



Let's Talk (Part 6) – Mortification

Matt Chandler – July 30, 2017

Amen! If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Colossians, chapter 3, is where we're going to be again. If you were here last weekend, we started what was going to be three weeks in Colossians 3, verses 1 through 17. Really what we've been talking about is really how God takes us, transforms us, smooths off kind of our sharp, jagged, broken edges and transforms our heart over an extended period of time.

We used last week this imagery or this illustration of sea glass, which is pieces of broken pottery, glasses, wine bottles, or whatever, and it spends 30 to 40 years in the ocean immersed in saltwater. Via calm seas, rough seas, and currents in the ocean, it is smoothed out, smoothed over. Its surface is transformed. Then it becomes something that's kind of valuable, where people gather it. They make jewelry out of it, and it becomes this really beautiful thing.

I said it's just a beautiful illustration of what God has done for us. He grabs us when we're broken, fractured, and jagged, and he begins over a long period of time to transform us, shape us, and turn us into something beautiful. We looked last week at the first four verses, but we started in verse 17 because we said verse 17 was really the summarization of all 17 verses. Why don't we look at that quickly together, and then we'll dive into the text for today?

In Colossians 3:17, we get a sense of God's vision for our lives. Here's what it is: **"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."** You see two things God is actively up to in our lives. Here's the first one: God is after our greater integration as human beings...word and deed, head and heart. He is shrinking the gap of hypocrisy over time.

What was interesting to note last week is actually kind of astonishing. When I asked the question, "How many of you sense a gap between word and deed, head and heart?" the only people who *didn't* raise their hands were liars. It was amazing! We all feel this. We get a sense that there's a gap.

We can call that gap *hypocrisy*, but God's vision for our lives is for that to be ever shrinking until there's integration of head and heart, word and deed.

That's not all God is up to. We see also in this text that on top of integration, on top of head and heart, word and deed, he also is transforming us to be a people marked by gratitude and gladness. There is not a greater apologetic for the Christian faith in 2017 than lives marked with gratitude and gladness. We live in a day and age that's pessimistic. It is hyper-aware of what it does not have. It is ready to be offended by anything.

What happens when the people of God just shine brightly by not being perturbed but just being grateful for what we've been given, for what God has entrusted to us, for his kindness to us in Jesus, I'm telling you, that will shine brightly in the cynicism of our day. We said this is what God is up to. He is after our integration. This is his vision for our lives: integration, gratitude, and gladness.

Then we looked at kind of how that path starts, how that process starts. It starts with this mindset, a mind that's set on the things that are above, not on the earth that's below. We have our mind set on Jesus. We went really kind of radical. We said as Christians, we're like all in on Jesus. We've pushed all our chips in. We don't have another bet. We're not hedging. Jesus is our guy, so much so that whatever you want to talk about, we're going to need to talk about Jesus.

You want to talk about marriage? We're going to need to talk about Jesus. You want to talk about children? We need to talk about Jesus. Do you want to talk about work? We need to talk with you about Jesus. Do you want to talk vacation? Jesus. Right! You name it, I need to talk about Jesus so we can understand one another. We are all in on Jesus Christ. "Christ-ins." I know that doesn't make sense, but it makes the point. Then in one of my favorite passages, one of my favorite ideas in those first four verses was found in verse 3, where it says, "**...your life is hidden with Christ in God.**"

It's this idea that our lives, all our failures, all our shortcomings, everything about us, is actually hidden in Christ in God, which creates a kind of freedom that empowers and enables us to live the Christian life in greater power, in greater freedom, and in greater joy the longer we follow after him. We are hidden in Christ and Christ in God. Therefore, since that's true (since your life is hidden with Christ in God), here's what the next part of this process of sanctification, of being made more like Jesus, looks like.

Colossians 3, starting in verse 5: **"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you..."** Then he lists them. **"...sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.**

In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

That's all next week's stuff. Verse 11: **"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."** Now if you have a background in church or you have a cursory understanding of religion, nothing I just read is somewhat shocking or surprising to you. I don't think anyone in here was like, "Wait a second! We shouldn't be a part of sexual immorality? Why has no one told me this?"

We have an understanding of what's going on here. Something I want to draw your attention to is the seriousness of what's going on in this text. The Bible just said, "You should put to death, you should murder, you should kill, you should act violently toward..." and then this list of behaviors. John Owen said, "Be killing sin, or it will be killing you."

He is pushing this point. When it comes to sexual immorality, when it comes to sex outside the bounds God has given us, you should be serious about putting that to death. Do not play with that thing. Do not try to train that thing. That thing is not a friend. It is not a pet. It will devour and destroy you. Something is trying to kill you, and you shouldn't play around with that.

He doesn't just mention sexual immorality here. He mentions impurity, and impurity is any moral corruption. If you are morally corrupt... So you're shady at work. You're underhanded in a relationship. That's moral corruption. He moves on from there and talks about passion. Now don't go all Nike commercial on me, all right?

He is not saying you can't be passionate about things. He is saying you shouldn't be led by your stomach. Are you tracking with me on that? You just give yourself over to various passions. Then when he talks about evil desires in this text, he is talking about impulses or compulsions that are out of step with God's good plan for our lives. Everyone in this room, regardless of how long you've

been around church, will have these impulses, these compulsions, to give ourselves over to things that are out of God's good design for our lives.

Then he moves on, and he talks about covetousness. Here's why coveting is such a big deal. I think coveting is one of those things that we're like, "Oh, I mean, in the list of sins, surely, man, that's like junior varsity, B-team, third string tight end in a system that doesn't use a tight end." But coveting is an accusation against God.

When you covet, you make the accusation against God that he is not good, that he has not done what's best for you, that he is cruel, that he withholds from you what is good for your flourishing. You make an accusation against God that is a lie and smears his character. Coveting is a very serious sin. In fact, this is the one he calls *idolatry*.

You make yourself your own God when you covet, because you say, "You don't know what you're doing. You don't know what's best. I know what's best, and I deserve this. I should have this, and I need these things. You have not given them to me." That's coveting.

What he says here if you stop and think is you have this permission toward violence. He is saying, "Put these things to death. Drag these out back, and put a bullet in their brain. Then empty the clip, and if you have any more rounds, you need to reload that thing. If you're out of rounds, then you grab a shovel, and you just pound it until you don't even know what it is anymore. Then you bury it, and then you burn the shovel you did all of that with with the weapon. Then you vacuum that up, and then you destroy the vacuum."

You don't play with this stuff. Now he is not talking about harming yourself or physically punishing yourself. He is saying where you catch whiff of these, this is your flesh and your Enemy trying to kill you. You shouldn't play around with that. You shouldn't pretend this is no big deal. You should not be like those fools who take baby lions and try to train them as pets.

Don't be that person. You end up on a show called *When Animals Attack!* It's just like, "Oh, he is so...! Let me stick my head in his mouth." Right? Yeah. Then you or your children die, and you're like, "It's crazy! He was so cute! I raised him since he was a kitten!" He is an apex predator. He kills stuff. That's all apex predators do. They eat things. Nothing eats them. They eat everything else.

This is what's happening in this text. Don't play with this. That's what the apostle Paul is saying here. "Hey, you mess around with this, someone is going to die." I'm just saying very few of us take this approach to sin. When we have impulses and compulsions and they're toward sexual immorality or they're toward moral corruption, very few of us have the thought, "Something is trying to kill me here!"

We don't go, "Hey, I need some help! Someone is trying to kill me!" No, we're like, "Yeah, I'm good, man. Hey, sit. Sit! Here. Here's a treat. You just do what I tell you to do. I'm in control. I've trained you. I've got this." You are not Cesar Millan. "You will not *psssssst*. Sin!" It will devour you. This is what the text is saying. Don't mess around with this stuff. Put it to death.

Then the next part. I love this. I think we don't think well about this because of a lot of propaganda, but he says that because of these things (sexual immorality), because of impurity, because of passion, because of evil desires and covetousness, the wrath of God is coming. I think one of the biggest, silliest lies our generations represented in this room are just lapping up as though it is true with no thought and no reason is, "God is a God of love. Therefore, he could never be angry with anyone. If God is a God of love, there is no room for him to have any wrath."

Yet common sense would tell you the greater the love, the greater capability of wrath. I'll say this. If you came over to my house and you took my rake... It's not a nice rake. It's like \$5. You took my rake, and you broke my rake. You ran over it with your car. I mean, I'm going to think you're a psychopath, but I'm just going to go get another rake. But try that with one of my children. Try that with my wife. I'm a pretty stable brother, but I know I have some capabilities.

The greater the love, the greater the wrath. It is a silly god of your imagination when you think God could never be wrathful toward what destroys the crown jewel of his creation, namely humankind. What does sexual immorality do? What is this kind of compulsive, impulsive thing? What does moral corruption do? It sows discord, destruction, and devastation to things God cherishes and loves, so he is rightly wrathful about the disintegration of something he loves so deeply, namely you and me.

Then the next part of this text is this really beautiful encouragement to Christians. "Hey, hey! That's not you anymore. You *used* to do this thing, and now since you have a new relationship with Christ and you have a new relationship because of Christ with sin, your relationship with sin has changed. Therefore, put it away.

This is the "hide the body" part. We have the "put it to death," and now we have the "hide the body." Put them all away. This next list shows you kind of the devolution of relationships. The first list ends with covetousness. "You have what I think I deserve. I'm not getting what I deserve."

By the way, just for free. It's not in the notes. If you ever have the thought about God, "I am not getting what I deserve," you are correct, but you're probably just correct differently than you think you are. You are *not* getting what you deserve, and that should make you worship your faces off.

He gets into now we're coveting. We're looking at, "I don't have that. I deserve that." Then watch the progression. "**...put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk... Do not lie to one another...**" Now what you just saw there is the disintegration of relationships and the kind of relationships that form us and sustain us. When I covet, that creates anger in my heart. Like I'm angry that you have something I don't have or that I have not experienced what you have been able to experience.

That anger leads to wrath. Wrath is not explosion. It is steadily building opposition against. Here's how you've experienced this. You have coveted. You have begun to be angry. Then you begin to steadily build opposition against. Have you ever been in an argument or a disagreement with someone, and then over the next couple of days, you begin to remember, "Man, I wish I would have said... I tell you what, if I could go back in time, I'd tell her, 'Who are you looking at?'"

You start to replay things in your head, and it starts to build. You have anger leading to wrath leading to malice. Now in your wrath that's steadily building opposition rooted in anger, stemming from that list above now we're to malice. We want to harm them. We're not psychopaths, so we're not going to roll up on them and punch them in the face or something like that. No, no, no. We're far too civilized for that.

We'll slander them instead. We'll slander. We'll make up stories. We will point out their weaknesses. We will take any credit they receive from others. "Hey, that guy is great." "I mean, yeah. He is great for a guy who has gone through three divorces." You know? It's that kind of stuff where we just want to discredit and slander. Then slander leads to obscene talk.

Now because we're Westerners, when we hear "obscene talk," we think of cuss words. All right? That's not what "obscene talk" is in this text. This is cursing, not language but cursing someone. Like

placing a curse on them. Don't think witchcraft. Just think, you can hurt people with your words. You can recover from a good punch to the jaw. There are some things that can be said to you that will haunt you for the rest of your life.

When he talks "obscene talk" here, he is saying basically you curse someone with your words. Then that leads to lying, because when you get confronted about all this stuff, "No, that's not what happened. What had happened was..." You begin to lie to get out from under the weight of your conviction.

Then he moves on from there to say then put off. What you're supposed to put off in particular is the old self with its practices. Once again, he is reworking our relationship structure. Since you have been raised with Christ, since your life is hidden with Christ in God, you *used* to do these things, but now you've been made new. So take off those old practices.

The New Testament loves the imagery of clothing and armor and taking it off and putting it on and those kind of things. Maybe to make this more visceral, when I was in college, my potluck roommate and I would play basketball late in the evenings because that's what you do in college, right? You'll sleep when you get out of college (at least that's what you think). We would go start playing basketball at 8:30 or 9:00 at night and then just play until sometimes midnight, sometimes north of midnight. Then we'd come back to our dorm.

Man, I don't know your college experience. I lived in the dorm, and we didn't have showers in our dorm. We did, but they were down the hall. I think these are illegal now, but it wasn't even like you had your own stall. It was like a "See you at the pole" shower where there are like five of you around it, nobody making eye contact.

We would get back from playing basketball and just be drenched in sweat. I would run, and I would rinse off. By the time I got back to my room, my roommate would just be in bed all sweaty and nasty. That dude didn't shower before he got in bed. The dude just got in bed. I mean, dirty stank, wet tee shirt on the floor. It actually prepared me for parenting. He is family now. This is awful.

In the middle of this, this is kind of the visceral picture Paul is painting. "Why are you wearing those grotesque clothes? Why are you?" The imagery here would be if my college roommate woke up the next morning, got that wet tee shirt, put it back on, and headed to class, which he may or may not have done. That kind of, "Oh, that is disgusting!"

This is what Paul is trying to create in the minds of his hearers. "Stop wearing that. That's not who you are anymore. You're wearing the wrong uniform. Take off those practices." Now my guess is if you have a church background, none of this is new. Again, like I said, nobody in here (I don't think) is going, "Wait a minute! Are you saying sexual immorality is wrong? Why has no one ever told me that at church?"

No, no. We know these things. What I want to talk about is why it's so difficult for us to actually practice them. I haven't said anything here that most of us aren't aware of. I think the real question is why are we so inconsistent in their application, and why do we seem to lack the power to surrender to this in such a way that we live lives that line up with God's good grace for us?

Well, I think the whole key to this text (both this aspect of it, which is putting to death, putting off, putting away) and next week (which is put on and be informed by and be shaped by) all hinge around a singular idea. The more we can grasp that concept, the more victory we walk in. The more we can't grasp it in our guts (not in our minds), the more we're hamstrung by holiness being an ever-increasing part of our lives.

With that said, let me give you the concept. The concept that's woven throughout these 17 verses is the concept of identity (who we are at the core of our essence). You see this starting in verse 1. **"If then you have been raised with Christ..."** Notice the text does not say, "If you believe Christ was raised..." No, no, no. It puts you with Christ. "If you have been raised with him..." Then in verse 4, **"When Christ who is your life..."** It's not, "Christ, who you worship on the weekends." No. **"When Christ who is your life..."**

Then you see it most fully in verse 11. Here. Here, in Christ. Life is hidden with Christ in God. **"Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."** What the apostle Paul does here so effectively is he is saying, "Whatever your go-to, 'Here is my identity,' is now obsolete in Christ." You might have secondary identity markers, but your primary identity marker is you are in Christ in God. You have been raised with Christ.

He is saying, "Oh, you want to go ethnically? Well, there's no longer Jew or Gentile. Oh, you want to go by education? There is no longer barbarian or Scythian. You want to go by social status? Well, there is no longer slave nor free." Your identity is not made up where you decide it's made up. It's

given to you. I think this is the concept we must grasp in its fullness. It won't be easy for us to do because we're living in a day where what I'm talking about right here is almost villainy.

I've been reading a book over the last couple of weeks by Tim Keller. It's called *Making Sense of God*. If you don't know who Tim Keller is, he is an academic, pastor, theologian. Just think Yoda. He would be an example. If you're thinking about pastors... *Google* asked Tim Keller to come teach their employees. You know, I got to do a youth camp a couple of weeks ago. *Google* is like, "Hey, could you come help our employees think well about what it means to be human?"

I'm reading his book *Making Sense of God*. He has a chapter on identity, and in that chapter... I just can't encourage you enough to grab that book. Read it slowly, but he is brilliant. *Making Sense of God*. On his chapter in identity, here is what he says. He says there are two ways to think about identity. There is *achieved* identity (an identity I achieve for myself), and there is a *received* identity (or an identity someone from outside of me gives me).

He says the way to best understand this is maybe to compare and contrast it. But before that, let me just define it. Let me define identity. Here is how Keller defines identity. He says identity is your self-understanding (who you really think you are most fundamentally) and whether you feel good about that or not. That's your identity, who you are most fundamentally. At the core of who you are, who are you?

I think the best way to understand achieved identity (this is Keller) is to contrast it with some history. In non-Western traditional cultures, in ancient cultures, the question, "Who are you?" is answered this way. You're a father. You're a mother. You're a son. You're a daughter. You are a husband or a wife first. Who you are in the group and who you are in the family is who you are. If you fulfill that role, then you should feel good about yourself.

Then the culture bestows honor on you. You are an honorable person. You should feel very good about yourself. You should have high self-esteem because you're a good son. You're a good father. You're a good husband because you've fulfilled your role in the community. Identity is found through self-sacrifice.

Now starting post-World War II (that's the first hint of it we've had in human history), culture has shifted and said, "No longer will you find your identity in community via self-sacrifice. You will find your identity via self-assertion." You will not find it outside of you. In fact, that is no longer the

heroic narrative of our culture. It *was* a hundred years ago, but the last 75, the heroic narrative of our culture is you find yourself inside of yourself.

You don't go *out* of you; you go *inside* of you. You base it on your feelings, your deepest dreams, and your desires. If anybody else tries to stop you from achieving your greatest desires, then they are to be rejected as villains, tyrants, and oppressors. You go find yourself. This is the air we're breathing.

Some of you are like, "Ah, I think you might be overstating." Well, I'm glad. I want to just quote some more modern-day "theologians" who I think are quite well-known. The first is a Norwegian woman. She is the queen of Arendelle. Here is what she would have to say about the subject:

Let it go! Let it go!
Turn away, and slam the door.
I don't care what they're going to say.
Let the storm rage on.
The cold never bothered me anyway.

It's funny how some distance
Makes everything seem small,
And the fears that once controlled me
Can't get to me at all.

It's time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules for me.
I'm free!

Now I'm not baggin' on *Frozen*. I've seen the movie 100,000 times. I have three kids. What I quoted is going to haunt me all day long. I'll just be driving this afternoon. "Let it go! Let it go!" I'm not baggin' on this, but this is the air we're breathing.

"Nobody gets to define me but me. *I* get to define me! There's no right. There's no wrong. There are no rules. There's an inward journey of me finding the true self. Then I have to live out that true self. If there's any opposition, then they're tyrants and oppressors. I have to find the real me. My only hope at ever being happy is to find the true me."

Maybe you're like, "Well, those Norwegians are liberals." Okay, so I have another one for you. This is from Mother Superior. Here's what she would say:

Climb every mountain
Ford every stream
Follow every rainbow
Till you find your dream.

All right. Now let's just stop for a second. That sounds exhausting!

Climb every mountain
Ford every stream
Follow every rainbow
Till you find your dream.

What happens when you climb that first mountain and you realize, "The dream ain't up here" and you're 30? Well, now you have to climb down the mountain and start fording streams. Then, man, you still haven't found your dream, so now you're chasing rainbows. This is exhausting and silly, but this is the air you're breathing. Even walking the hall earlier, I was looking at the thousand backpacks you came up with. On multiple backpacks out in our foyer, there are these kind of sentiments: "Make your own magic. Be true to you."

What does that even mean? Keller says there are four reasons in particular that this idea of finding your identity from the inside is toxic and destructive. Now before we dive into it, I'm not saying the old way was better. I don't believe in glory days. I think there's one coming. I don't think there's one behind us. If you're the son of a blacksmith in the fifth century and you want to get into the arts, you're just kind of out of luck. You know?

"Dad, I want to sing."

"Okay, well, you're going to sing while you beat this metal into the shape it's supposed to be in."

"Well, I just feel like I want to act."

"Okay, act up this ax for me really quickly."

If you were like, "I hate you, Dad" and you were to storm off to the next village, they would be like, "Oh, now who are you? We haven't seen you around our village."

"Well, I'm Ebenezer, the blacksmith's son from two towns over."

"Well, we have a blacksmith. Why are you here?"

"Well, because I want to act."

"Well, you're an outsider. We have our actors. You need to go back to your daddy."

I'm not trying to paint a picture of yesteryear like it was glorious. In fact, there was plenty of tyranny, plenty of oppression. But Keller is going to give four reasons why this idea of finding your identity inside, achieving your identity, is toxic. Here is what they are. The first is he says...

1. *It's incoherent.* It's unclear. Here's what he said. At the deepest part of who you are, there are conflicting loves. You will have multiple dreams and not be able to achieve all of them. It's incoherent. It's not clear. You won't know. Think of how unstable this leaves our souls. If you're like, "Oh, I have to find my meaning, my core, my essence inside of me..." We're digging around in those feelings, and we're like, "Oh, I need this, but gosh! This! I love both these things, but I can't do both. Which one?" It's incoherent.

2. *It's unstable.* Here's how I would paint Keller's point of *unstable*. When I turned 23, I could look back and see 13-year-old Matt was an idiot. I was 23, and I was like, "Good God! I can't believe I am still alive!" But at 23, I thought I was wise beyond my years. I thought I had some life experience. I thought I had a lot to offer the world. At 33, I couldn't believe 23-year-old Matt was allowed to do anything, much less have a driver's license.

Then at 43 (where I am now), I look back at 33-year-old Matt and go, "Oh the mercy of God is unreal! They gave that kid a mic. Why would they have given him a mic?" Straight up. I'm 43. I feel like I'm seasoned. I feel like I have better nuance than I ever have. I think I have a good head on my shoulders. I think I understand well. My marriage is flourishing. My kids are doing well. I've learned

some things I've needed to learn (a lot of times the hard way at your expense). That's why I'm going to give you my sixties, Lord willing, because you have had my twenties and thirties.

Now here's what I'm fully convinced of. At 53, I'm going to think where I am right now was silly, uninformed, and harmful. Which one of those do I trust? My guess is when I'm 63, I'll have some issues with 53-year-old Matt and 73, 63-year-old Matt and 83, 73-year-old Matt. Right? At what point do I trust these feelings that are so fickle and change so quickly to self-identify with? He is saying not only is it incoherent (not clear), but it's also unstable.

3. *It's an illusion.* Here's what he says. Here's his illustration about finding your identity inside of yourself is an illusion. He argues that every culture always never talks about culture itself but lays a grid over the entirety of that culture that informs what they find when they look inside themselves. He says when you go inside, you're going to find out who you are. You're going to look at your dreams and your feelings. You're going to self-identify with those things. You're going to say, "Here's who I am, world." When you do that, it feels pure, but it's not. It's an illusion.

Here was his illustration. He said imagine in the fifth century an Anglo-Saxon warrior. If you don't know history, the Anglo-Saxons were a brutal, violent group who really established the English Empire in the fifth century. Imagine we have an Anglo-Saxon warrior, and he has two competing impulses in his heart. The first is an impulse toward violence. Upon any threat to the empire, any threat against the rule and reign of the Anglo-Saxons is to be met with force, violence, and death swiftly. He has that impulse.

He also has the impulse of same-sex attraction. In the fifth century, it's a no-brainer. "I will embrace violence and anger, and I will reject same-sex attraction." Now fast-forward to 2017. A young man or a young woman finds two impulses inside of themselves: the impulse toward anger (the impulse of violence) and the impulse of same-sex attraction. What does our cultural grid say? "No, no. You can't be angry. You need to go to counseling and anger management for that. Apparently, you were born gay. That's your identity. You should define yourself that way."

This is an illusion. It's culturally informed, and we don't know it's happening. It feels pure to us. We get down in to our heart. We're like, "I feel this. I sense this. This is who I am." It's an illusion. It's been culturally informed. The last thing is he says finding your identity inside of yourself (trying to achieve your identity) is not just incoherent, unstable, and an illusion.

4. *It's crushing and excluding.* Here's what he means by crushing and excluding. When no God, no Bible, no parents, no community get to help form and shape our identity, all the weight of that lands on us. When the weight of self-identification lands on us, we will, by nature, take *good* things and make them *ultimate* things. Let me give you some of those examples that I think most of us experience.

For example, *love relationships*. If I need my wife to justify me, if I need my wife to help me make sense of who I am, if I need my wife to (Jerry Maguire) "complete me," then I am jamming up our relationship day one. I am asking her to be for me what she cannot be. "I need you to justify me. I need you to give me meaning. I need you to help me understand that I matter." That is a crushing weight placed on my wife's shoulders. She is unable to do those things.

Take this the way I'm saying it. She is too unstable. She is not firm enough to do that for me. She has not been designed to do that for me. She can't be that. So what I'll do is I'll smother her in an attempt... "I need you to be... I need you to be... I need you to be..." She would be like, "Oh gosh!" My wife is independent, so she isn't having that. What am I going to do? She is going to run off, and I'm going to chase her. "I need you to validate me! Oh! I need you to validate." Then the marriage disintegrates.

Another way this happens all the time is through *children*. I mean, you live vicariously through your children, where their victories are your victories. You put a pressure on them to perform. You put a pressure on them to mirror back to you your value and worth in a way that does not enable them to see and form their own identity because you need them to help you form yours.

Man, I'm not saying parenting isn't complex. It's hopelessly complex. A few weeks ago, I had a meeting with one guy. He was like, "My dad never came to any of my games. He just wasn't interested in me at all. He didn't know how to relate to me. Literally, he never came to one game. I played sports through college, and I don't think he ever saw me play." We worked through that, prayed, saw forgiveness, and all that.

Then later in the week, I had a guy who was going, "My dad was at everything. He was at every practice. He was at every game. I just felt this pressure. He never really put any pressure on me. He was just always there, and because he was always there, I was like, 'Oh gosh! I'd better be good at this to be loved by him.'"

I'm a dad of a son. I'm like, "Gosh! Do I go to games? Do I not go to games? Do I just go to half his games? I don't want to jack up my kid. How do I do this?" All right? "Maybe I'll go to every other game and look disinterested on two of them and really interested in one." Right? I mean, this is complex stuff!

I think the best we can be is just to be emotionally available. I think that's the best we have (to be emotionally available), and that requires us to have an emotional IQ, but that's a different sermon for a different day. When you expect your kid to hold the mirror for you so you can get your identity from them, this is making them ultimate in a way that's crushing to them and never going to help you.

If you ever saw the movie *Chariots of Fire* or read the book (the book is better than the movie, per usual), you get the story of Eric Liddell. Eric Liddell was a strong believer in Christ. In fact, after the Olympics, he actually went to China and served as a missionary in China until he died. The gold medal race was on the Sabbath, and he refused to run on the Sabbath.

If you can imagine, there's this immense amount of pressure on Eric. I mean, for your country, for your family, your legacy. He is like, "No, no, no. I belong to the King. I will not violate the Sabbath." He has these great lines. He has this great line where he feels the pleasure of God when he runs. I love that sentence, but my experience is the exact opposite. I just feel the wrath of God when I run. I feel the brokenness of a sinful world when I run. Eric is like, "When I run, I feel the pleasure of God."

All the focus is on Eric, but it's actually the other runner, Harold Abrahams, who gives us some insight into making good things ultimate. He is frothing at the mouth. He is ready to go. He is kind of glad Eric is not running. He likes his chances now. He is asked about the race, and here's what he said: "[I have] 10 lonely seconds to justify my whole existence."

See what happens? His achieved identity is...what? "I'm an Olympic sprinter." Now think about this. His whole life he has been running and training. Everybody is going, "You're fast. You're amazing. You're the fastest guy I know." Then he shows up on the Olympics. He is still one of the fastest. Eric is a little bit faster, but he is still fast. Who knows what's going to happen? "I am an Olympic sprinter. I am a runner. It is who I am. It is my core essence. It's what defines me. Who I most fundamentally am is a sprinter."

If he loses this race, he is dead. He has no idea who he is anymore. Now the reason this is not just crushing but also excluding is if my identity is that I am a salesman, then you cannot outsell me. If you outsell me, that knocks my identity. That sends me into a tailspin where I don't know who I am anymore. I can't celebrate you. I have to honestly try to destroy you.

I would do that in really subtle, underhanded ways. I would (back to the list) need to slander you a little bit. I would need to curse you a little bit. I would need to maybe lie about you a little bit. If my identity was in the house I'm in or the car I drive or the money I make, what you will find... I see this. People don't so much want to be rich as much as they want to be richer than the other people they know. I'm telling you!

What people want is to be richer than the people around them, prettier than the people around them, have nicer things than the people around them, have more... Now what is this? This is all identity stuff. This is all jostled hearts. So what does this have to do with putting to death, putting away, putting off? Well, as Christians, we don't believe you *achieve* your identity but rather you *receive* it. You receive the identity from the creator God of the universe.

Where you and I have longed all of our lives to be delighted in, to be rejoiced in, to have a safe place, to be affirmed, and to have a solid foundation on which we can operate and feel free to fail and still be loved and to stumble and be exactly who we are, which is messy, complex, silly, serious, and all the complexities of the human soul find their rest in a *received* identity that is bestowed upon them by the creator God of the universe.

This starts to solve some things. You need someone, I need someone, from outside of me to bless me. It does not work for me to bless myself. Do you remember the old *Saturday Night Live* sketch where the guy looked in the mirror and was like...? He just started to give himself a pep talk. "By golly, people like you. You're a good person."

You are where you are, so you can try to pep talk yourself all you want, but you know what's going on. You know where you doubt. You know where you screw up. You know where you're morally corrupt. You know where you're given to impulses and compulsions that are out of step with God. You know this about you. So you can give yourself that pep talk, but there you are lying to yourself aware that you're lying to yourself, which then does what? Makes you angry. Which leads to what? Coveting, malice, and wrath. We're back in this cycle we're supposed to be out of as Christians.

The Bible says we are esteemed by God. We are adored by him. If you're like, "Well, I've never read those verses," I'm glad you asked. Romans 8 says we have been adopted as sons and daughters. Zephaniah 3 says God sings over us and rejoices in us. Stop for a second. Do you believe the creator God of the universe sees you today hidden in Christ in God, sings over you, and rejoices in you? I'm telling you, most people can't get that. They might go, "Oh, I've seen that verse," but like *get it*.

In the book of Psalms on repeat, you're delighted in, you're delighted in, you're delighted in. In Ephesians 2, you're holy and blameless in his sight. In Colossians 1, you are spotless. He never lets us down. He does not fatigue of our failures. We are his sons. We are his daughters. He delights in us. He rejoices in us. He sings over us. This is an identity that is secure and unshakable.

So watch. If I were to be fired from The Village... I am a pastor and a preacher. If the elders had a meeting with me after service and were like, "Hey, man, I can't believe you dogged out *Frozen* like that. We're going to have to ask you to leave" and I were to leave, now I wouldn't have that title, but who I am would not have changed, because what I am is an adopted son of the King of Glory who, by the grace of God, gets to preach and pastor.

If (God forbid) something were to happen to my bride and best friend, I would be crushed, but I would be a son of the Most High God, adored, esteemed, loved. Who I am would not fundamentally change. Now I'm going to need a lot of help. I'm going to need a lot of support. I'm going to need some time off, but I'm his.

If there was no money in my account or a lot of money in my account... Now this frees me up to love you, support you, and cheer you on. This gives crystal-clear clarity to what my life is about. This forms an identity in me that you cannot take from me. You can't do anything to take that from me! You can send me a scathing email about what an utter failure I am, and I'll just be able to go, "Gosh! I'm far worse than that! Is that all you saw? Are you serious? That's it? You should probably pay better attention!"

I don't need to pretend I'm more than I am. I don't have to carry that weight. I do a few things really, really well, and then I really stink at a lot of other things, which, if you pay attention to our staff, you'll kind of understand how we're put together. There's a freedom to be found in our identity being in Christ. How does that equate to putting things to death? Well, as a child of the King, I have access and benefits as a child of the King that I'm going to choose easily over what the world offers up to me.

You want to offer sexual immorality to me? You want to offer swipe-left hookup when what I have is the mingling of souls with my best friend, the coming together of mind, heart, body, and soul in a depth of intimacy? Look. I don't care what kind of freaky hook-up sex you're talking about; that wins.

You want to tempt me with being enslaved and burned up by anger when I can be free of that and trust God to be God and trust that people are as broken as I am and I should extend grace to them as God has so consistently extended grace to me? On and on we go. It's in understanding who we are that putting things to death, putting them away, and putting them off is possible. But when you don't get this and you don't quite have your identity...

I think this is a huge deal in evangelicalism right now. We're so influenced by this view of identity that we constantly kind of step away from who God says we are to try to make our own name, our own self, our own view. It's near impossible to not at times give into this. The cultural pull is so hard. It's so powerful, and yet it must be rejected. It *must* be rejected!

I so want you to get this. Like not go, "I get it." I don't want to give you talking points for a shallow coffee later this week. I don't want to give you kind of new phrases to in Home Group go, "I really love that." I don't want that. I want you to *get* this. I want you to be transformed by it. In fact, at this point, my sermon is done. I'm just like, "Come on!" But that's not how this works. That's not how any of this works. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for your Word. I thank you that you are working in us, moving in us, shaping us. Help us believe what you say about us is true. Thank you that we are hidden in Christ in you. Thank you that you see us as holy, spotless, and blameless in your sight. Help us then with that understanding get violent over sins that are trying to destroy, hooks that are trying to be set deep.

Let us be serious about our adversary and your power to destroy him. Let us walk in the power of being the princes and princesses of glory. Let us sit at your table and feast on what you have provided us. Why would we choose the rags of rebellion when the cloaks of righteousness await us? Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.