

Prayer (Part 3) – The Sanctity of Human Life

Matt Chandler – January 17, 2016

Hey, how are we? Doing well? Awesome. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. We're going to be in Luke 10, so if you're here today and not a believer in Christ, not quite sure how to navigate the Bible, we have a page number for you. The big number is the chapter, and the little number is the verse. I don't want to presume you know how that operates. I want you to be able to see what we're going to marvel at together today as a family of faith.

Earlier, before we get to what we'll read in Luke 7, there is this profound moment in the gospel of Luke that really shapes how you should consider and think about Jesus. The Bible tells us that a man named Simon who was a Pharisee... He was a moral elite of the day. We would know him as a moral conservative. He was outspoken, had brilliant moral positioning, beliefs about how life works, and he invites Jesus to have dinner at his house.

This is an interesting thing to look at. If you ever want to just have an interesting time in the Bible, just study all the people Jesus sits down and has dinner with. You can't figure him out. He doesn't have a stream you can identify. He's hanging out with tax collectors and sinners. Here he is. He's at a politician's houses. He's at a crook's houses. He's having dinner with prostitutes. It's a weird thing to look at who Jesus has dinner with.

In this occasion, in Luke 7, he's having dinner with Simon the Pharisee. The Bible says that in the middle of this dinner, a woman of the city... That does not mean that she lives in a loft downtown. Are you tracking? A woman of the city shows up. Depending on the translation... Really, the Greek is letting us know she's a prostitute. This prostitute who... Keep in mind that their cities and towns are a lot smaller than we know of them today.

Even in biblical times, when you're looking at big cities, you're looking at cities of 100,000 or 150,000. This woman who is a well-known prostitute in the city opens the door. Awkward. You're

at this moral elite's house. Everybody is having dinner. It's a room full of men, and the door opens up, and there is a prostitute at the front door. She ignores everybody else in the room. She makes a beeline to Jesus Christ. She falls at his feet, and she begins to sob, that kind of uncomfortable, loud, uncontrollable sob.

Little girls... I have two of them. They don't dream of becoming prostitutes when they get older. No one in their first grade little quiz when they... "What do you want to do when you grow up?" No one fills out, "I would like to be used and abused by sad men." Bad, horrific, horrible things happen, and that's where it ends.

This woman, filled with shame, feeling unlovable, feeling dirty, falls at the feet of Jesus, and wave after wave of guilt and shame pours out of her in the form of tears, groans, snot, and heaving. It's awkward, and it's uncomfortable. Simon the Pharisee thinks to himself, "If this man Jesus was a prophet, he would know what type of woman this is who is touching him." This is a warning. Jesus answers him.

He thought that, and Jesus said, "Simon. Quick question. A man owed 500 pieces of silver to a moneylender, and another man owed 50 pieces of silver. Both could not pay. Both were forgiven. Who loved the moneylender more?" Because Simon is so self-righteous, he has to give himself a way out. "I suppose..." Right? "Maybe the one who owed more."

He said, "What you have said is true. Do you see this woman?" This woman is there. "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no oil for my head. You gave me no water for my feet. Yet, since she walked in this room, she has not stopped anointing my head with oil nor wetting my feet with her tears."

In the text... I encourage you to read it. It's stunning. He stops, and he addresses the woman. In my imagination, my guess is he lifts up her head, picks up her chin. This is not a woman who makes a lot of eye contact. She has been used and abused and viewed as a commodity her whole life.

He picks up her face, and he makes eye contact in a way that doesn't look at her as a product to be consumed, doesn't look at her as a consumable, but looks at her as one who has been made in the image of God. He commends her faith, and he forgives her sin. Then he sends her out with peace. In this moment of divine scandalous grace, Jesus wrings from her heart guilt and shame, and she leaves with peace.

Now, for the last four or five years now, we've used this weekend the same way, to address the sanctity of life, sanctity of human life. Specifically, we've talked about the sanctity of the life of the unborn. The way we've approached that is we've just laid out things that are our moral positions as Christians, and then we've laid out some moral positions that have nothing to do with the Bible but actually are just scientific.

We've stepped into this space where there is a lot of darkness, a million abortions a year. That is one million little boys and girls who die every year, sucked, plucked, torn out of their mothers' wombs surgically or with other abortive measure. Really, we've argued like this biblically. Here is our moral position. We believe life begins in the womb at conception. That's life. The moral, spiritual soul is present at conception, and all human life is made in the image of God. Therefore, it's more valuable than the rest of the creative order.

As Christians, that's what we believe the Bible says, that life begins at conception. It is the only place in the universe where spontaneously, there is a new strand of DNA out of nowhere that is not the mother and is not the father. It is wholly its own. We have marveled at this. We've been blown away with the fact that God knit us together in our mother's womb. Yes, yes, yes, it's biological, but it's more than biological.

Then we've made some arguments scientifically. We've made that DNA argument. Let me just say this. Don't think I'm having a political conversation today. I'm kingdom of God party. I have my guy. I've watched the debate. I'm not confident that any of those brothers are our savior. I'm fairly certain none of them are. My hope is not in America being great again, although I want to be a good citizen. I want to participate. I do believe the grace of God is profound on the United States in how we've been able to function these last couple hundred years.

I will tell you this. We are not the hope of the world. We're just not. Our system of government isn't. Our way of economics isn't. If I've offended you and ostracized you, I promise you I'm not trying to do that. I'm just trying to get across that I don't have a Republican agenda here. I'm not bought or owned by any party. I have my guy, and my hope is in that guy, and long after the United States ceases to exist, I'll have my guy. Right?

With all of that said, I'm not trying to get into a political fight here because I don't think this is political. I think it's ethical. I think it's moral. Ultimately, my hope for days like today is that Jesus

would heal, and the Holy Spirit of God would call out of guilt and shame and into life. We've just let the scientific facts out. The facts are not friendly to the choice side of the argument.

The Bible is over here now. Science is not friendly to choice. In 1973, you couldn't take a 3D MRI and watch your baby suck his or her thumb. What we know now is by eight weeks, babies have brain waves. They dream. They suck their thumb. A law was passed last year because we have proven scientifically that babies in the womb at eight weeks feel pain, which is why they recoil from pricking and try to retreat from many of the instruments that are used to abort them.

It hurts them. We know that at eight weeks, all of their organs are functioning. They have brain waves. They have a heartbeat. Their kidney is cleaning fluid. They have their own blood type that is distinct from their mom's or their dad's. We have a whole other human soul in there. That's the scientific side of things.

Here's my big point. We've done that year after year after year here. I'm passionate about the life of those babies, think we need to fight for the unborn. We need to be serious about the unborn. They are the least of these, the most vulnerable, the most helpless in our society. I don't want to lack the courage to say what is true, which is abortion is murder. It is the taking of a human life. I don't want to be a coward. I need to say that to you.

Yet, at the same time, I need to acknowledge that what you're talking about here is not an issue, but you're talking about human beings. You're talking about people, not just on the baby's side of things, but on the woman's side of things. What Jesus has called us to is not moral arguments and principles but more than that.

See, in both of those, I can take a moral position. I can say, "I'm a Christian. Here's what the Bible says. Based on what the Bible says, here's my moral position," or... Maybe you'll find this interesting. No, the line isn't cleanly wrong around religious people and non-religious people. There are plenty of non-religious people who are on the side of life because more and more and more, science is carrying the day.

In fact, you will see the hypocrisy of progressives and liberals around this issue. You find a half cell of something on a far off planet. "We discovered life." At eight weeks, "That's not life." I mean, it's madness. It's a seared conscience. It's a broken brain. In the middle of all of this, you're not just talking about a baby. You're talking about women.

I can take the moral position that this is what the Bible says. I can take the moral position that this is what science says. Neither of those moral positions changes the fact that for every one of those babies represented, there are real women in real situations, some of them hopeless and difficult, some of them carrying an immense amount of shame and guilt, that Jesus would call us out of moral positioning.

There is nothing wrong with holding a moral position. I'm not trying to woo you out of a moral position. Rather, that a moral position should move us as Christians. In fact, Jesus would call us not to just moral position but actually action. Jesus is after more than just moral positioning. Let me show you that. I want to spend some time on the text.

Then we'll get back to what that has to do with life and women and abortion and all of that. Here we go, starting in verse 25 of Luke 10. **"And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test..."** I already have questions about the intelligence of this brother. He's going to put Jesus, the Son of God, to the test? "... **saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'**

He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'" Look at verse 28. **"And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"**

What a fascinating exchange between Jesus and the lawyer. The lawyer asks the question, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life? What do I have to do to be a whole person?" Jesus asks him, "Hey, you're a lawyer. What does the law say?" The guy smokes the answer. He nails it. Don't lose the fact that Jesus said, "What you said is correct." How does this unravel for the lawyer? The lawyer should have just sat down. He got what he wanted. "You have answered correctly."

Then Jesus threw this at him. **"You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."** See, here's what Jesus is exposing in the lawyer, and here's what Jesus would expose in us. Understanding in our minds is not necessarily believing in our hearts. What we believe in our hearts drives us to action, not necessarily what we believe in our minds. Right?

How many of you have plenty of knowledge of things you should be doing in your mind that you're not doing? Okay. I'm just going to call that unanimous. There are a lot of liars in here today. I'm fine. You're saved. That's why I started with the story I started with. Right? You're saved for being the liar you are. All of us have far more... In fact, we prayed about this three weeks ago. "God, shrink the distance between my head and my heart. I know more in my mind than I'm believing in my heart. Shrink that. Close that gap for me."

The lawyer answers correctly. "You have answered correctly. Do this." Here's what happens. The lawyer now needs to justify himself because he has answered correctly, but his life certainly does not match up with what he knows. Jesus exposes this with two words, "Do this." Now the lawyer is threatened. See, the lawyer is threatened because he needs to justify why his belief is not playing out in his life, why his understanding has not equated to a life that lines up with how God designed life to work.

He seeks to justify himself by asking a legit question. "Who is my neighbor?" That's a legit question. This lawyer is asking this question at a time in history when the Roman Empire had occupied their homelands. They're murdering and raping and destroying where the Jews lived. He's asking, "Do I have to love the Romans?" The racial tension between Jew and Samaritan made some of the tensions we feel in our country between races as some kind of disagreement on the playground in kindergarten.

The Jews prayed that God would not save the Samaritans in the temple. They prayed, "Don't save them. Don't extend them grace." How dark is your heart? He's asking, "Is the Samaritan my neighbor? Let's define *neighbor*. Is *neighbor* like my legit neighbor, like the dude who lives on the sides of me or across the street? Who is my neighbor?" He's seeking to justify himself. He's seeking because Jesus has now exposed the chasm between head and heart by saying, "You're correct. Now do this." In seeking to justify himself, he asked the question, "Who is my neighbor."

Jesus answers him by telling a story. "**Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers...'**" Everyone in the crowd would understand what that road was. That road was not a safe road. It was known for being a place you should never be alone. Even if you were with a group, you probably shouldn't be there after dark. Are you tracking with me? This is a well-known place where there are robberies and murders.

This is a dangerous place, a place even at noon, clear skies, bright sun, visibility as far as you can see, you didn't want to be by yourself. This was a very dangerous place. **"...and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite..."** The people of God, the people group within the Jewish nationality who were responsible as the priesthood, a Levite passes by.

These are the kinds of stories that got Jesus killed. **"So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan..."** Jesus has the gall to make the Samaritan a hero. By the way, just so we can be clear as we're reading the Bible, we're all guilty of this. As you read this passage, keep in mind we're the lawyer. As you're reading this, don't be going, "Oh, I kind of see myself in that Samaritan." Right?

You're not the Samaritan. Aren't we guilty of this? We read Jesus' parable, and we're like, "I'm that guy." You're not that guy. I'm not that guy. We're the lawyer in the text. You're not the Good Samaritan. You may or may not be the priest or the Levite. You're not the Good Samaritan. You're not the Good Samaritan, even if you've given yourself that nickname. You're not the Good Samaritan.

"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed..." Listen to this. **"...came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.'"**

This is a stunning story. Here's what we have to figure out. Really what has happened here, and one of the reasons we've been praying the way we've been praying as a congregation is what occurs in the Samaritan's heart isn't intellectual. It's emotive. Compassion isn't intellect. It's a feeling in the gut. Mercy isn't intellect. It's something in us that has been stirred up because we have experienced it. Right? What is happening that a priest and a Levite would cross the street and ignore a brother who is beaten and bloody and pretend as though they don't see him? Let's talk about it.

Fear. Hello? I mean, you're in a dangerous place already. You're not comfortable there. This dude is naked and bloody. I'm freaking out. I know some of you are like, "I have my CHL. I hope. I got it. I'm going to help him, and I'm going to hope those robbers are still around. This is a sub-compact .40 with a laser scope. I'm hoping they have friends. I have an extra clip." You have to love Texas.

In the end, for all of your bravado, this is a terrifying moment. This man is bleeding out. He's bloody. He's half dead. One of the narratives that has to be chiseled away out of suburban Christianity is the idea that what is uppermost in God's heart for you is safety. Here's what Jesus guarantees you. Are you ready? Security. What's the difference between safety and security? Regardless of what befalls your life, you are secure in Christ. Your eternity is secure. God's care for you is secure. You will never be outside of his security.

Yet, the history of the people of God is we run into places that are dangerous because it is there that people are hurt and wounded and in desperate need of the love of Jesus. We are not to be driven by fear. Perfect love casts out fear. See, when you make the plan of God for your life to be non-heroic... Do you know what I'm saying by non-heroic? That what God has for you is the memorization of some texts and to be morally well behaved and to just sit on your couch and read Christian books and try not to do bad things.

What a pathetic version of the Christian life. What does it mean to be a Christian? "To not be bad." No thank you. First of all, it's not biblical. Secondly, that's terribly boring. It's not what God has called you to. "Be safe." That's not his call. His call is, "I'm with you. Let's go." There is something in us that yearns for the heroic. I'm not talking about you being William Wallace. Are you tracking? That's not what I'm saying.

We've been created and made by God to be in the muck and the mire, to be *in* it. It's in that place we realize we're not God and that he is. We learn we're powerless, and he is powerful, and that's more comforting to the soul than it sounds. It's not comforting to your ego, but it's comforting to the soul. Fear makes us walk on the other side, but not just fear. Self-righteousness makes us walk on the other side. "This dude probably had it coming. Why didn't he just do what I did?"

Hey, man, aren't you on the road to Jericho also? "Yeah, but we're not talking about me. We're talking about him." Really the only reason you weren't robbed and left bloody and naked is a 45-minute window. Had you left earlier and been where he was, it would have been you bloody and

naked and him walking on the other side of the street. Self-righteousness fuels our inability to engage hurting, broken, and bloodied people.

"If they just did what we do, if they just lived their life like we live it... They must have had this coming somehow. Why can't they be more like me?" Lastly, God help us, I believe we're seeing more and more and more an erosion of human capacity toward empathy and compassion. Let me just say this. It's funny. I said this in our 9:00 a.m. service, and a guy who is pretty high up on the chain at Apple is sitting right over here, so I did make eye contact a couple of times. He's a friend.

I'm not anti-technology. I'm preaching from an iPad. I have an iPad Mini and have a MacBook Air, and I love all of them. I'm not anti-technology. I don't have a smartphone. It's too much for me. I have a weird personality. That kind of streaming, non-stop stimulation does really bad things to me. I'm literally being honest. I have a little flip phone. People look at me like I'm crazy. I think they question my character, are just waiting for me to break the phone and throw it in the trashcan and walk away like it's some kind of burner.

There is a book called *Reclaiming Conversation* by Sherry Turkle. She's a beautiful writer. Here's what she writes of what seems to be diminishing capacity for empathy and compassion. Here's what I mean by a beautiful writer. Look at her first sentence. "Our rapturous submission to digital technology..." Could you have ever made that sentence?

"Our rapturous submission to digital technology..." I love this woman. "...has led to an atrophy of human capacities like empathy and self-reflection. When you speak to people in person, you're forced to recognize their full human reality, which is where empathy begins. A recent study shows a steep decline in empathy as measured by standard psychological tests among college students of the smartphone generation, and conversation carries the risk of boredom, the condition that smartphones have taught us most to fear, which is also the condition in which patience and imagination are developed."

Sherry is arguing that one of the reasons we're seeing the atrophy of empathy and compassion and mercy is we distract ourselves from feeling deeply. It's not just this stuff. It's everything about the world in which we live. If you turn on the local news... Let's forget *Fox* and *CNN*, which will sear your conscience. Let's just say local news. Even the local news switches gears so fast it will make your head spin. It will be like, "Five dead in a house fire in south Dallas. Three children among the dead. Next up, Jo Jo the cat joined a spa in Uptown and has lost four pounds this week."

How do you switch gears like that? There is no space to lament, no space to grieve, no space to hurt, no space to weep, no space to be broken over the shambles our world is in, the fact that there is that kind of loss right down the street from us. There is the phone with apps and games and pretty pictures and all sorts of things to distract us from feeling deeply the brokenness of this world. Who wants that, right?

Jesus wants that for you, to mourn with those who mourn, to grieve with those who grieve, to feel the weight of the brokenness of this world and be shaped by it. God calls us not to a moral position to hold moral positions but then to step into more than that, to not be driven by fear, to not be owned by self-righteousness, and to not lack empathy, but to be really overwhelmed with mercy and compassion.

What does all of this have to do with life and abortion and women and all of that? I'm glad you asked because that's really why I just taught all of that, so I could talk about that. When it comes to life, when it comes to abortion, when it comes to women and men who are involved, here's what I really want for our church. This is what I'm really hopeful for.

Every year, we talk about this. We talk about it throughout the year. It's not just this weekend that we address this topic. This will go down as the greatest genocide in human history. There will be a day not far from now, probably because of science, ironically enough, that it's outlawed as we currently know it. When we're in our 60's and 70's and 80's, it will be with a great deal of shame that we address how horrific the last 50 years have been.

Tens of millions of little boys and little girls sucked to pieces out of their mothers' wombs as they recoil and try to get away from it. I want us to be serious about babies. I want us to rejoice in them and celebrate them. When we're in here, and you hear a baby crying, I love that sound. That sound doesn't exist in dying churches. I love it. They're crying, and you're like, "I'm trying to keep them quiet." I see it. I don't mind it. Now, if they're freaking out and distracting everybody around you, I get it, but just a little coo here and there or a baby shouting out, I just think they're agreeing with my sermon. I'm just like, "Hey, I'm glad somebody is talking to me." I like that.

I want us to value. We're going to be serious about it. We're going to teach it. In fact, we're bringing in Eric Metaxas in May to do a forum for our church on how the church might be involved to help end this. Eric Metaxas is a brilliant, brilliant man. He lives in New York City. He is a prolific writer, a

New York Times bestseller, brilliant, educated at Yale or something. Let me just say he's smarter than us. He's going to come in and just hang out with us at a seminar. We're going to teach on these things.

If you want to know how to educate your children or have these conversations, if you have questions yourself, I would recommend you go to a website called abort73.com. It is run by a godly, brilliant man out in South Carolina. It's a lot of the scientific apologetics around this issue. He is a Christian, but the arguments he's making are far more scientific in nature. It's a trustworthy site. I want us to be serious about babies.

Look right at me. I want us to be serious about the women who are making these decisions. My wife and I have fallen in love with the ministry YoungLives. YoungLives is a part of Young Life, and it's a ministry to teenage moms. One of my sisters got pregnant in high school. I saw firsthand the complexity and difficulty of that.

If you were to study statistics in any way around this issue, you would find most abortions occur at or under the poverty line. Here's what I'm asking you to do. Sure, we can take a moral position here, but I want you to get in the skin of a little girl who has been abused and used her whole life, who has no real vision for the future, who has no real vision for going to college, finding a nice spouse, doesn't have the capacity because of how life has played out to look into her future and see good days ahead.

Barely surviving. Feels like she's drowning. All of a sudden, she finds out she's pregnant. I read a sociologist years ago who said, "Among the urban poor, sex is a playground for men and a nightmare for women." She can't hardly feed herself. She has no support. She finds herself pregnant. I want us to be serious about her. I want us to be very serious about her.

For the 22-year-old junior at the University of Texas who went out one night and got plastered and doesn't hardly remember and now finds herself pregnant, and she's being overwhelmed with guilt and shame, and if her parents find out, they're no longer going to pay for her school, and she feels dirty and ashamed, and she's beginning to give into self-hate. I want to be serious about her.

The woman through her brokenness and sinfulness who gives herself into an adulterous affair and finds herself pregnant, I want us to be serious about her. I want us to enter into their sorrow, and I want us to be the presence of Christ. Look at me. This will not be easy for us. Can I tell you why it won't be easy for us? We live in DFW. What do I mean by that?

One of the things we value in the class that is primarily represented in the rooms that make up The Village Church. We are all upper middle class. We have some who are upper class. We have some who are lower class. By and large, if we look at our numbers, we are a middle class, upper middle class church.

Here's what we value. Are you ready? We value efficiency. We do. We love efficiency. We want it to be efficient. Not only do I want it to be efficient, but I want results. If I'm going to give myself to something, I want results. I need to know I'm not wasting my time, and that's why this is so difficult. That's why this is so difficult, because this is complex and unsolvable.

The reason every year we do this, and everybody gets amped up and goes and signs up for something, and then three months later, we've given up because we don't see the results, and it feels inefficient because it is inefficient and because results are long time coming. I want you to do this. This is so helpful. I want you to say this with me. "I am not God." No, say it louder. "I am not God."

Doesn't that feel good? I'm not responsible for results. God hasn't called me to results. I am not judged as a success or failure by results. Heck, who knows what is actually going on here? People look at The Village and go, "168 and close to 15,000 in 13 years," that's stunning. We don't know what's going on here. God will be the ultimate judge of that.

Heck, a lot of you are here just to be entertained. We don't solve. We just step into hard, complex, unsolvable situations, and we give ourselves. We open up our dining room table, and we just stay the course, and we love. Listen. We don't try to fix. We just cry, and we're there, and we're sorry, and we do whatever we can to help. The pressure of fixing...

Golly. Even Jesus said, "The poor you'll always have." What do you do with that? Jesus said that. Unfortunately, people with moral position will oftentimes quote him as a reason not to get involved. "Well, we're always going to have them." Yeah, so we give ourselves. We don't just stand in moral position. We get into the muck and the mire. We open up our dining room tables. "Well, I don't know if that's safe." I'm not saying it's safe. I'm saying you're secure.

"Well, why don't they just give those babies up for adoption?" Golly. If you knew how privileged and absurd that would sound to these communities. "Why don't they just..." What you're saying is, "Why don't they act more like me?" Do you know how ethno-centric that is, how class-centric that is? They're not you. Let's be real careful of elevating where you are as the apex of human existence.

We step in, and we love over the long haul, maybe for decades, and don't underestimate what the grace of God will do by us just being present over a long period of time, to be, in this really mysterious way, the presence of Christ to the hurting and the broken, the trapped and the hopeless.

Let's be serious about babies, but let's not demonize these young women and women who have come from horrific, difficult situations. Jesus doesn't handle it that way ever. He doesn't tell the woman at the well, doesn't try to tell the woman caught in adultery, doesn't say to the prostitute at his feet... Never does he give them a moral lecture. He always lifts up their head. He always looks them in their eye. He always speaks peace, always speaks grace, always commits.

May our moral posturing never isolate, brutalize, and beat up the very people Jesus longs to show mercy to. What do we do with all of this? Well, a few things. If you would be so inclined, we have all kinds of opportunities for you coming into this week. I don't know if you saw it when you came in here in Flower Mound, but that mobile unit out there, you helped pay for that.

That has been driving around three locations, even here in Lewisville, and we have seen young women who were abortive focused, were going to have an abortion, step onto our mobile clinic and be loved, cared for. They got to hear the baby's heartbeat. They heard Real Choices say, "We're committed to you. We're walking alongside of you."

Real Choices operates in this world between baby and woman in a very serious way. They're on the ground in the muck and the mire, and we want to partner alongside of them. If you're here in Flower Mound, when you leave today, you can just walk through that. You helped pay for that. You can get in the mobile unit and see what it looks like.

If you are in the medical profession, you can sign up to serve and be trained. If you want to volunteer with Real Choices, you can do that. I want us to raise across all of our campuses this weekend \$120,000 for Real Choices because I want to fund them and resource them and come alongside of them because they are doing things we don't need to rebuild because they've built it so beautifully. They're better at it than anyone else we have found or researched. They are very serious about these women.

They are not just taking a moral position. They are engaging in the care and in the fight for the souls of these girls and women. I want us to raise \$120,000. We have a landing page on our website you can go to. If you're quick enough, you can even text it, as I ranted on smartphones earlier. If you have your smartphone or something like that, you can just text there. Our hope is to raise \$120,000 for Real Choices.

They're going to use that in marketing. They're going to use that in reaching and serving these young women. I want you to consider doing that. We don't do a lot of things like this. In fact, it's a very rare thing, maybe once every other year, for us to ever lay before our congregation that we want to raise \$120,000 this weekend. Right?

There are 12,000 to 15,000 of us across our campuses. This should be very... We should blow past this. You can go to the landing page on our website right after service, or if you were quick enough to take a picture of that or use that, you can do it that way. In the lobby, there will be two other tables here in Flower Mound. There will be a table for YoungLives. I

think it is one of the more beautiful ministries that is loosely attached to The Village Church.

You will not solve or fix anything by getting involved. Look at me. You will not solve or fix anything by getting involved. It is not efficient. The lows will oftentimes outnumber the highs. And you're going to cry. And it's going to be incredible. Their table is out there. Women and men, it's out there. Lastly, we have a table out there for Grace Abounds. Grace Abounds is a ministry here in the Flower Mound area that cares for women who have had abortion or men who have funded, forced, or bullied a woman into an abortion.

All of that is out there. Those are physical means by which you might respond. Here's what I wanted us to do for just a few moments here. I said we would do this three weeks ago, so we're just going to spend some time praying together as a congregation. I'm going to put two prayer points up and just walk you through it a little bit. We're just going to spend some time praying together as a congregation.

If you're not a Christian, maybe this is weird for you, but just think happy thoughts toward women in tough situations, or just ask that God would help your heart believe. That's not a bad prayer to pray if you really want to believe. Ask God to help your heart believe. Here's the first prayer. I have two questions that lead us into it. *Is your life marked by mercy?*

That's a tough question, isn't it? "I think."

I've tried to ask a follow-up question that might help you process. *When was the last time you felt real and deep empathy for another person?* When was the last time someone else's hardship or brokenness broke your heart, led you to pray, led you to deep concern? When was the last time, like the Good Samaritan, you were moved with compassion?

See, brothers and sisters, this is a spiritual issue. You can memorize all of the verses in the Bible you want around compassion, and have no compassion. You can memorize all of the verses in the Bible about mercy, and have no mercy. This is not an intellectual argument. We need the Spirit of God to help us become more integrated people.

If you can't remember the last time you cried, can't remember the last time you hurt deeply, don't feel guilty or ashamed of that. Let's just pray. Ask the Lord to soften your heart. You pray for you right now. Pray for your own heart. If you lack empathy, compassion, if you can't remember the last time your heart broke for another, that you wept for another, that you mourned with those who mourn, will you pray for you?

Ask that God would soften your heart. Would you pray for Real Choices and YoungLives? Would you pray God's favor? Would you pray for resources? Would you pray for volunteers? Lastly, would you pray that God would end abortion as we currently know it in the United States?

Father, we thank you for your stunning grace, for your goodness to us, your mercy extended to us. Would you make us a place of mercy? We thank you for the truth of your Word. We thank you that we can courageously and boldly stand on every jot or tittle in the Word of God as inherent as your very Word.

We pray more than we would just understand it in our minds, that we would believe it in our hearts, and that belief would be shown by action. I thank you that you have not asked us to solve. You have not asked us to fix. You have not asked for efficiency, nor have you demanded results, but just that we might step out by faith, being fueled and empowered by your Holy Spirit, in love. Around our dining table, through our tears, with our grief, and with our joy, to walk alongside others for the long haul.

I pray for a supernatural overwhelming of our spirits toward mercy and compassion and acts of mercy and compassion and that we would give our lives not to safety and boredom but rather to love in difficult, complex places that won't be solved, but we might see your mighty hand move and work over the long haul to save, to bend, to rescue, to ransom, and to make right. You are good at this. You do this. This is what you do. We praise you for it. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.