Let's make it work, and let's work toward the most joy possible." Do you know your spouse has been given to you by God to reveal some of the wicked areas of your heart? It's a good thing God gave you a spouse.

I know all the traps around adultery. "She just treats me like I deserve to be treated." No, bro, she doesn't know you. "She gives me affection my wife doesn't give me," because you're not being a good husband at home. Become an expert in your wife's physical beauty rather than looking at porn all the time. Quit comparing her to someone else. Maybe you're thinking I'm being too hard on men. They're the predominant, although not the only, perpetrators of this.

Women tend to over-romanticize past relationships. "Oh, it was so good then. I know we broke up for a reason. I don't even remember that. He treated me better than this guy treats me. Maybe it'll be found there." You just wreak havoc on your world. The promise is, "Your way... You control the river of delight, so I'm going to do this your way. I'm going to eat food your way. I'm going to spend my money your way. I'm going to serve my wife your way. I'm going to pursue her your way. I'm going to guard my mind your way. I'm going to guard my heart that way, because I'm after the fullest joy possible."

3. *How our relationships would work.* In verse 11, he says, "**Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.**" I love this verse. He just said there are no more dividing walls between us. There are two races, the race of Adam and the race of Christ. That's it.

Are there ethnic differences? Absolutely. Should they separate us? Absolutely not. Are there socioeconomic differences? Yes. Are there different categories within those socioeconomic build-outs? Absolutely not. The rich should worship with the poor. The white should worship with the black. The Hispanic should worship with the white, black, and Asian.

We should be a family that mirrors well the saving work of Jesus Christ. Here's what he's saying here. Christ is all and is in all. We are now defined by his rescuing power, not by our ethnicity, not by our socioeconomic status, not by these things, so the church becomes a tapestry of God's saving work. Now let's look at our relationships with one another.

Verse 12 says, **"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved..."** By the way, right there was just almost the whole series. Did you see that? *Holy* means forgiven. *Beloved* means you're delighted in. That was forgiveness, justification, and adoption, delight in. You are holy, forgiven, and you are beloved. You are delighted in and enjoyed by the King of glory.

"Put on...compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." That was the last two weeks here. Verse 14: **"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body."**

Listen to this little quick sentence. **"And be thankful."** If you write in your Bible, you underline that. **"And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."** Let me condense all these verses and just encourage you this way.

4. *Become an expert in how good God has been to you.* Our default posture is to be aware of what we don't have rather than what we do, of comparing ourselves to God's goodness and grace to others and then comparing it to what he gave to us in order to see if the scorecards work out. Become an expert in how good he is to you.

Learn to walk in thankfulness. Learn to walk in gratitude. Everything about your understanding of God and your relationship with one another will begin to change if you begin to marvel at how good God is rather than what you don't have. Think even how dark that is. Why do we spend so much of our time dialing in to the things we wish weren't there, that we don't have, that we should've gotten, or what should've happened? I don't know why we torture ourselves like that.

There are covenant members of this church who can't be here this morning because physically something has gone wrong, but not you. You're here. There are covenant members of this church right now whose marriages are on fire, but maybe that's not you this morning. Maybe you guys are in a sweet spot in a good rhythm and a great season of marriage. You should be thankful for that.

We have parents here whose kids are wayward, I mean, drugs-and-alcohol wayward. Maybe not yours. You should be grateful for that. Instead of, "Gosh, they're always getting B's," breathe, bro, just breathe. By the

way, my parents would take me out to dinner when I made all B's. It was like a win. I'm not saying don't have high expectations; I'm just saying breathe. Think of how good God has been to you.

You had the option of breakfast this morning. Do you know how many people on that video we watched didn't have that option? God has been unbelievably good to you. Become an expert in it. Do you have good friends? You should be grateful for that, because good friends are hard to find. Real friends are hard to find. Do you have money in the bank? Praise God for that, because a lot of people here don't.

On and on I could go. You should not be a stranger to God's mercy and blessing on your life. You should be an expert in it. Are you struggling? Then lay that before the feet of God, voice that to your community, and be serious about being completely dialed in to every way God has blessed you. In fact, a good exercise this afternoon... I don't know when the Boys kick off, but if you have time, you should write out just a list of all you have to be grateful for. It'll surprise you how amazing God has been to you. You just don't spend any time thinking about it.

If we will be serious about persevering in the ongoing ethic of confession, repentance, and life together, we must be far more serious about our hedonistic tendencies than we currently are. C.S. Lewis says it this way, and I'll close with this. This is in a book called *The Weight of Glory*. If you are a reader, I would strongly recommend Lewis's book, *The Weight of Glory*.

In that book he says, "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." Oh, that we might not be ignorant children, making mud pies when the beach is an option.

Seek him. Seek to put to death indwelling sin. Become an expert on his goodness and grace and grow in your relational capacity to walk with those who aren't exactly like you. These lead to deeper joy, more pleasure, a greater experience of God that fuels the ongoing ethics of confession, repentance, and life together. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I pray where we have been complaining about our thirst but refusing to drink that you would help us. So many of us, Father, have jammed you up. We've given you an hour and 30 minutes a weekend, and that's the extent of our pursuit of you. So forgive us for that. That would be absurd in any other relationship, so forgive us for trying to just make our relationship with you look like that.

Father, teach us more rightly how to understand and handle your Word. Might we be more serious at pursuing you in your Word in order to wield well the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I pray that we'd believe your promises over the promises of sin. God, help us grow in gratitude. You are good, and you do good. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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