

The Apostles' Creed (Part 2) – God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth

Matt Chandler – August 30, 2015

[Video]

Male: I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth...

Female: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

Male: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

Male: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Male: He descended to hell.

Female: The third day he rose again from the dead.

Male: He ascended to heaven...

Female: And sits on the right hand of the Father almighty...

Female: From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Male: I believe in the Holy Spirit...

Female: The holy catholic church...

Male: The communion of saints...

Male: The forgiveness of sins...

Male: The resurrection of the body...

Male: And the life everlasting.

Male: Amen.

[End of video]

Hey, how are we? Doing well? All right. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Matthew 6 is where we're going to camp out. We'll be in verses 9-13. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that is our gift to you. As I like to say, if you want a nicer one, you can visit the lost and found. There are beautiful Bibles in there. Feel free to take one of those, especially if it has your name on it.

We're in week two of a series on the Apostles' Creed. As I said last week, we needed to cover a couple of things about the Apostles' Creed before we really dive into it. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Matthew 6. We're going to hang out in Matthew 6:9-13, but before we get there... The Apostles' Creed is one of the oldest of the Christian creeds. In fact, it has been used for well over 1,000 years by Christians globally for two means.

It has been used to correct error, and it has also been used as a piece of a spiritual formation plan for the people of God. It has been used to correct error and form the people of God, and that's the role of the creed. Now, it's very important for you to know that this fall, I am not preaching the Apostles' Creed but rather preaching the Bible. Okay? The creeds have no authority unto themselves except the authority they derive from the Word of God.

Creeds point outside of themselves to the ultimate authority, which is the Word of God. The way to think about the relationship between the creeds and the Bible is maybe to think about the relationship between the sun and the moon, right? The sun has all the light and all the heat, and the moon, where it appears to have light and appears to have heat, it's borrowing that or taking that from the sun.

Last night, if you looked up and saw the full moon, the moon is not glowing, right? It's taking the light of the sun, and it's reflecting it to us here on earth. The creeds reflect, but they have no light, no

heat of their own. We're going to preach the Bible this fall, but we're going to use the Apostle's Creed as a jumping-off point.

We said last week that the reason we want to do that is because getting into a creed will help with symmetry. It will help shape us as more fully formed followers of Jesus Christ. We said that it would provide some clarity. There are some false assumptions and thinking about the Godhead that we need to correct, and the creed will help us do that.

We talked about understanding more fully what the community of the saints are, and the creed will help us do that. Finally, how we counsel ourselves and others will be directly affected by our understanding of the Word of God as the creed presents it. That's why we're going to spend 12 weeks in it, or at this point 11 weeks in it since we already have one down. That's the Apostles' Creed and why we're in it.

One more thing. If you're not a Christian or don't quite get what all is going on here, I'll just say this. Christians do not believe in incantations. What I mean by that is you saying the Apostles' Creed out loud does not make you a Christian, will not make you lucky, does not forgive your sins, will not help you get that promotion at work or land that young woman or young man you're eyeing right now. That's not how this works.

I pointed out last week that the Apostles' Creed begins with a very significant two words, "I believe," not, "I know." I said the reason that's so important is because there are two ways for you to know truth. You know in your mind, and that's called understanding, or you can know in your heart, and that's called believing. The best way for you to understand this, I think, is this way. You can know things in your mind, and those have no effect on how you live your life.

There's a long list of stuff you know you should be doing and don't, correct? This is true. I'm not making this up. There is a whole long list of things you know you should do or not do, and that makes no difference as to whether you do them or do not do them. Belief is different in that belief drives the actions of our lives. Knowing in your head is not the same thing as believing in your heart.

The Christian, according to the Word of God, is called to do both, but the creed says, "I believe. I believe in my heart. I don't just know in my head. I believe in my heart." That's what drives us as the

people of God. Now, when the creed has been read historically, it is simultaneously the greatest act of rebellion and the greatest act of allegiance simultaneously happening at once.

Here's what I mean. When people stand and publicly recite the creed, they are in one sense rebelling against the predominant narratives or stories of their day, and they're pledging allegiance to the God of the Bible. If I could plug it into 2015, for us to stand and believe this, not just know it but say it like we believe, is to fundamentally reject the narrative of materialism, that what we need to be happy and full and content is *more*.

We need bigger houses and nicer cars and better-looking people around us. It's this idea that we're going to reject that and pledge allegiance to the God of the Bible. It's to fundamentally reject progressivism, the weird, insane belief that things just always get better and never devolve. We say, "No, no, no. Our allegiance is not that man is eventually going to figure this out but rather that God will eventually make this straight."

When we stand and recite the creed, we are rebelling in many ways against the narratives of our day, and we're saying, "Here's where our allegiance lies." One of the things we're going to do throughout the series is as a family, as a community of saints, we're going to stand, and we're going to say the creed together. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to stand across all campuses. Fort Worth is going to stand. Plano is going to stand. Dallas is going to stand. Flower Mound is going to stand. We're going to recite this together.

If you're not a Christian, and all of this is a little weird, then you can just stand and watch us be weird. That's going to be awesome for you. How entertaining. Will you go ahead and stand with me now? We're going to read this together. We will fundamentally reject the greater narratives of our day and pledge allegiance to the God of the Bible. Let's read this together as brothers and sisters and as guests of brothers and sisters.

"I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen." Okay, have a seat.

Last week, we covered *I Believe In*, which moves us, as the creed goes, into an extended discussion out of the Word of God on *God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth*. Now, it's important to know that the Christian view of the Godhead is that God is three distinct persons and yet is one. There is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. That is tremendously important in the shape of the Christian heart and head.

What we want to spend our time talking about today in the Godhead, out of the creed, is the person of God the Father. God doesn't have fatherly attributes, but there is a God the Father in the Godhead. If that makes your head cramp a little bit, it does mine too, but we're going to work this out in the weeks and months to come. Let me give you my outline so you type-A people can just breathe out and enjoy.

I want to spend the next 30 minutes just trying to convince you from the Word of God of this truth. Our God is an infinitely powerful, intensely personal Father. Our God is an infinitely powerful and yet intensely personal Father. Now, with that said, let's read Matthew 6, starting in verse 9. This is Jesus teaching people how to pray. Jesus, God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, part of that Godhead. Next week is his sermon, but for now, we're going to talk about the person of God the Father.

Jesus says, "**Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'**" What we see here in this prayer is our Father, our God being infinitely powerful while simultaneously being intensely personal.

Let's look back up at the beginning of the prayer. By the way, if you have a church background or if you just graduated from high school in the South, you probably know this prayer, right? It was on a bookmark or a coffee mug or a poster your parents hung in your room. Let's look at this. "**Our Father...**" Now, it was not uncommon in the ancient Near East in the first century for pagan peoples to claim their god was their father.

The people of Rome considered Zeus to be their father, and then from there, the Roman emperor to be another sort of deity they would oftentimes consider their father. What Jesus does here that is completely other than is he doesn't talk about *father* in the Zeus-like way. If you remember, Zeus is

the kind of dad you don't really want to play with, right? He's always just waiting for you to screw up. He has a lightning bolt in his hand, just knowing you're going to do it, and just waiting for you.

That's not what Jesus is doing when he introduces the concepts of *Abba* around *Father*. You see here that there is a tenderness to our God that is personal, intensely personal, that only the Christian God in the ancient Near East was one who loved his people and sought their good. Yet, if this prayer was, "Our Father who art in the living room," then it would lose its power because God is not just intensely personal, but he is infinitely powerful.

What you get here is, "Our Father in heaven..." so that the location of God is transcendent. If you're old enough, you'll remember. I just read about it, so I'm not old enough, but if you're old enough, you'll remember that the Russians actually beat the United States into space, right? A cosmonaut beat us there, and the first thing he said is, "I've made it into heaven, and God is not here." Yeah, because orbit isn't heaven.

God is everywhere at once, and there is a special location in the universe where God reigns and rules from in a special way, although he is everywhere at once outside the boundaries of time. This is a God who is infinitely powerful and yet intensely personal. It's our Father, our dad, but this is his realm, his rule. It's epic. It's infinite. There's nothing he cannot do.

Look where it goes next. **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."** Here's another example of our Father being infinitely powerful. Throughout the Scriptures and really throughout human history, the name of our God is hallowed, revered. It has weight to it. There is a type of fear at his immensity that is a good kind of fear.

We know that... Let me just use this illustration. The bigger the mammal, the more fear that exists in you. Let's say I show up at your house. I knock on the door. We're there to hang out. Let's say you have a Chihuahua that you've named Diesel. As I walk in, Diesel is losing his mind. Now, I'm 6-foot-5, 215 pounds, with a size 13 shoe. I'm just not nervous because I can step on your little hamster dog and just keep on moving. I'm not terrified.

Let's just say instead of a Chihuahua named Diesel, you have a German Shepherd named Blitz, and not one of those kind of American German Shepherds but one you had shipped in from Berlin that has like a tool belt, and before he attacks and kills me, he puts a car bomb in my wife's suburban to just make sure all of us die.

I'm going to approach that dog a bit differently, even though I'm still 6-foot-5. I'm still 215 pounds. I still have a size 13, but this thing weighs 160. It's just a big different now. There's a little bit more fear in me, a little bit more awe in me around Blitz than there is around Diesel. We know this. If that's true just at the mammal level, how much more so at the infinite scope of God the Father?

Everywhere at once, hallowed be his name. That's why in the Old Testament, he says, "Don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain." You know that doesn't have anything to do with cuss words, right? Let's don't be flippant about the things of God. God is serious. Don't take it lightly. Don't take his name lightly. Don't take his renown lightly. Hallowed be his name. Hallowed be his name.

From there, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."** Again, one of the things the Apostles' Creed is doing is it's showing us the shape of the triune nature of God. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit: three in one, three distinct persons, one Godhead. Right?

Here's the thing about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is inaugurated in the coming of Jesus Christ. It is active and moving now, and it will be consummated at the return of Christ via the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of the Father. Are you with me? You don't have to pretend if you're not. Just be like, "Close." I'll take it.

What we see in the consummated kingdom of God is that the very makeup of all we know has shifted for the better. Now that the kingdom of God has been consummated, the wolf and the lamb lie down together. There is peace in the animal kingdom. We see that the deserts blossom with roses.

Now, I know some of you have some pretty legit green thumbs. I know you're really proud of those crepe myrtles you planted out back. They're looking good. That Japanese maple you have just in the shade, right? Your house is looking real fly. Okay, green thumb. Let's make the desert bloom with roses. You just can't do it, right? God can.

What kind of infinitely powerful God can restore peace among the animal kingdom, can make the deserts bloom with rose, and then kill death. Who can kill death? How infinitely powerful must you be to tell death, "Yeah, you can't do that anymore"? The Bible says that all our remembrances of the

former things will go away. There will be no more crying, no more tears, no more death, no more disease.

How infinitely powerful is our Father that this is what his kingdom looks like as it is rolled out, the death of death? The wolf and the lamb lie down together. The lion and the antelope go to the mall. Right? This is a whole different thing than we experience now. Creation groaning and longing, that the brokenness of the world is righted simply by the consummation of his kingdom.

Then you have infinitely powerful. Infinitely powerful. Infinitely powerful. Then the prayer moves to intensely personal. **"Give us this day our daily bread..."** Now, when the prayer says, **"Give us this day our daily bread..."** it's not saying, "God, give me all I want." It's saying that since God is an intensely personal God, he's going to give you what you need.

I'm going to say something bold. It might even bother some of you, but I have to love you enough to say it. It is only a selfish, unloving father who always says yes, more than likely trying to make up for some inadequacy you feel in yourself. Loving fathers don't say yes to all their children's desires, because children's desires are immature and will ultimately harm them if we say yes to everything.

The most loving thing a loving, personal father can do is go, "Nope. I'll be the killjoy here for your joy. I'll be the bad guy for your safety. I'll take your scorn for your own good. I'll do it. I'll absorb it. I'll absorb your little poutiness. I'll absorb your, 'I can't believe you. You don't...' I'll take it so that you survive, so that you grow healthy, and so when all is said and done..."

Come on. If you're over the age of 20, you already have examples of where we're going, "Okay, thank you for saying no to that one. Thinking back on that sophomore year, thank you, God, my Father, for saying no to that." We already know this. You're going to learn it more and more and more the older you get.

Our daily bread is not that God gives you everything you want; it's that he gives you what you actually need. Look, I love you. Some of you are brilliant. You're brilliant in business. You're brilliant in all you do, but you are not smarter than God when it comes to what's best for you. You're just not. It would be like my 6-year-old trying to argue with me right now that her way is better than mine. It would be cute but dumb. "Oh, that's so cute, Norah. Go to your room."

I mean, I just know more than her. I've lived longer. I'm smarter than she is, except in math. What I want to point out here is there is a stunning amount of unity in the Bible. One of my favorite prayers in the Bible is actually found in the book of Proverbs. King Solomon is praying this to God in Proverbs 30, starting in verse 7. **"Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying..."**

Here's the one I want to show you matches up to the prayer of Christ. **"...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me..."** Why? **"...lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."** What is that except, "Give us this day our daily bread"?

"Give me what I need because if you give me more than what I need, my tendency is going to be to believe that I did all of this, and I don't need God. If you don't give me what I need, then I might steal and defame your name, and I don't ever want to defame your name." Isn't it stunning, the unity between the Old Testament and New Testament? It's the same prayer.

From there, it stays intensely personal. He moves and says, **"...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."** Now, this word *debtors* in the Greek is a marvelous word. Let me show you why I think it's marvelous. How many of you memorized the Lord's Prayer growing up or in your home, and it didn't say *debts*, but it said *trespasses*? Look around. These are those who picked up on *trespasses*. Put your hands down.

How many of you it wasn't *trespasses*, but it was just *sins*? "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us." How many of you were on *sins*? Okay. The reason why all of those words were used and all of those words were right is that the Greeks weren't as lazy as we were when it comes to language. All of those meanings are compact in the Greek word we see there.

What it means is that all of sin, all sin, whether internal or external, sins of commission...sins where I do what I know is wrong...or sins of omission...sins where I don't do what I know is right all are first and foremost against God. We sin primarily against God, and yet, when the sons and daughters of God sin against a loving, infinitely powerful, intensely personal Father, there is collateral damage. There is always collateral damage.

You will not rebel against this loving, powerful Father and there not be collateral damage. Husbands, to rebel against this infinitely powerful, intensely personal God means there are going to

be some ramifications on your marriage, in your family, at work, in your relationships. You cannot rebel against this Father and there not be collateral damage. Women, you cannot rebel against this Father and there not be collateral damage.

Why this text is so intensely personal is that the gospel steps into our rebellion against God and heals it with the forgiveness of Christ (sermon next weekend, spoiler alert) and then not only reconciles us to the Father but then begins to reconcile us to one another. This is intensely personal, where God forgives my sin, heals me, reconciles me to himself, and then reconciles me to others I have sinned against, and they have sinned against me. Not only is the vertical healed, but the horizontal begins to be healed. That's intensely personal.

Look, he stays personal. **"And lead us not into temptation..."** First Corinthians 10:13 says, **"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."**

The reason why I would categorize this as intensely personal is we all struggle with different things, right? For some of us, there is this serious temptation toward one thing that might not even be on the radar of someone else. Let's say I finish up this service and kind of mingle a bit and meet a few of you and pack up my bag and head home.

On the way out to my car, if I guy walks with me to my car saying, "Hey, man, you want to buy some black tar heroin?" I don't need to make a pro/con sheet for that. I just don't. I don't need to go, "Okay. Let me think about it. Give me a second, buddy. It could make GroupConnect fascinating. I could be fired, go to prison..."

I'm not going to need to weigh it out. I'm going to be like, "Thanks, buddy. I'm going to give you about four seconds to run while I go tell the police officer here that you just tried to sell me black tar heroin." I'm not going to go home and be like, "I can't believe I gave up my opportunity." It's just not going to get me.

I've said this a couple of times now. Several years ago, we found a young man in our bathroom with a heroin needle in his arm, and it would be a temptation for him. See, when this prayer says, "Lead me not into temptation," that's intensely personal. God knows your iniquity, your bent, what you

struggle with. The Bible promises that our loving, intensely personal, infinitely powerful God has given us a way out.

You'll never be tempted beyond what you can bear. Most often than not, when you give yourself over to sin, you have not taken the eject button he gave you way earlier in the process. One of the disciplines I've tried to pick up on over the years, the first kind of inkling of a pull toward unrighteousness, I just confess, and I haven't done anything yet.

I'm just saying, "Hey, for whatever reason, I've been thinking this way. I know it's sinful. I know it's wrong. Brothers, hold me accountable." I'll loop people in before I do anything, before I've even considered it too much. The first little inkling of a desire that is outside of the boundaries of God's good, perfect, and pleasing will for my life, I'm just going to roll my crew in on that.

I'm just going to go, "Brothers, I do not want to give myself over to these things. Brothers, I am in my flesh right now. Pray for me. Help me. Encourage me." It's intensely personal. Then the prayer ends with his infinite power. Again, some of you might have had a couple of more words in how you memorized the Lord's Prayer. **"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."**

How many of you, when you memorized this, memorized, "...deliver us from the evil one"? Okay. That's the other. That's in the Greek there also, in the phrase there also. Here's what I love about the Bible and when it comes to God and Satan and angels and demons. There is not a lot of dualism. What I mean by that is if you read the Bible, Satan very much looks like a really mean dog on a leash, muzzled.

That's not how our society portrays it, right? You know, if you like scary movies, with the demon-possessed person, when the priest shows up, everybody knows he's going to get lit. Everybody knows he's not making it out of there alive. He's going to fling some stuff and say, "The power of Christ compels you." The girl's head is going to spin around, and he's going to die. Everybody knows it. That's not how it works in the Bible. That's not how it works in real life. There is no dualism.

Did you know that the whole thing, the great battle of Armageddon is that all of the enemies of God have gathered in the Valley of Armageddon, and what does God do? He shows up and says, "I am." *Boom!* It's over. It's not even a game of *Halo*. It's just over with two words. "I am." The shortest battle in the history of the universe. Over.

"Deliver us from the evil one." What is formidable to us is an easy win for him. "Deliver us from evil." Now, we said last week that we spend time in the creed, looking at the Word of God through the creed, because it will help us develop symmetry and clarity and understand community and help us counsel. I want to do this with thinking about and considering that our Father, our God, is an infinitely powerful and yet intensely personal Father. Let's talk symmetry.

If you remember what I mean by *symmetry*, if you've ever worked out in the gym, you remember the illustration was the upside-down pear with toothpicks jammed in it. That's how a lot of dudes look in the gym because they don't ever work their legs. They're all yoked up. All you have to do is shove them, and they'll just fall over. Right? They're going to do a pushup real quick, but you can just shove them right back down because they don't have a good base.

We want to have good symmetry as Christians. When we're thinking about God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, infinitely powerful, intensely personal, how do we develop symmetry? Maybe you're in here, and you tend to think of God as all-powerful, but the personal is what you struggle with. Your Christian life looks a lot like a checklist of things to do because the foundation of your understanding of the Christian faith is, "Don't upset him. Do what's right."

Now, there's nothing wrong with pursuing holiness. There's nothing wrong with pursuing what the Bible clearly lays out as the path of life, and yet simultaneously you must not reject that the Bible is vocal and loud about God's delight in you, his pleasure in you, and his desire to commune with you. You do not have a father who is just, "Do what I say, and then leave me alone." That's not what you have.

On the other side of things, maybe that's not your issue. Maybe you understand God to be intensely personal, but you have no holy fear or reverence for him. If you are a man or a woman who could be described as a nominal Christian... I don't even know if that exists, for the record. I tend to think you're non-Christians if you know *about* Jesus but don't really know him. Maybe that's too bold, overstated. If so, I apologize. It's just kind of how I think about it.

If you're a nominal Christian... What I mean by that is, yeah, you kind of know Jesus like Abraham Lincoln. You know some facts about him, but he doesn't kind of shape or direct your life. He's intensely personal. "Yeah, Jesus is my homeboy," but you don't have that reverence and awe of him, then that's something that needs to be nurtured and developed.

If you want to develop symmetry, those of you who understand that he's all-powerful and almighty but don't know him personally, you need to grow in your understanding of adoption and God calling you to himself and God delighting in you. You need to read those verses. You need to think and meditate on that aspect of God our Father.

If that's not where you are, and instead you're totally like buddies with Jesus and buddies with God but there is not this sense of his immensity and transcendence, you need to spend some time in the last three or four chapters of Job. You need to spend some time in Romans 8-11. You need to spend some time and dig into the immensity of God.

Then on clarity, some falsely lean toward what is called *deism*. Deism is not Christianity. *Deism* is the thought that an all-powerful, infinite god created, started the engine, and then has walked away and then let it run. He's not intimately acquainted with us. He doesn't really care about what is going on on earth. He started it. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die." That's deism. It's not Christianity.

Some of you need the clarity that if you believe that, you can't say you're a Christian because that's not what Christians believe. We're not deists. In the second way, some believe God is no judge at all. In fact, this is a very popular notion about God. He is really no judge at all. He's a God of love. In fact, you'll hear people say all the time, "I just couldn't believe in a God who did this. I just don't think God would do this. I just can't believe that God would allow this." Right? He's no judge at all.

What happens when you make God a God of love is to be a God of love is to have wrath. You cannot tease out love and wrath. Where there is one, there will be the other. How do we know it? I can tell you the simplest way. Try to harm one of my kids. Try to harm my wife. I don't think I'm dark of soul. I don't have fantasies of murdering anyone, but I will bloody you as best I can with this gangly body and the weapons I've assembled.

Why? Because I'm just looking for a fight? No, I hate violence, but I'm crazy about my 12-year-old daughter, and if you tried to harm her, I would gladly lose my job and spend some time developing a prison ministry to crush your face. Why? Because my personality is one of wrath? It's not at all. It's one of love and nurture and care. Because that exists, wrath is possible.

If you say, "God is a God of love. He would never have any wrath," you miss the reality that those two have to coincide. You can't have love without wrath. If you did, it would be a cheap,

meaningless love that is not driven to utilize its power to defend. It's silly. Gosh. It's silly. If you want to emasculate the God of the universe... "Oh, you would never get upset with sin." That means he doesn't love you.

"He would never rightly and justly judge people who rebel against him." Yes, he would because he is so intensely personal, because he loves *you* deeply. The sin that infects and breaks you and causes carnage around you, he hates that sin. If God loves you, he will expose your secret sin. I'll just say it. One of the frustrating parts of being a pastor is I know you're here.

Here's what I mean by that. You're listening right now. You might even encourage me some time this week. "I'm loving this Apostles' Creed. At first, it wiggled me out. I have a Catholic background. I didn't even know we could do this here. I thought we were Baptist. I'm loving it. Thank you." Simultaneously, you're emotionally or physically abusing your wife, neglecting your children, stealing from your company.

If, brother or sister, if God loves you, he will expose you. If you've been breathing air, you've heard of this Ashley Madison hack. There was a website that was devoted to adultery. Their tagline was, "Life is short; have an affair." That's a tricky little... That's marketing. That's PR. "Let's take *adultery*, which is a negative term, and let's make it pretty. It's an *affair*."

On this site, millions and millions of users were hacked, and all of the personal information was lifted. Then they posted it on the web. There were 15,000 government employees, thousands upon thousands of university professors and administrators. Why do I single out those two? Those two are policy makers and culture makers. What you see in the Ashley Madison scandal is that the virtue of the American soul has rotted.

I'll out my people. There were 400 pastors on that list. In fact, you can be mindful of this. All over the United States today, there are men resigning their positions at church because their sins found them out. Now, I would ask you to consider the love of God in these terms. When this hacker group decided to hack into Ashley Madison and out all of these people, could it be as we see in the Old Testament, God using the Assyrians to rightly expose the idolatry in Israel's heart?

Could it be that God lovingly outed sons and daughters who had given themselves over to sin and are now exposed in their shame with the ability to repent, confess, be forgiven, and be restored.

Could it be that it's the love of God that ripped off the roof of this scandal? Could it be that God is so intensely personal that he would burn down your world in the hopes of rebuilding?

See, I'm telling you, brother and sister, he is a just, right judge, and the only way out from under that judgment is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son. Next week's sermon. This is the kind of clarity we need. You can't be like, "God is a God of love. He would never..." Yes, he would because he is a God of love. We're not deists. We believe he's intensely personal. This is what Christians have historically believed.

Now, when it comes to community, it's important to note that God has not just called us to himself, but he's called us to one another. If you look around... Go ahead and do that. Look around. We don't have a lot in common. We're from different socioeconomic backgrounds. We're different ethnicities. Some of us grew up in Christian homes where we were nurtured. Others of us didn't.

Some of us have been saved 20 years. Some of us have been saved 20 days. We have had different experiences, different backgrounds, different educational levels. What makes us the family, what makes us the community of saints, as the creed will say later, is our shared Father, this intensely personal, infinitely powerful Father.

When we gather as the family, when we recite the creed together, when we hear our voices as we sing, when we gather in groups in homes across the Metroplex during the week, we testify that we are a family of faith, brought together by this Father, this infinitely powerful, intensely personal Father.

That's why before the service starts, you're hearing all about GroupConnect. Get in a group. We walk together as the communion of saints, brought together by this Father. Lastly, on counsel, if God the Father almighty is infinitely powerful and intensely personal, that should shape how we counsel ourselves and others.

Okay, let's play a little game of confession. How many of you this week just stressed, like, "I'm not going to make it, man. I'm freaking out." How many of you hit that wall this week? Okay, just look around. Be encouraged by this. Look around. There are like a thousand of us. Go ahead. Keep your hand up. You're stressing out now. Get your hand up. It's like, "I'm hiding. I can't." Just keep your hand up. I'm not having you stand.

These are the ones who are like, "I'm not going to make it. I'm freaking out. It's too much. I don't think I'm going to make it." Go ahead and put your hands down. How many of you had someone come to you and go, "I'm freaking out, man. I'm not going to make it." I'm not going to ask if that person was your spouse. I won't do that to you or me. Just keep your hands down, all right?

If God is infinitely powerful and intensely personal, that should shape on the day of trouble. In year two of my pastorate here at The Village Church, we had grown by 2,000. We had the budget of a church of about 80. It wasn't that people weren't giving. It was just that we were all 20-somethings, and we were broke. Half of us were living with our parents. It's like the offering was change most weeks. It was terrible.

We couldn't hire the staff necessary to organize. Here was my week. On Fridays, I would mow my lawn. It took about an hour to mow it and use the line trimmer. It's not because the lawn was big. It's because I mow slowly. I would literally say out loud while I mowed the lawn, "I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this." Out loud, not in my head. "I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this."

A neighbor would come over like, "Do you need help with that bag?" I'm like, "No, no. That's not what I'm doing. I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this." What I was trying to do was get out of my head and into my heart, "This is not my church. This is God's church. Even though I do not know everyone, he knows everyone. He knows their backgrounds. He knows their stories. I am not their Savior. He is their Savior."

I'm trying to get that into my gut. I'm trying to not *know* that; I'm trying to *believe* it. I would finish mowing the lawn, and I would feel encouraged, and I would preach the two services Saturday and the four Sunday, and I would feel encouraged. Then I would get to the office Monday and would be discouraged. I would get more discouraged on Tuesday, more discouraged on Wednesday, almost unable to move on Thursday.

Then I would mow my lawn again. "I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this. Surely, you know by now. I don't have to carry this. I don't have to carry this." I would be encouraged by the weekend services. The reason I'm saying that is because I don't want you to think that this kind of thing is a magic bullet.

You struggle with anxiety or fear, and you're like, "I know. Wait. No. God is infinitely powerful and intensely personal. Thank you, Pastor. I won't struggle at all anymore." No, no, no. Sometimes, it's very much a wrestle. If King David can say in the Psalms, "Why are you downcast, O my soul?" He is arguing with his own thoughts and heart. Surely, we will wrestle ourselves. Surely, we will wrestle ourselves.

This will inform not only how we counsel ourselves but how we counsel others. Now, when it comes to God being our Father, let me tell you the single greatest hurdle we'll have to overcome. Are you ready? Our own dads. Let's chat for a second because I have to do two things carefully. One, some of you, your fathers were wicked, deplorable men who did such dark and unthinkable things that there is festering wound in your soul you're going to have to wrestle with. The Lord, I think, will be generous to you in that wrestle.

For most of us, though, we just had regular, earthly fathers who did the best they could. They did the best they could, but they're not God, so they failed us, and they gave us some of our issues. I will say unless you're part of the former of what I just described, most of your jacked-up-ness is yours to own, not your daddy's. You should probably be more generous to him.

When I think about my own upbringing, my own father, who... God bless my dad. He's a tender, good-hearted man. He's from an extremely abusive background. He just didn't know what to do. He's a military man. Here's how I understood how to interact with my dad growing up. Do what he says and leave him alone. I grew up in a day and age where there wasn't such thing as time out. Are you tracking with me?

Are you going to tell a 12-year-old Matt Chandler to get in the corner and think about that? I would be like, "Awesome." I would just think about how to do it better and not get caught next time, just spend my time working my next plan. That was not the world I grew up in. It just was not. There wasn't, "Go think about that." You would think about it afterward, like, "What just happened, and can I have an ice pack?"

No, this, "Get in the corner and think about it," is producing great fruit. Nevermind. I apologize. My understanding was the best thing I can do is do what I'm told and stay away from Dad. Give Dad space, leave him alone, and do what I'm told. That's how I functioned. Then I became a Christian. God radically saved me by his grace.

Here's how I viewed God the Father. I viewed God the Father, this infinitely powerful, intensely personal God via the lenses of how I saw my own father. For the first several years, I just tried to do what he said and leave him alone. Really the basis, the driver of my Christian faith was, "Don't get in trouble. Don't get in trouble. Don't get in trouble."

I'm telling you one of the biggest issues of God's fatherhood over our lives is we're driven by, "Don't get in trouble. Don't get in trouble. Don't get in trouble," because our own fathers struggled with delighting in us and affirming us and rejoicing over us. It was this kind of works-based, "I'd better do *this* to be approved of," type of nonsense we now carry into our understanding of our heavenly Father that paralyzes us from enjoying his delight in us. His delight in us. Jesus tries to help us. He tries to bail us out of this like this. Luke 11, starting in verse 11, says...

"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

If I could just plug that into my own story... If my earthly father, as broken as he was, longed to give me good things and failed some and succeeded some, and if I as an earthly father apologize to my children more than anyone else on earth, doing the best I can and yet falling woefully short... If my father and if I want to give to my children good things, and yet sometimes accidentally hand them a snake, how much more then will the infinitely powerful, intensely personal, perfect Father give to his children what is good?

See, if we could just be real frank, the real issue for many of us is if God is infinitely powerful, he has some explaining to do about certain events and certain times and seasons of our lives. Isn't that a legit question? "If God is infinitely powerful and intensely personal, where was he when *blank*? Why didn't he deliver from the evil on that day? Where was he in that event? Someone help me understand how this could possibly happen if what you're saying is true."

The only way I know to minister to my own heart in my own grief and loss is to consider how I'll think of anything that bothers me now 10,000 years from now. When my son was 3 years old, he had a febrile seizure and had to be put in the back of an ambulance and rushed to the hospital. Sweet Norah, when she was 6 months old, got a hot fever. I stayed up all night with a nurse in the hospital and put cool towels on her trying to drive her fever down.

Six years ago, I was diagnosed with incurable brain cancer and told I was going to die. I did 18 months of high-dose chemo, radiated my brain. I wonder. I spend time going, "How will I look at that 10,000 years from now? How will I consider that 10,000 years from now?" See, the problem is one of perspective. Gosh. I don't know what God is up to. He's infinitely powerful. I can only bench press 500. I can't. That's so untrue. Oh my gosh. That's so untrue. I cut back at 450. I don't want to tear a shoulder.

I want to put it in perspective. I don't have good perspective. He's infinitely powerful. He's intensely personal. He loves me. He's for me. Let me just end like this. This is the question I think you have to wrestle with. Do you believe that God is good? Don't be too quick to say, "God is good. God is good all the time."

No, no, no. Do you really believe? Do you *believe...?* Not *know*. Do you *believe* that he's good, and do you believe God is for you and not against you, regardless of life's circumstances? If you can settle that, then you can join with the refrain of Christians across 2,000 years of history who said, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, for an opportunity once again to just sit under your Word and let it push on us and pull on us and shape us. You're good and gracious and kind, and we praise you, Father. Help us be more symmetrical in our belief about you. Challenge our notions of how we see you. Let us understand more fully your inherent personal touch, that you know us and that you're for us and that you delight in us.

Sometimes we don't feel like there is possibility for you to delight in us, and yet you do. Then there are others of us who are so lackadaisical, so not concerned with God. I pray that you would deepen our seriousness. Father, where we've bought into deism, will you forgive us? Where we've bought into you being a God of love with no wrath, will you forgive us?

Father, might we buy all the more into the communion of saints. I pray that GroupConnect would be jam packed with those who want to be a part of this family of faith. Ultimately, Father, we rejoice in the fact that you are infinitely powerful and intensely personal. You are for us, not against us. Bless us, Father. We need you. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

We end our services every week in a celebration of the Lord's Table. Let me set it up like this. If you are a guest with us, we provide Communion primarily for our members, but if you are a believer in Christ in good standing with the church you're visiting us from... What I mean by that is they preach the same gospel we preach. We want to invite you to celebrate the Lord's Table with us, to rejoice with us in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

I would like to ask this. If you're not a believer, if you're not quite sure what to do with any of this yet, will you just abstain? Will you just let the elements pass? I'm not trying to make you feel awkward or on the outs. I can't tell you how excited I am that you're here. I spent close to two years in church trying to figure this thing out before I became a Christian. Maybe you just watch us rejoice in our God today.

If you're not a Christian, would you just abstain from the elements? I want to lay those two questions before you and give you some time to consider and to pray before we take Communion together as a family. Remember. Do you believe God is good? Will you work on that? Maybe confess. "Hey, listen. I don't, God." He already knows if you don't. You don't have to pretend. Let's not be the veneer people. Let's not smile and go... Let's not do that. It's not helpful. It's not honest to a God who already knows.

Do you believe that God is good? Do you believe God is for you? Where you find in you places, spaces that you don't, those need to be confessed? You need to cry out for help. God delights in these things. Psalm 51 says the broken and contrite in spirit he will not despise. It's such a great irony that it's the proud he knows from afar, yet we're so worried about how we're perceived, and our pride keeps us from being honest about what we need. No, no, no. Confess. Ask for help. Then we'll celebrate here in a moment. I'll be right back.

Christian, why don't you look around? This is our family. This is the household of God, what God has brought together, what only the Father could bring together. He has called us into this place for such a time as this. Jesus, looking out at an early group of disciples, said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The Bible says that on the night Jesus was arrested, he took the bread and broke it and said, "This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal, he took the cup, and he blessed the cup, and he called the cup the blood of the new covenant. He said as long as we gathered as his people, as long as we got together, that we should drink the cup and remember the ushering

in of the kingdom, the consummation of the kingdom, and that it would be making all things new.
This morning, together as family, we remember.

Father, we love you. We sing now of your faithfulness, of your greatness. Thank you for using your infinite power and your intensely personal nature to grow us and save us and form us as a people.
We love you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

Love you guys. Let's sing.

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