



## Exodus (Part 13) – The Plagues: Part 1

Matt Chandler – November 20, 2016

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[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. He draws us out of our sin, our Egypt, and draws us into his presence into relationship with him.

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If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Exodus, chapter 7. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a black hardback one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that's our gift to you. We're going to hang out in Exodus, chapter 7. We're going to go over quite a bit of text today, and I want you to see I'm not making any of that up. If you'll grab that and check that out, that will be awesome.

I think one of the things we tend to buy into in 2016, that I think humankind tends to buy into with every progressive generation, is we're kind of on this upward trajectory away from the Dark Ages into greater levels of enlightenment. That would be awesome if it were true, but it just isn't true.

Now I'm not saying we don't have better medicine, and I'm not saying we don't have faster cars, and I'm not saying we haven't created machines that we can fly in and all of those kind of things. What I am saying is the real kind of root issue at play in the heart of man continues to be the root issue in the heart of man.

It's not a stretch to say Pharaoh in the book of Exodus is one of us. He is a very modern guy, or we are very ancient in how we think. We're going to dive into the plagues put on Egypt in our time together this morning, because that's a perfect fit before Thanksgiving. What I thought we would do

is in order to understand the plagues, we have to see God is answering a question Pharaoh asked in the plagues. Here's Pharaoh's question, and I would say it's our question.

Exodus 5:2 says, "**But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?'**" This is a very modern question. "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?'**" It's a question he asked. It's a question we ask all the time. It's a question our culture asks. The interesting thing to note about Pharaoh is he is in the kind of same space we are. He is in a pluralistic culture, which means, by and large, it's not offensive to Pharaoh that the Hebrews have a God, and that God has spoken to the Hebrews. That wouldn't have been offensive at all.

In fact, Egypt had 114 gods they worshiped. Of course, the Hebrews had a God. Of course, that God spoke to the Hebrews. That's not offensive. Listen. In our very day and age, that's true. We live in a pluralistic society. It's not offensive that you would believe in God. Do you know that only 3.1 percent of the American population is atheistic? Now they're a loud minority, but there are not many of them. (People who would say, "There's no such thing as God. I mean, that's just ridiculous that there would be something other than what you can see, sense, and touch.")

Our hearts are hungry for something sacred the secular cannot provide. That's the reality of the world you and I inhabit, and Pharaoh inhabits this world. It's not offensive to him that the Hebrews have a God. What *is* offensive is that God has some sort of authority over him. It's the same thing we struggle with, same thing our culture struggles with.

It's not a problem to believe in God unless you're saying, "Your God tells me how to live my life." If there's one thing we cannot tolerate, it's some deity impending on our freedoms and our desires. See, we live in a day and age where... Pharaoh struggled with it because he thought he was a god. "Who is this God to tell me what to do, for I am god?"

We struggle with it because we live in a day and age, and this is the Word of the Year for... *Oxford Dictionary* put out the word of the year. Did anybody see that this week? The Word of the Year is the word *post-truth*. It's a brand new word. It had never existed. We had to come up with it. There's an idea in humanity that hasn't been thought of, so we needed to create it. This isn't like a hip-hop artist creating a word, right? This isn't *crunk*.

This is basic, the elites of our day saying there is a new idea we're trying to operate out of that we don't have language for, so we need to create a word that embodies the way humankind is now

behaving and thinking about the world they inhabit. Let me give you the definition of post-truth. Post-truth is "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

Isn't that amazing? Like, "Who cares what's true as long as I feel good? It doesn't matter what your facts are if I get to choose what makes me happy. There is no truth except what makes me happy. What makes me happy rules the world. There is no authority but my authority." That's post-truth. Now you take that to logical conclusions, and it's anarchy. All right? We're in a post-truth era, brothers and sisters. You can't take anything to its logical conclusion because that's illogical.

It's illogical, and yet so many of us are operating under this premise. "There are no objective truths. There are no truths that lay on all people everywhere. There's just what feels right to me. Get the objective facts out of the equation. Objective facts trigger me. I don't like that. I want what makes me feel good. I want what appeals to my emotions and my personal belief. Throw the facts out." We had to think of a word for that. It's 2016. As far back as humankind goes, we didn't need a word for that. Now we need a word for, "The facts don't matter." We need a word for, "Truth doesn't matter."

How do you raise kids in that environment? How do you do life in a "the truth doesn't matter" environment? "Only how I feel matters." I mean, we've set ourselves up for a coming, impending train wreck. Most of us live life in this space, right? Now we would never admit we do, but we live in a pluralistic society, and we lean that way. "Sure, there's a God, and that God is awesome. People should believe in God as long as that God doesn't kind of get into their sacred space."

I mean, honestly, even if we're honest, most of us are pretty cool with God as long as he doesn't make us do things we don't want to do. We think God is awesome as long as he just lets us have this. "God is great. Just don't say anything about *this*, Lord. You just shouldn't meddle in *these* spaces. Here's my list. I'm your guy as long as you don't meddle in *this* space." The Lord doesn't play games like that with his creation, right? It's just not how he works.

Many of us, instead of glad submission to the God of the Bible, we're far more apt to believe kind of the moralistic, kind of man-centered, rah-rah nonsense of our day. Instead of maybe the Sermon on the Mount, we prefer the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley, which reads:

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

We love that stuff. You put a beat behind that, and you show somebody working out or somebody driving a nice car. I'm amped up, man! I'll watch that 30-second clip on my phone before I hit the gym. I love that! "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul. Try me!" It's this idea that, "I'm enough. I can do it."

Now reality is I have a ton of objective evidence that I'm not the master of anything, but I'm telling you, you just put a hip-hop beat behind that thing, and I'm in. Right? This is man-centered nonsense, an overestimation of our ability to pull things off, especially at the deeper levels of meaning and existence.

I think you can work really hard and get a nice car. That doesn't make you the master of your fate. It just means you got a nice car. Congrats! You can work really hard and get in the neighborhood you want to get into, but that doesn't make you the captain of your ship, the captain of your soul. I think you can get six-pack abs by eating right and working hard, but you're still going to die. Selah. Right? This is Thanksgiving week. I'm trying to encourage you.

Now God in his mercy is going to step into this space. He is going to step into the question, "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?**" Look. If we could just stop for a second, gosh. Sometimes I wish we could do church like we're all on a couch. We could just have this conversation.

If we could talk about just you in your life right now, my guess is there are areas of your life that you know the Lord is leading you toward obedience, and you have your heels dug in. You're asking the question via justification, via doubt, via all sorts of other things, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?"

Well, the Lord in his mercy steps into that space and answers Pharaoh's question. He answers it for Pharaoh, and he answers it for Egypt. We're going to look at three of these, and then we'll save the rest of them for post-Thanksgiving celebration. Let's dive into God answering the question for Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Starting in verse 14 of chapter 7.

**"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me [or worship me] in the wilderness.' But so far, you have not obeyed. Thus says the LORD, 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD...'''"**

Do you hear him answering the question, **"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?"** Then Moses comes, "So you would know who the Lord is, here's what's about to happen." Watch how often he says, "So you would know I am the Lord." Now we covered that word *Lord* extensively about a month ago. You can go listen to it online if you want all the weight behind that little word the *Lord*. **"I Am Who I Am"** is what the Bible is saying there. Look back at now verse 17.

**"Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."**

**And the LORD said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone."**

**Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts.**

**So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile."**

Now as we've covered in our time together, the Nile and the Nile Basin were the center of kind of economic power and vitality in this part of the world. In fact, the Egyptians had multiple gods over the Nile that they prayed to and sacrificed, because as the Nile goes, so does the Nile Basin go. As the Nile Basin goes, so does Egypt go. All their power, all their might, all their wealth were caught up in the Nile, and the primary god of the Nile was a goddess called Hapi.

Let me show you a picture of the goddess Hapi. So this is Hapi. Hapi is there to provide fullness of life. That's what Hapi brings to the table. "We sacrifice to Hapi, and we come to Hapi because Hapi [it's not lost on me that that's her name] is going to provide for us the fullness of life." There's a base instinct really that exists in every human being all over the world. By the grace of God, I've been on six continents now, so I'm just saying there's a base impulse at the core of every human being, and we want the good life.

The good life is almost universally designed or thought about in the same way. There could be some variations, but here's what it involves. Have you seen the commercial "Coke is life"? Have you seen that commercial? Everyone is hot. Everyone is happy. They're drinking and eating stuff you can't eat and drink and still be hot. They're drinking a 2-liter bottle of Coke even though it's real sugar, not high fructose corn syrup, so you know it can't be bad for you to drink 92 grams of *real* sugar.

The food is delicious, and everybody is laughing. Once again, there's that beat again in the background. God knows we have to have a beat in the background. Everybody is just happy and smiling no matter where you go, and humans are who want joy, gladness, community, and good food. It's just the marker of... When human beings think about flourishing, they think about acts of celebration. They think about community. They think about a party. That's what "Coke is life" is offering you. Apparently, by drinking their chemical water, you can get into that space.

That's what Hapi is there to offer: a full life, rich life. God in his mercy is now revealing that Pharaoh and the Egyptians are worshiping what is false and have built their hopes on sand. He exposes it for what it is: a lie. See, the reality is the fullness of life you and I desire is only found in Jesus Christ.

Now I'm not saying you can be an unbeliever and not have a good life. I think you could! I think you could drink Coke, eat good food, and laugh some. You could have it, but you will not have life as God designed it to be at the deepest possible level outside of being reconciled to your Creator. The Bible is filled with this kind of language.

Jesus says, "**I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**" Like, "You need me in order to get to those spaces you're actually really after. The hungriest part of your heart will be solved, satisfied, only in me." God has exposed this. He has revealed this. Here's what's kind of heartbreaking to note. I think painfully but rightly, God will oftentimes expose in us where we have believed in false idols, where we have trusted other things to lead us into the best life possible.

Then when God exposes those things can't satisfy us like we hoped they would, God in his mercy has shown us, "You need me. You don't need this thing." Then we get really angry that God has pointed out that thing can't satisfy us. A heartbreaking thing about being a pastor is watching people get mad at God for exposing their idolatry. I'll give you some examples where we see it a lot.

I try to say to you all the time just because I really do care deeply for you that husbands make terrible gods, and wives make terrible gods. Here's how the game works, right? We get in our mind, "What's going to make me happy... The fullest life, the 'Coke is life' moment, is going to be found when I find a spouse and have some coin in my pocket, when I have a little bit of money to do what I want, and I've found *the one*." Right?

Then we get married, or we find one. We have a little bit of coin in our pocket. Let's be honest. We're disappointed. We're disappointed! "This is not what I thought it would be. This is not all I thought it would be. This is actually difficult. I didn't see this aspect of crazy in this person while we were dating. I thought this house, this car, this place would satisfy me in ways it is not."

What's happened is we've been exposed. We have trusted in something for fullness of life that cannot bring about fullness of life. A lot of times, people have the audacity to get angry at God for that. "You owe me! You tricked me." No, you worshiped what is false and are now getting the fruit of worshiping what is false. It is God's mercy to reveal to us where we're chasing after things that are false that won't ultimately satisfy us, that can't ultimately satisfy us so we'll run to what does.

Now here's a heartbreaking part of this story and a heartbreaking part of pastoring. Pastoring is awesome, but there are some really heartbreaking aspects of it. One of the things we read in this narrative of the plague, the first plague, is all the water was blood everywhere. Now I can't even imagine how we would do that. Most people I know won't even drink tap water here. It's like, "What is this? Did you filter this?"

"Well, no, it's from the tap."

"What? Are we animals? Am I a pet? Filter that."

"No, no, no. It's clean water. All right? It's clean water! We have some standards here in the States. You can drink that."

"I can, but I won't. Did you drill a hole into a volcano and pump pure water through it for my palate? Because if you haven't, brother, you can toss out that..." I just can't even imagine us surviving in this mess.

What they figured out is the magicians could duplicate the act. As soon as the magicians could duplicate the act, although it's shortsighted and only lasted for a moment, Pharaoh's heart grew hardened because he learned he could just dig a ditch and get some water out of the ditch alongside the Nile River.

Here's what so often happens to us. We get exposed for pursuing the wrong thing, worshiping the wrong thing, and chasing the wrong thing. We get exposed, right? "My marriage hasn't played out that way. My job hasn't played out. My money hasn't played out. I haven't gotten to the 'Coke is life' moment. It just is evasive." God lays us bare, can't be found, calls us to himself, but we're going, "Oh, that would require complete surrender."

**"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?"** "I don't know that I can go all in on that, but look at this. I can carve out this ditch, and I can make my own way. Fullness of life hasn't been found where I thought, so I'll try other avenues. I'll try other lanes." We begin to harden our heart toward the mercy of God in exposing that our pursuits have been in vain.

That's exactly what Pharaoh does, and he hardens his heart against the mercy of God. Listen. It is oftentimes the mercy of God to wound you, to reveal to you where you have bet your life on the wrong horse. That's his mercy. It's not his wrath. It is his mercy. Pharaoh, despite God pointing out that Hapi isn't working, chooses instead to dig a ditch next to the Nile.

Do you remember what we talked about the Nile in regard to its depth and speed and how many tons of water per second are moving in the Nile? Pharaoh is satisfied now with digging a little ditch beside the massive force of the Nile to sip dirty water. God provides mercy. Pharaoh hardens his heart. It happens all the time to this day. **"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?"**

Then we move to the second plague. Let's pick it up in verse 1 of chapter 8.

**"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me. But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants.'"""**

Now that's there everywhere. I love the progression. "They're going to come into your house. They're going to go into your bedroom. They're going to get in your bed. They're going to go to your kitchen. They're going to be in your oven. They're going to be in your kneading bowl. They're going to be on you. They're going to be on your servants." Now think about this. Who are their servants? The Israelites. The Hebrews. They're not off in the corner not experiencing these plagues. They're right in the thick of it. Let's pick it back up in verse 5.

**"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!" So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.**

**Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, 'Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.' Moses said to Pharaoh, 'Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile.' And he said, 'Tomorrow.'**

**Moses said, 'Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. The frogs shall go away from you and your houses and your servants and your people. They shall be left only in the Nile.' So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the LORD about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank."**

Verse 15 is huge. **"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."** What's happening in the frogs is another Egyptian god. This is the Egyptian goddess, Heqet. Let me show you a picture of Heqet. Heqet had a frog's face (and hence the frogs coming out of the Nile).

It was actually another goddess tied to the Nile, except the purpose of Heqet and what Heqet was supposed to bring to the people of Egypt was fruitfulness, whether that fruitfulness was found in childbirth or fruitfulness in legacy or in business. If you wanted to succeed, you wanted to be fruitful, you went to the goddess Heqet.

You would make sacrifices to Heqet, and Heqet would bring to you or give to you the gift of fruitfulness. God in his mercy knows that's a lie and the only fruit we can bear with our lives that lasts and is eternal in its significance is fruit borne out of complete obedience and surrender to God in Christ.

I heard this illustration from Paul David Tripp years ago. I've loved it as an example of fruitfulness. Any kind of fruitfulness borne outside of surrender to Christ is like picking up apples and stapling them to a tree. He said it will look fruitful for a bit until it all starts to rot. See, the Bible is going to press on this ruthlessly. I think living where we live, becoming experts in the book of Ecclesiastes would be really helpful. Ecclesiastes isn't necessarily a chipper little book, but it does say ultimately if you're spending your life on anything under the sun, then it's meaningless and futile.

The Proverbs would say, man, it's smart to save. It's smart to be prudent. It's smart to do good business, to manage your household well. Ecclesiastes then comes alongside of it and says (in not these words exactly but) somewhere inside of you, there's a recessive moron gene that either your kid is going to have or their kid is going to have. When the moron gene pops up, all you've saved and all you gathered will be wasted and spent.

This idea of legacy and fruitfulness where we save up for a long legacy of faith, God is going, "That's awesome, except one of your grandkids is going to be an idiot and blow it all." Listen. If you're a businessman and you studied business, is it not true that businesses owned by families rarely survive the third generation? Why? The recessive gene pops up.

What happens is one guy works really hard for it. He sacrifices. He pays. One generation watches that sacrifice and has some of it, and the third generation is entitled and just feels they deserve it. Then the company tanks. The company is sold for half its former value. See, Ecclesiastes is speaking exactly to this. The Bible would say, "What does it gain a man, what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world yet loses his soul?"

See, God knows that only in life surrendered to him does genuine fruitfulness, eternal fruitfulness, actually spring forth in our lives. Again, we see some heartbreaking things in this passage. Look back at verse 15. I told you to see it, but I just want to read it to you again. **"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."**

Let me explain how this happens to this very day. It's another heartbreaking part of being a pastor. A lot of times the thing that wakes people up to their deep spiritual need is tragedy, difficulty, suffering, and hardship, right? Those things are called severe mercies. That's what the Puritans would call them. It's God making us aware of our need.

Most of us, we feel like we kind of have control of our lives. We're managing things well. We're eating good spinach. We're working out pretty well. We throw in some blueberries on top of our oatmeal every once in a while. We just feel like we're controlling our own destiny. Then the illusion of control evaporates. We get sick. We get fired. Our relationships begin to fray. There's heartbreak.

In fact, one of the things I've heard oftentimes from people who don't believe is Christianity is a crutch for the weak-minded. Listen. I would not only agree with that, but I would add to it. Christianity is not just a crutch for the weak-minded, but Christianity is a crutch for the broken in spirit. What I would remind whoever would say that to me is you're going to eventually love that crutch or understand your need for it.

To get back to what's happening here with Pharaoh, people come in, and they're in these really broken situations. The world has kind of burned down. They're frightened and scared. Their marriage was just about to be doomed, or their health has faded, or their child is wilding out. There are all sorts of reasons that bring us into that space. We're like, "Oh Jesus, help me. Please help me." They cling to Christ.

Then what you begin to see is they tend to be "all in" kind of people. They push all the chips in. All of a sudden, they're in church every weekend, taking notes. They're in Recovery. They found a Home Group. They're buying books and reading. Then what happens is they begin to come out of that season. Either the Lord in his mercy begins to restore and heal and put back together, or they get healthy again.

Then it doesn't take long in that respite to forget it was leaning on Christ and the power of God in their lives that had brought about that respite. All of a sudden they're back to the, "I'm the captain of my soul. I beat cancer. I just tweaked how I interacted with my wife a little bit. I just tweaked how I interacted with my husband a little bit. I just approached my child this way. Do you know what? I doubled my spinach, and I put Thieves oil on the bottom of my feet so I can never die."

It's this. All of a sudden, it's no longer about what the Lord did, how the Lord carried you through. It's all of a sudden I'm back to the captain. Isn't that exactly what Pharaoh did? Frogs everywhere. I mean, just try to imagine how you would possibly do life. Wherever you step, frogs. Wherever you cook, wherever you sleep, there were frogs everywhere.

He can't get out. He can't fix it. Heqet is a lie. She can't do anything. He goes to Moses and says, "Please plead with the Lord to take away the frogs." Moses says, "Tell me when to do that." "Do it tomorrow." "I'll do it tomorrow, and the frogs will be gone." Moses prays. The frogs are gone. As soon as the frogs are done, Pharaoh is like, "Uh-huh. I am the captain of my soul." Then he forgets, and he hardens his heart.

I'm telling you, so many of us are guilty of this today. When things get difficult and hard, "Help me. I'm yours. I fully surrender." The second there's any respite, we give ourselves credit for navigating that difficult season. It's blasphemous. It's sad.

Then the last one we'll cover today is the gnats. We know about gnats. We're Texans. Let's look at this, because if anyone can be empathetic to what's going on now, it's us. Let's look at this now starting in verse 16.

**"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.'" And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt.**

**The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."**

Now this is an assault on another Egyptian god, but more than anything, it's an assault on the pride of Egypt and their ability to live lives of comfort and ease. If you think back to kind of imagery around the Egyptians, what do you think of? They're always lounging. They're always lying around. They're surrounded by pets. They had this kind of, "We are the most powerful nation the world has ever known. What we provide is comfort and peace."

There is nothing that can destroy comfort and peace like gnats. What do we get, like seven days a year that we actually get to use our back patios with the table we bought so we can sit around and have a meal outside? What will ruin that very quickly? Gnats will. I mean, they just get this uncanny... What a deplorable little creature. They're just always around your eyes or around your mouth, and you can't kill them. They're hardly there, but they're there.

What's happening here is God is revealing to the Egyptians that no amount of wealth or might can bring comfort to the soul, but only the Creator of the soul can comfort the soul. Who knows this better than we do, for all our orthopedic pillows and our beds made of Space Age technology? You have that foam thing NASA created for something else, but it will just conform perfectly to your body. It's like you're back in the womb.

Here's what we know. Seriously, here's what we know about the world in which we live. We're more sleepless than we've ever been. We're far more stressed than we've ever been, more anxious than we've been. For all our air conditioning, for all our "Coke is life" experience, for all of our beds, pillows, chiropractors, and massages, and for all of those opportunities, we're a people who are unsettled and anxious.

The gnats are exposing the impossibility of man to comfort the deepest parts of man. No amount of vacationing and money and stuff will bring the comfort our souls are hungry for. Now the culture itself screams this out to us if we're paying attention. Two of my favorite over the last 10 years...

There was a great article on Madonna. Can we just agree that if you just go by one name, you made it? Right? If you go, "Madonna," and you have to go, "Madonna...who?" then maybe she is not there.

But if you just go, "Madonna," and you're like, "Oh, I know who. Yeah. *Like a Virgin*. I remember that. Yeah..."

Madonna was being interviewed, and she talked about always feeling like she never measured up and felt enslaved to that feeling so that it didn't matter if she was number one on the charts or if she filled up a stadium, she would walk right off stage and begin to doubt whether she was good enough. She was driven by discomfort, a lack of peace in her soul that made her believe she wasn't good enough, and she could never rest.

Then one that maybe because we're in the middle of football season... I've used it before. I'll probably keep using it. There was an interview with Tom Brady where Tom Brady talks about winning another Super Bowl. I mean, he is running out of fingers, isn't he? He is sitting on the bed in his hotel room, and he has this thought: "Is this it?"

Okay, so let's talk for a second. Tom Brady. He just won another Super Bowl. His Victoria's Secret supermodel wife in the bathroom is about to come to bed. He is worth tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars. He can't go anywhere without being bothered. He doesn't live the life you and I have. He has access to everything he wants access to. He is sitting on his bed going, "Is this it? Is this all?"

It's no real secret that most billionaires are really tormented people. Go read Steve Jobs' biography. He was a miserable human being. How can you be a billionaire and be miserable? Just get whatever! You don't even have to think, "Can I afford that?" You can! "I want to go to the game today." You just go. You probably have an awesome parking spot, and you probably have the best seat in there, because you're a billionaire. You eat what you want when you want. You don't cook it. You have it cooked by people who know what they're doing.

You have access to everything. I mean, think about what it would be like to just go, "Hey, what's our favorite dinner? What's our favorite restaurant in New York? We should go there for dinner tonight" and hop in your G5 and go. That's what billionaires do, and they're miserable. How? How is that possible? Because the comfort our souls are hungry for can only be given by the Creator of our soul.

Here's what I meant at the beginning when I said, man, this idea of human beings just always getting smarter and better is a lie. We're stuck in the same space they are. See, although I'm

guessing you don't have a blue idol of Hapi in your bedroom that you're burning incense to and maybe sacrificing to, my bet would be many of us have the question, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" and are seeking fullness of life not in full surrender to Christ but in other streams.

Is that not the same god? Are you not just worshiping something that is false? In a desire to be fruitful and to matter and have lives of meaning, my guess is you're not sacrificing to a frog-faced idol in your home, but my guess is you *are* seeking fruitfulness and purpose and mattering not in full surrender to Jesus Christ but rather through other means and other venues.

I'm guessing almost all of us are trying to find comfort, *deeper* level comfort, in places it won't be found. We've talked about this before. Many of us have gone on vacations and come home just as tired. We've gotten a few days off of work. We've stopped grinding for a while and found ourselves restless. In fact, some of us are in a perpetual state of restlessness and can't quite pinpoint why.

It's because real peace, real comfort, will be found in full surrender to Jesus Christ as we process through that. That full surrender is day at a time, moment at a time, hour at a time, event at a time, decision at a time. As we work for full obedience to God in Christ, according to the Scriptures, we are conformed to the image of Christ and find the comfort of God deep in our souls. I love that this is the first one the magicians couldn't duplicate. Did you notice that? They were able to duplicate the first two, but they couldn't duplicate the last one.

On four separate occasions now here at The Village, we've baptized people who have come out of the occult. I love that, because I just don't think of Dallas as a hotbed of occult activity, but man, there are covens here. There are all sorts of that type of activity here. To the man and woman who got into the baptistery and they've testified that there is a power to be had in the occult...

They were able to do some things and see some things and be a part of some things that were supernatural and powerful, and yet there was a restlessness of soul and anxiety of soul that plagued them and haunted them. They would testify to the beauty of surrender to Christ that in the surrender to Christ, they finally sensed both power and peace, fruitfulness and faithfulness. Comfort for the human soul is found in full surrender to Jesus Christ.

How are we to navigate this space? I want to quickly just wrap up like this. The Lord answers the question, "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?**" by answering, "**I Am Who I Am.**" He answers, "I am the Lord. I am the creator of all. All things obey me. I am above all, through all, in all,

about all. It's all about me." The way we fully surrender to Christ is by repenting and believing on repeat all the days of our lives.

You never outgrow repentance, and you never outgrow belief. If we could be honest with one another, have an honest conversation, belief is a wrestle, is it not? Belief can be a wrestle. There are seasons, situations, and times in which belief is going to be a real wrestle. What marks us as the people of God is repentance and belief.

This week I was flying back home from Steamboat Springs with a group of guys who are on a board with me that I serve on. We were talking about this idea of repentance and belief and kind of the domains in which it plays out. Bruce Wesley, who pastors a church in Clear Creek down by Houston (just a church filled with astronauts and engineers), said they break it down in these three categories. I thought it was so helpful.

1. *You repent and believe with God as our King.* In light of the current environment, here are my bonafides. I am the son of a Navy man. I grew up on bases. My favorite movie growing up was *Red Dawn* until it was *Rocky IV*. Man, I love the United States of America. I plan on being a good citizen all the days of my life, to be involved as a citizen, to pay my taxes, to defend her if necessary, but Jesus is my King.

My hope is not rooted in what this country does or does not do. My hope is rooted in his sovereign reign over all of mankind. Christ is my King, and my great herald and banner last week was that there was no panic in the Godhead. There was no huddling to figure out what to do next, regardless of where you land on things.

Christ is my King, and my allegiance is there. We repent and believe that God is our King. Maybe you're in that space where you have way too much hope planted in political systems and parties. There needs to be some repentance there and belief that God is King. Then not only do we repent and believe with God as our King, but we...

2. *Repent and believe with the church as our family.* We talked about two weeks the idea of moving from thin to thick, shallow to deep, requires commitment, loyalty in love to one another. The church should be a family. In so, as a family, we defer and seek to understand one another.

I don't agree with a lot of things my family would agree upon, but man, I'm going to seek to try to understand their position gently. I'm never going to poke and provoke them. Not on purpose! Sometimes it happens on accident. I never want to speak in hyperbolic terms to my family members who don't land where I land on certain things.

Listen. I'm an opinionated dude! All right? I don't tend to speak off the cuff. I tend to want to read and understand, form an opinion, and then I'm stubborn. But I don't want to roll over anyone or steamroll anyone or crush someone or provoke conflict.

Maybe in this last cycle, man, you have just spoken in ways and behaved in ways that provoked animosity and anger. I'm just telling you, brother and sister, you need to repent and believe. I'm not speaking to one side of the aisle here. I'm speaking to us all. Then we repent and believe not only with God as our King and the church as our family, but finally...

*3. Repent and believe with God's mission as our purpose.* See, the Christian sees through the lens of God's mission being our purpose, that fruitfulness is born from me being obedient to the mission of God in my life, which means I see the neighborhood in which I live, the place in which I work out, and the people I come in contact with via my children's sports as opportunities to herald the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, an opportunity to open up my home, open up a good bottle of wine, cook some good food, and sit around and talk about the King of Glory and to wonder what they think about these things and how they've considered these things in their lives.

It begins to bring this purpose into our existence, this fruitfulness that so transcends, and so much better than any other purpose I might have. God is our King. The church is our family. His mission is our purpose so that our life is marked by repentance and the wrestle for belief. This is what God is calling for: full surrender.

Who is the Lord that you should obey his voice? He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Sovereign God of glory. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He has always been, and he will always be. He alone can make known the path of life, and the soul of man is filled with joy in his presence. Everything else is counterfeit. It's apples stapled to trees. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters. Thank you for the opportunity to just have your Word read in this place. Speaking of the freedoms we enjoy in this great country, we're able to do

this without fear. We're not registered as Christians or singled out as Christians. There are not laws in place that stop us from gathering and worshiping you but rather the opposite.

We're encouraged to worship you. We're encouraged to gather freely, to make much of your name and renown. Strengthen us. Embolden us, Father. Where we are asking the question, "Who is this again that I should obey?" I pray you would remind our hearts, and full surrender, obedience, would be ours today for our joy and your glory. Help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

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