

James (Part 12) – Faithful / Faithless

Matt Chandler – May 24, 2015

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. This is going to be a bit of a twist. Go ahead and turn to Mark 14. I'll explain why in a minute. I know we're in a series on the book of James. We're going to get there, but I'll need to frame it.

In 2002, I was having dinner with a group of about eight men at The Village Grille just across the street here. Back before they made it the restaurant it is now, it was just cafeteria style with butcher paper. They had crayons out so you could draw on the butcher paper, at least your children could. I guess the idea was that your children could.

I had a meeting there with the then deacons of Highland Village First Baptist Church. I had been in their hiring process for several months, and we were nearing the end. We had a meeting where they asked me this question. "If you had a vision for, a dream for Highland Village First Baptist Church, what would that vision or dream be?" What I drew on the butcher paper was I took a crayon. I don't remember what color crayon or anything like that.

I drew a circle, and I wrote in the middle of the circle, "HVFBC," Highland Village First Baptist Church. Out of that, I drew all sorts of lines. I started creating other little circles attached to HVFBC. I said, "Man, if I could be spent, used by God in this place in a particular way, my hope and dream would be that out of Highland Village First Baptist Church, God might do something where we're able to create a lot of other movements of God's spirit and be a part of the larger kingdom of God, not just the building up of this congregation.

What I feel compelled to give my life to is a group of men and women who are compelled by the gospel to be a part of something bigger than just themselves. This is what excites me, keeps me up at night. This is the fuel on which I run." From my initial moment here, even before I had this job, this calling really procured via the sovereignty of God procured via the search team that found me and us saying yes to it, my hope, my dream, our dream was that The Village Church would be a

place that was serious about multiplication and seeing a work of God that was bigger than just our gathering here.

Since really the very beginning here, we've been serious about multiplication. That has taken multiple forms. We've been actively church planting. In fact, we planted our first church just a couple of years after I got here. By the way, we've sent out a ton of missionaries, but it took a different turn after a season we called *Venture* in which we had called the church together for six weeks of prayer and fasting.

For six weeks, we prayed and fasted and asked God to really solve what was a growing space issue. Despite our planting, despite me constantly saying, "If you're driving past six great churches to get here, stop it and go to those churches." The old State of the Union address. I need to do one of those again at some point. Ultimately, God made a way. He literally handed us by his grace what we call the Denton Campus.

In 2007, we launched our first site and officially became a multisite church. That did nothing to damper our enthusiasm toward sending missionaries and planting churches, but we did begin to experience the beauty of multisite. There are complexities and difficulties, but people began to put their faith in Christ. We began to see that not only did the Denton Campus provide relief some and space. It didn't do much of that.

Actually, it started to reach. People began to become Christians. People began to be discipled. We started a gospel work there in Denton that to this day is a marvel to see. A couple of years ago now, there was a deep, growing conviction that maybe these campuses that The Village Church has, there may be a way to leverage what God has done here to the original intent, which was not just to hold on to these campuses but to see them mature to a place where we can just release them to be autonomous gospel lights in the context God has placed them.

As you know, unless you're very new to The Village, in 2014, we voted...particularly the Denton Campus voted...to become an autonomous congregation. Now, there are a couple of reasons I'm sharing this. First and foremost is that this needs to be epically celebrated by this church. We're looking at 13 to 14 years of fervent prayer that Christ might use us to make his name all the more visible in our day in this place. He has answered that prayer, so there should be a ton of excitement about that.

The second reason I'm saying this is today will be the last stream Denton receives until its commissioning service in the fall. I just wanted to take a second before we dive in. I know I'm going to make this sermon long because of this, but Denton, thank you. What a grace of God you have been to The Village Church. You were the first to head out and become a campus, which means all of our mistakes and great ways we've learned were actually at your expense.

Now, you're the first to roll off and become an autonomous church. As beautiful as this process has been, there have been mistakes and hard lessons learned along the way, and you have been just a picture of graciousness and seriousness about the Word of God, about the power of God, about the kingdom of God, and about the mission of God. Thank you.

I wanted us to just spend a second here praying for them as they get all the more ready just to be fully autonomous. This will happen in the fall. This is just their last stream until then. I want us to pray for Denton and pray for us as a church. This isn't just, "Okay, now we're done with multiplication." All the more, The Village Church must be a place that is serious about sending, serious about saying, "Goodbye," serious about training up, raising up, and sending out for the glory of his name.

They will not be talking about The Village Church in heaven. They will be talking about the glory of Christ, and that's what we have been invited in to participate in God's big plan to see his name glorified in the world. Let's pray for Denton, Beau Hughes, that staff, that congregation. Denton, I'm just going to pray for you. Please join me in praying for yourselves, but let me lead us in prayer for you.

Father, we thank you for the spaces you let us play. God, we're just humbled by all you have done and accomplished in such a short time, seven years there in Denton, coming up on eight years now in Denton. You are good and gracious and beautiful and right. I thank you for Beau Hughes, how you've raised him up, how you've used him to raise up other leaders.

I thank you that the testimony of the members in this Denton congregation is that they are loved and cared for and shepherded well. There is a seriousness about your Word. There is a seriousness about your mission. I thank you for that. I pray for our other campuses, that their hearts would yearn and burn for this same thing, to be a contextual gospel light to the world around them.

I pray all the more that you would empower and embolden and strengthen and increase our courage to be all the more zealous about sending, all the more zealous about using and leveraging the resources of The Village Church to the greater kingdom goals and gains. Thank you that you allow us to participate in such marvelous things. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Okay, now why are we in Mark 14 if we're actually supposed to be in James 5? Well, I found that James 5, the text we'll be in today, was, for me, extremely difficult as I began to build out the series. Here's why it was difficult. It was difficult simply because of everything that is in there. These few verses... I feel like I could have done maybe a 12-week series just on this text alone.

The complexity or really all that is in there and all the different ways we could take this text... Think of it as a diamond that can be turned and seen from different angles. I wanted to somehow paint a picture as James starts to land the plane on what is actually going on here. There are a hundred different ways I think this text could be correctly preached, but to frame where I'm going with it, I want to point out this interaction between Jesus and the apostle Peter.

The apostle Peter is easily one of the more colorful characters in Christian history. He is brash and aggressive. He tends to not mind to fight. In fact, we see him. He actually cut off a guy's ear in one sense. He is an aggressive man not afraid of conflict. If you're nervous or squeamish about conflict, Peter is on the other side of the scale. He welcomes it. It almost appears at times that he's looking for it. He's also a brother who tends to speak before he thinks.

Again, you might not be able to relate to any aspect of Peter in regard to those personality traits, but we all share something in common with the apostle Peter. That's what I want to turn your eyes to. Immediately following the Lord's Supper, the institution of the Lord's Supper, we see this. Mark 14, starting in verse 26.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away, for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Even though they all fall away...'"

I love that. He's like, "These bums, maybe. Even though they all fall away..." He doesn't say they might. "Even though they all fall away... I hear you, Jesus. I get it. You're the Son of God. They're going to all fall away." Then Peter does what he so often does. **"Even though they all fall away, I**

will not." Jesus lovingly says to him, **"Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."** Peter is rebuked by Jesus, right?

If you get rebuked by Jesus, you back off, right? I'm backing off. If even a dear friend of mine rebukes me, I'll back off a little bit, but Jesus just rebuked him, and Peter (this is personality stuff), even being rebuked by Jesus, doesn't back off. Look what the text says next. **"But he said emphatically..."** Gosh, I love him. **"If I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And they all said the same."** I love how Peter's confidence actually made a moron out of everybody else.

One of the things that has to be true about the apostle Peter is he's a leader. We see later on at the church in Antioch a lot of people being deceived by Peter's hypocrisy. In fact, even Barnabas is swayed by Peter's hypocrisy later on in the New Testament. Stick in on this. "You're going to deny me." "I'm not going to deny you. Even if I must die, I will not deny you." To give Peter really some credit here, it is like 15 verses later, the same night... Look in verse 66. Jesus is arrested. He is taken before the high priests. We see in Mark 14, starting in verse 66:

"And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you mean.'" He played dumb. "I don't even know what you're talking about." **"And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed."**

What a moment there. The rooster crowed. Surely, it registered. We don't see that it registered, but surely that first rooster crow... This is conjecture. I'm going to leave the Bible. Do you think maybe he heard that and was, "Okay, I've got this"? He goes back in after that. He goes outside and hears the rooster crow. Then he heads back into the courtyard. Look there now in verse 69.

"And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.' But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know this man of whom you speak.' And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept."

In one of the other gospels, the Bible tells us that when the rooster crowed the second time, Jesus turned and looked at Peter, if you can imagine. Peter is broken. He is weeping. Here's how I'm trying to frame our James text. So far, in the book of James, here's what we've talked about. I'm just going to do the last 12 weeks, just listing them in sentences, so don't panic. It will be a regular-sized sermon.

So far in the book of James, we've talked about how to live our lives as servants rather than demanding to be served. We talked about considering our trials as joys, not just hearing the Word but doing the Word, not being judgmental but extending mercy, walking in works that reveal faith, being doers of the Word and not hearers only, watching our mouths, pursuing true wisdom rather than false wisdom, pursuing godliness not worldliness, learning to walk in humility, and seeing money rightly.

Last week, we talked about the importance of walking in patience. My guess is that almost every one of those turns, we've said, "Yes, Lord. I'm going to do this. I've got this. I hear you. I saw that in the text. I want this for my life." We set out to actually apply it. See, the thing we have in common with the apostle Peter is our will and our discipline and our passion and our strength are lacking to bring about the obedience God has called us to. That's what we all have in common here.

I contend that out of this beautiful text in James 5... In fact, if you want to go ahead and turn there now, James 5, we're going to start in verse 13. In this text that is so rich with opportunity to preach on a variety of things, what James, as he's ending the letter, is trying to draw our attention to is he's trying to give insight into maturing our relationship with Christ in a way that truly emboldens and empowers that obedience.

James is now trying to move us out of... I've told you from the beginning that James is a difficult book. It's a difficult book because no matter how long you've been following Christ and no matter how mature you are, James is going to read your mail. I said in week one that if you live to be 117, you will read passages in James and feel like you have a million miles to go.

That's why we've introduced language in this series about progress, not perfection. We've tried every week to bring it back to the gospel and talk about centering ourselves on Christ and then moving forward in glad-hearted obedience. I think what James is trying to do here is push us into a relationship with God because he knows a strong communion with God actually will embolden and empower obedience in a way your will is simply not going to bring about.

We see in Peter a zealous, ferocious, passionate, hardworking man, and he epically fell apart at the questioning from a teenage girl. I think we're far too confident in our ability to knock things out. James is going, "We'd better get back to God. You've heard all I had to say, but let me remind you that communion with God is where we're really going to find the impetus toward obedience. Let's read this text together. James 5. We're going to start in verse 13.

Here's what I think you're going to see. There is a lot here. Here are the two things I'm going to pull out of this text. First, the centrality of prayer and praise in the life of the believer, the ongoing ethic of confession and repentance, and then finally Elijah as the illustration. I think Elijah as the illustration is such a hope-filled illustration here. With that said, let's read the text.

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours..." I'd underline that, maybe circle it. **"...and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."**

Maybe you're listening to this text. You heard my brief outline, and you're going, "Okay, here we go. Here's another kind of... You have to pray, and you have to sing." Yes, that's in this text, and I believe yes, that's where I'm going, but here's where I want to try to take how you're thinking about prayer and praise, because I think all of us know about prayer and praise. I don't think I'm going to say, "Hey, we should be praying," and blow anyone's mind here at the church.

I don't think anyone, when you talk about prayer and praise, goes, "I had no idea I was supposed to talk with God and praise him." I think we know. What is it that needs to change in us so we act in? I think honestly the thing we miss most often is not the invitation to pray and praise but the invitation to commune with the living God and to boldly approach the throne of grace with confidence.

I quoted Colossians 3:4 several weeks ago. The writer of Colossians, the apostle Paul, said, "And when Christ who is your life..." It's this appeal not to break apart our lives into segments but to really have Christ who is our lives, and I taught that when it came to money and how we spend our money, that Christ is my life. It's not Christ and then my marriage. It's Christ, and then I operate in my marriage in relation and conjunction with Christ who is my life.

The same is true with parenting. The same is true in all areas of my life. What's happening there is regardless of what's going on in your life, the invitation is to come to Christ, commune with Christ, know God. If you go back and look at the text, you see here that we have a relationship with God. It is doctrinal, but it is also experiential. We have a relationship. It's not just mere intellect. It's a relationship with, a relationship we've been invited into.

I think if you see prayer and praise that way, it changes it. Prayer is not just a duty. It's a delight and a gift for the people of God to commune with their adopting, loving, merciful Father. We see here, "Are you suffering? Go to him. Are you cheerful? Sing praises about him. Are you sick? Gather with others, particularly the elders, and go to him. Regardless of what's going on, get in here."

Now, do you think about God like that? "Oh, you're suffering? Get in here. Oh, you're happy? Get in here. Oh, you're sick? Get in here." You have this appeal from God. James is writing, "For all that has been said, for all God has commanded, for as much as I've tied this back to the teachings of Christ, I know you're going to fall short. Do you know what I want you to keep in mind? Get in here. Commune with the living God. Have a relationship with him."

Listen to me. Some weak, sad, Bible-Belt version of Christianity that has you thinking because you believe moral principles and attend a church, you're a Christian is not biblical Christianity. You've been called to a relationship with God through Christ. That and that alone is Christianity. Any other kind of moral construct might be sweet, but it ends in hell.

How should we think about prayer then? You have this invitation. "Come to me." There are seven things about prayer that I found so helpful. These aren't original to me. I actually first read them from D.A. Carson. Seven things on prayer that I hope are helpful for you.

First, I think *prayer needs to be planned*. Some of you are like, "Gosh, that just doesn't sound right." I can tell you this. I plan dates with my wife. There is not a human being on earth I love more than Lauren Chandler, not one. "Not your children?" No, those kids are going to get out of my house. My

wife is going to be with me to the end. I love my wife more than I love anyone else on earth, and I plan dates, and in that planning, she has never felt robbed of my desire for her or love for her.

You have to plan prayer. You know this. We've talked about time. "I have to get some things done. Busy day tomorrow. I have a lot to do." You plan it. Honestly, I think this idea of planning eventually deserves a sermon of its own out of the Proverbs. If I had to guess, there are a lot of you who are going to work out this week, right? You are. You have plans. You're going to hit that elliptical. Gosh, I don't know what you're going to do. You're going to take a class.

Unless you actually go, "When am I going to do that?" chances are you're not going to do that because there are a thousand competing things that are going to pull on you. There are things that you're going to feel in the moment like are more important, more valuable than that. Maybe they are. Maybe they're not. Without planning, you're not going to do it.

Plan prayer. When is it you will pray? I'm not saying that throughout the day you don't commune with God because I texted with Lauren right before I walked out here. We have set dates, but then we text and talk throughout the day. "How is your day going? What's going on? How can I help you? Do you want me to pick that up?" We're texting all day long, but I think you need to plan it.

Second, *adopt practical ways to impede mental drift*. It's going to be very difficult to pray with your iPhone in front of you and all of your apps on. It's going to be calling you. It's going to be calling you. I wish at some point... Gosh. Even talking about this, there are so many other sermons I want to preach in the middle of this sermon. I have to stay true to this outline. I think if we were aware of really the spiritual war that was waging around us, we'd be able to dial in a lot more.

If we had any concept of just how violent and bloody things are in the heavenlies, we'd be much more apt to pray, and that pull toward checking our Twitter timeline, checking in on Instagram... Listen. Just as a life coach, if you're in the midst of deep journaling and Bible study, you probably don't need to Instagram it. Right? It's like, "Oh, this is so rich." *Click*. "Communing with the Lord." No, you're not. You're Instagramming it, so I know you're not communing with the Lord.

If you're communing with the Lord, the last thing you're thinking is, "You know what? Everyone should know this." No. To commune with the Lord is an intimate connection with our Creator, to walk in the very thing we were created for. You're not thinking about 'gramming it at that time. If that was too close to home, I don't apologize.

The third thing is *in different times and different seasons, seek out people to pray with*. If you want to call it prayer partners or something like that... Just, I want to pray with people. I learn from them, and I pray more fervently when I'm with others who will agree with me in prayer. If you want to grow in prayer, maybe you gather with somebody to pray.

If you don't know how to pray, I'm telling you as you leave here today, when you go to Home Group, here's the question. "How many of you feel like you don't know how to pray?" When those hands go up, you guys need to go, "Okay, let's get together. Let's start praying together." That's how you'll grow.

The fourth thing is just like the third: *get around people who do pray*. Is this not the way you learn everything else? Just get around those who are better than you, not better than you in the spiritual sense, not varsity, but they just have more experience. They've been at it longer. Just get around them.

Fifth, *develop a system for your prayer lists*. If I lost you at *system*, you're not Type A at all... I know when I say *system*, there are certain ears that perk up and other people who just vomit and black out. In the end here, if you're a systems and Type-A person, you're like, "Yes! A system for prayer." If you're Type B, you'll say, "I will never pray again." No, no. I mean something as simple as note cards.

The system that is very basic is I have a note card for my wife and for my children. I am writing on that card specific prayers I have for them. I share that information with them. When I cuddle with my kids at night, I say, "Here's how Daddy is praying for you. How else can Daddy pray for you?" Sometimes Norah, my youngest, will want to see her card. It's really kind of a cute thing.

I have a card for the elders. I have a card for Flower Mound. I have a card for my neighborhood. This is just a system. Then I work my way through those cards while I'm exercising the plan for prayer I have. If that feels too stuffy and all that for you, I will ask if planning a vacation with your wife away from your children feel stuffy. No. Why are you trying to put that on this? It's just good, disciplined work that should lead to a much strengthened and empowered maturation.

Sixth, *mingle praise, confession, and intercession, and tie as much of it as you can back to the Scriptures*. Here's what Tim Keller says on prayer. "We would never produce the full range of

biblical prayer if we were initiating prayer according to our own inner needs and psychology. It can only be produced if we are responding in prayer according to who God is as revealed in the Scripture. [...]

Some prayers in the Bible are like that of an intimate conversation with a friend, others like an appeal to a great monarch, and others approximate a wrestling match. [...] We must not decide how to pray based on what types of prayer are the most effective for producing the experiences and feelings we want. We pray in response to God himself."

I love this quote because he's tying our prayers to the Word of God, so you don't necessarily have to separate those two things out. As you're reading the Word of God and come across a sentence and hope and desire and want that for my son; hope, desire, and want that for my own heart; hope, desire, and want that for my daughters, see something about the character of God that hits my heart in a different way and then spontaneously go into praise there.

I love the grids that try to teach prayer, but it's a harmful thing, I think, if when all is said and done, you're in the Scriptures and come across something during your intercession space that should lead your heart to adoration, and you cut off adoration because you're in the intercession block. It's foolish. We read the Word of God and let it lead us to praise, lead us to adoration, lead us to intercession. We want to tie our prayers as best as we can back to the Word of God.

Seventh... Carson stole this, which is fine. I just stole all seven of his. I just got this one that he stole from the Puritans. This is great. Ready? *Pray until you pray*. That's just a great sentence. You want to learn how to pray? Pray until you pray. That's the prayer block, but he also doesn't want us praying. He actually has us doing something even more uncomfortable than praying. You're like, "What could possibly be even more uncomfortable than praying?"

Singing. Singing praises to God. Why here when we're joyful should we sing praise to God? Three things very quickly on praise. I know singing is a weird thing. Is there anywhere else in the world besides our car and maybe our shower that we sing with a group? Maybe at a concert, maybe, like I said, in the car with the family, but really this is the place we do it, and most of us feel uncomfortable.

Most of us don't know parts. We know those of you who do know parts let yourself be known in the chord. You're closing an ear and kind of singing. You're kind of annoyed by people who are a little

bit pitchy around you, so we're a bit self-conscious. Singing is difficult. I found, sadly enough, that men have a difficult time singing. I feel sorry for you.

That's a pride issue, and the Lord is inviting you into something deeper. You just have to get over yourself. If you think singing isn't masculine, then you need to read your Bible and maybe spend some time with King David. The brother played a harp. In this day and age, does it get more effeminate than the harp? Yet, he's killing lions and bears, cut off the head of Goliath.

Remember, there was a song written about David, that Saul had killed his hundreds, but David had killed his thousands. This dude didn't just kill a couple. Thousands. In fact, later on, God would not let David build the temple because he had killed too many people. Let's be careful how we think about it. Three things on singing praises to God.

First, *singing digs deep roots*. In Colossians 3:16, the Bible says, "**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.**" Singing digs deep roots. My friend C. J. Mahaney calls singing and worship songs take-home theology.

I love hearing my children at our house singing songs we sing in the corporate gathering. I don't know if you pick up on this, but if we're singing a song, you will almost always, at the bottom of our screen, see the text from which we wrought that. You are singing doctrine. You are singing biblical theology. Surprise! "I'm not a theologian." Really? Why don't you just sing this song for me real quick?

All of a sudden, you're in the deep. It's take-home theology. We sing together, and it digs deep roots. It's a type of theology that we take home. It's accessible and easy. My 6-year-old will sing some of the songs we sing, and my 6-year-old is developing a biblical theology, a biblical doctrine of who God is and how he relates to his people in the singing of songs. What a gift. How easy is that?

It also builds others up. If you go to a concert or even in worship services, one of my favorite moments, and as I've had conversations with others, many people's favorite moment is when the guy will back off of the mic, and the congregation or the concert hall will just sing. There is something electric and soul-stirring about the voices of many coming together. It builds up the body.

Lastly, *it strengthens the person for trials*. In my more difficult moments in the 40 years I've been alive and in the 20 years I've followed the Lord, dark nights of the soul have always been made bearable by worship and by singing to the Lord. One of my favorite confrontations in my marriage, right after I had been diagnosed with brain cancer and they had said, "You're going to die. You have a couple of years left. You have to make sure everything is in order."

"That's great. You're going to poison me while I try to get everything in order." My wife finally pulled me aside and said, "I don't know how this ends, but you're going to have to take those freaking headphones off." My little happy place was worship music blaring in my ears and just preparing to see him face to face.

In those moments, when they strapped my head down to the radiation table and closed that giant lead door and left me in there by myself, it was songs in my head. In the MRI machine, I was singing to the Lord. I have a friend who plays golf. I don't play golf. He literally studies holes, and he literally thinks through playing a round of golf in the MRI. I don't do that. I sing. It strengthens us in trials.

I could go on and on and on. Another thing here... This is a sidebar. I wish I had more time. Also, in this communing with God via prayer and the singing of praise and all that creates, you also have this, "Hey, are you sick? Then call the elders together. They're going to anoint you with oil," which could be medicine there. I know all you essential oil users are like, "That's right. Get 'em, Pastor."

In the end here, what you have happening is a community that is locked into one another and pursuing him together. Another argument I will fervently give for belonging to a local church is that in moments of suffering and sickness, we pull together. We walk together. We commune with God together. In this text, he says, "Call the elders." You don't belong to a local congregation. "Who are the elders? Do you randomly pick elders from a bunch of different churches and have them come?"

No, the community in which you live, you call the elders together. You give yourself over to the common grace of medicine, if that's what is meant by oil in this text, and then you pray together. The Bible tells us in other places you weep together and then you rejoice together. This is a call to community. That's not the only thing a life of prayer and praise... That's not the only piece for maturation.

Look there in verse 15. We also see the ongoing ethics of confession and repentance. **"And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has**

committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." I think one of the big mistakes of our day is this siloing out of life.

I said earlier that one of the things we want to do is, "Okay, I have my church life. I have my work life. I have my home life." Really, our cry, our banner as Christians is Christ who is our life. He is my life. Now what you see happening here is a type of siloing that the spirit and the body and the mind are somehow so disconnected that they don't affect one another.

That's not biblically true. One of the things I love (and I say this to you as often as I can) is I love it when science starts to catch up to the Bible. We see in this place that the Lord has designed us as whole people and really the spirit can affect the physical and can affect the mental. Let me show you this in another place. In Psalm 32:3-4, it says, "**For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.**" There's a gnawing in the pit of his stomach.

Verse 4: "**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me...**" He couldn't sleep well. "**...my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**" He is exhausted. Then he ends this psalm with, "**Selah.**" "Think about this. Consider this. Don't be too quick to keep reading. You think about this." When he kept silent, when David who had some secret sin in his life kept silent about those secrets in his life, his bones wasted away.

He had a gnawing in the pit of his stomach that wouldn't go away. He couldn't sleep at night, and he felt utterly and completely exhausted. On a recent *NPR* interview with a neuroscientist named Dr. David Eagleman, he said this about some of his research. "You have competing populations in your brain, one part that wants to tell something and one that doesn't. There is a real physiological battle going on in the brain.

Keeping certain behaviors secret, especially behaviors that are seen and understood to be 'wrong...' I love that. He's a secular. That's why he put *wrong* in quotation marks. "...means continual struggle with yourself. The internal dissonance and lack of sense of personal integrity is draining. The struggle involved in keeping a secret is stressful.

This means your brain will register the fact that there are increased levels of stress hormones going through your bloodstream as a result of this struggle to keep your secret. Your brain does not enjoy

this stress. Those living duplicitous lives live with the stress of keeping a whole section of their lives secret from the people they see every day and care about.

The fact that their brains are marinated in stress hormones due to keeping the secret over and above the effects of the wrongdoing themselves can cause an impairment in the person's ability to stay healthy and function well." This is science catching up to the Bible. From there, we don't have time for me to get into this study. It was a huge one by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas in Austin.

He used blood tests and EEG measurements to measure what physically happens to people who confessed. He did it in two ways. Those who would confess out loud... Can we just kind of marvel altogether as a people that the University of Texas in Austin is actually doing a medical research on confession. The horns, really? I know I'll get an email on that. I welcome the hate. It just makes me stronger.

Here's what he found. Pennebaker found that whether secrets were confessed to another person out loud or were merely written down privately and shared later, there were tangible health benefits, both physical and mental. The research found it not only improved relationships in regards to depth and intimacy but better sleep and an improved immune system.

You have science saying, "Don't live a duplicitous life. Don't hold onto secrets. Come into the light because confession brings about deeper, more intimate relationships. By the way, it will make you a healthier person." This is the secular world going, "The Bible is right." They just don't know they're saying that, which is one of my favorite parts. "The Bible is right." Thank you, Austin. Thank you very much.

Here's my appeal to you. If you can feel yourself in Psalm 32, you have a gnawing in your gut, you're having difficulty sleeping at night, you feel just exhausted...stop. From my first second as pastor of this church, I wanted to flank myself with other men and women and keep us before the Lord, especially in this way. Let us not ever pretend to be more than we are.

Why? Well the cost of confession could be severe. That's why. Well, yeah, but you're saying that as though you're not paying a deep price right now for not confessing. Confessing secrets. Maybe it's an addiction to pornography. Maybe it's an eating disorder. Maybe you're cutting. Maybe you're

really struggling with depression. I don't know what it is. Maybe you're actually flirting or having an affair with somebody at work. I don't know.

There could be a billion things going on across this congregation and across those later who will listen to this, but I'm telling you that the only way to kill darkness is to drag it into the light. You will not win on your own. Right now, you can say, "Surely, I will." You're just being Peter. That's all you're doing in that same kind of false bravado and false notion of strength.

Here's the conversation I find myself in all the time. "If I ever were to tell my spouse that I look at pornography, he or she would just never forgive me. I can beat this." Okay. How long? When did you start looking at pornography? "Oh, gosh. I don't know. I was about 13." You're 37. Do you realize how stupid you sound to me right now? You're like, "Pastor, did you really...?"

That's stupid. I love you. Are you serious? You're literally going, "I've been working at it for 20-something years and gotten nowhere, but I have it this time." Look. You don't have it. Some of you fools are going to destroy your marriage before you'll freaking listen. Others of you are going to have to come to utter ruin because if God loves you, he will expose you.

Why not just step into the light rather than just be dragged into it? If you don't know how, that's what we're here for. Wednesday nights, come see us at Recovery. We'll help guide you. Come up and talk to one of us when the service is over. Quit hanging onto it. Come into the light. You don't have to be exhausted. You don't have to hide this area of your life from those you love and care about most. Step into the light. Listen. I know it's terrifying. I know it's terrifying. Step into the light.

Then I love the last illustration here. The illustration is that of Elijah. Look there in 16. **"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."** Elijah's street cred is legit. He walks in a power...

We first run into Elijah in 1 Kings 17 when he stands in front of Ahab, a terrible king married to Jezebel. Right? Look. Just don't marry a woman named Jezebel. If we have somebody at The Village named Jezebel. I apologize. You should be angry at your parents. When all is said and done here, Ahab, this evil king...

It has already stopped raining for six months in Israel, and Elijah tells Ahab, "It's going to be three more years." Ahab now wants him dead. Jezebel wants him dead. He flees to the brook in Cherith. There at the brook in Cherith, God takes care of him. The birds feed him. There is water in the brook.

Then it all starts to dry up, and Elijah starts to wonder, "Oh, I wonder if the Lord has forgotten me. Have I done something wrong?" He's almost like, "Oh no. What did I do? The brook is..." Then the Lord leads him to the widow at Zarephath. He approaches the widow at Zarephath. He says, "God has sent me here. Please make me something to eat."

Her response was, "I have just a little bit of flour, a little bit of water, a little bit of oil, enough to make one cake that my son and I are going to eat so we can die." A cheerful woman, if you will, right? An optimist. Elijah says, "Hey, the Lord sent me here. The Lord will provide. The Lord is good." Sure enough, day after day after day, that same amount of flour, same amount of oil, same amount of water was there, and there was a cake every day for the three of them to eat.

Then out of nowhere, the son gets sick and dies, and the widow begins to wonder, "Is it my sin?" Surely, Elijah, this man of God, is going to step into that space and go, "No, the Lord... I'll heal him." We do see Elijah take the boy and bring him back to life but not before Elijah questions whether or not he has sinned against the Lord and whether that sin was what led to the boy's death.

Then you see Elijah on Mount Carmel fighting the prophets of Baal. You see him call fire down out of heaven that consumes not just the sacrifice but the rocks and the dirt. He calls fire out of heaven. If that was still an actual spiritual gift, I would like it. You would just be able to spot in Dallas where I was. "Oh, Chandler must be downtown." Right? Oh, like you wouldn't use it like that. "Get out of the left lane." Right?

Ultimately, after this, Jezebel hears what happens to her prophets, and she says, "God deal with me harshly if by this time tomorrow you're not like one of those." What does our boy Elijah who has seen such powerful, profound things from God do? He runs. He pouts and accuses God. Right? What? You just called fire out of heaven.

Can we chat? I just feel like I wouldn't have any questions after that. If God was feeding me with birds when there was no food, if he was giving me drink when there was no water, if miraculously,

there was meal after meal after meal when everyone else was dying around me, you would think the fire out of heaven would kind of push you over the edge and you'd go, "Got it."

Not Elijah. Elijah is pouty. He's like, "I'm the only one who hasn't bowed my knee." He actually asked God, "Will you let me die?" Elijah is like, "Can you just kill me?" I don't know if that's the adrenaline crash from the fire thing, but he asks God to kill him. Here's why I like Elijah as the illustration. He's a man with a nature just like ours. Elijah, for the profound ways God used him...look right at me...certainly did not wear a cape.

In the midst of unbelievable miracles, he questioned God. In the middle of unbelievable blessings, he doubted. In the midst of what would really turn... We feel like, we think, I think that if I had been there to see or experience that I would not have these struggles, yet here he is struggling. What James is saying is, "No, no, no. Cling to the Lord. Go to the Lord. Know the Lord. It is the Lord who is your righteousness. It is the Lord who accomplishes."

For all of Elijah's goofiness, after this he establishes Elisha as his heir apparent. Do you know the next place we see Elijah? The Mount of Transfiguration. He shows up with Jesus on the mountain. Listen. James is beautiful, and it's long. We have a little bit more to go, but really, where our heads and hearts need to be is communing with God on high. That's prayer. That's praise. That's confession. That's repentance.

My most earnest prayer for you is always this. Are you ready? Weariness. That's what I pray for you. If you're thinking, "How cruel," it's not cruel. It might be the most loving prayer I can pray. See, if Peter was weary of himself, he wouldn't have made such ridiculous claims, specifically after Jesus said, "No, no, you're going to all fall away." If Peter was weary of himself, then after the first rooster crowed, he would have repented, and all the damage that comes from his other two, "I don't know this man. I have no idea who this is," wouldn't have taken place.

You being weary, tired enough to surrender, pushes you into prayer and praise more than your strength ever will. What does confession do and what does repentance do? I'm not just talking confession before God. I'm saying drag this thing into the light. I'm not just saying that when we're done here, we go, "God, you know what I've been doing. You know where I've been. Please forgive me."

Yes. Now take another step and confess to brothers and sisters who can hold you accountable. Get out of this crazy cycle you're in where you continue to justify to yourself that you're going to be able to beat this. You won't. That's why God has given you community. That's why God has given us light, to shine into darkness.

"What will people think?" What's true about you and, therefore, what's true about Christ. That's what they'll think. You want to rest. I've said this to you a bunch. There are few things as freeing as not having any secrets, not having to carry the weight of feeling like at any moment you're going to get busted and found out to be a fake.

For many of us, that's going to be a wrestle, right? We'll wrestle with it from time to time, but man, there's something beautiful about somebody walking up and going, "Guess what I found out." You're going, "What?" without any, "Oh my gosh! What did they find out?" There's a freedom there, and Christ invites you into that freedom. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women and again such a beautiful text, maybe a hard text. I want to pray for those in this room who maybe have no relationship with you, for those for whom Christianity is about a code, not about a relationship. I pray for repentance and salvation for that man or woman in this place.

I pray that you might grow us in our prayerfulness just as my heart grows increasingly hungry to see a revival in our day and age, God, that you would increase our prayerfulness, that we would pray until we pray. I pray that we would be a congregation marked by singing. Let us go to you. Let us come to you. Let us celebrate our union with you.

I pray for those, having to believe it's hundreds if not thousands of men and women in here, who have duplicitous lives, who have whole areas of their lives that are secret to their spouses, to their children, to their coworkers, to the brothers and sisters they try to do life with here at The Village. I pray this week would be an epic ministry week in the life of The Village Church where we love and walk alongside those who are eager to confess and come into the light.

I pray even now as I'm praying that as men and women come and line up and are prepared to receive and pray for and hear the confession of others that you would embolden the type of courage necessary to walk into the light. Father, where there are stubborn hearts, I pray that in your love, you would just expose them this week, that you would just tear the roof off of their secret and let it

be seen by all for the good of their souls. We love you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray,
amen.

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