

John chapter 5. I'm glad that you're here. I'm going to take a break this weekend from Ecclesiastes. We've been walking through line by line, word by word the book of Ecclesiastes, and I know a lot of you are like, "But Chandler, I wanted to be uplifted this morning." But we're going to take a break out of Ecclesiastes. And I'm going to tell you why. We've had a really weird pulse thing happen the last two summers. The last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August last year, we grew by about 600-700 people. And it didn't really make a lot of sense to us because of the time of the year it was. It just didn't add up. And so, we just counted it as a fluke. We were just, "Well man, it was just a fluky, weird year. Okay." We added services and just dealt with it. And we've grown this year. I mean, we're just are kind of on steep incline right now, and in the last four weeks, we have once again jumped by 600-700 people. And so, I think what's happening is that July, specifically late July, is the new Fall. Because school starts so early now, people take their vacations and stuff in June and then in early July, they play a little bit and in late July, they're starting to kind of get into a groove, get into a rhythm and get ready for school.

And so, they sit around and are like, "What are we going this year?" "I don't know. Go to church." And then you come. And we're okay with that, but here's what I want to do. I want to save you some time and I want to save us some time and here's what I want to do this morning. I want us to take a break from Ecclesiastes this morning. We'll get back into it next week, but what I want to do is tell you who we are, I mean unapologetically, don't apologize for it, tell you exactly who we are. I don't know if you can remember back to when you were dating, but everybody had that date that looked so good after one, and after date three, you're like, "Psycho." We're trying to circumvent that and let the psycho right out of the bag right out of the gate, and you can decide whether you can live with that or not. And so, what I thought I would do this morning, just very quickly, is go through who we are and better yet, who we're trying to be. Because we're very much in process here. And these are the things we're fighting for and we're dying for and we're longing for and that we believe are the family traits of this place. And so I thought that if I could just go over that very quickly with you this morning, then you can leave here more informed. And you can leave here going, "Yeah, I want to be a part of that fight," or "I disagree, this isn't the place for me." And listen, that never hurts our feelings. Can I be really honest with you, and if I could sear anything into your head and your mind and your heart this morning, specifically you church folk, it's this.

Our way is a way, it is not the way. And when your personal preference become the way, you're off. And when you're off the tracks, the only thing that can happen is death and destruction...well probably not death and destruction but bad things. You get the point. So, we're not claiming our way is the right way. We're just saying it's a way. And in this very town, less than 10 miles from here, there's liturgical worship going on and it's beautiful and God finds it acceptable, and there's traditional worship going on. And traditional worship does not equal dead worship. That's ignorant 20 year olds who say stupid things like that. Our way is a way, that's all it is. So if it resonates with you, come play. If it doesn't, praise Christ because there's all these other expressions of service to Him out there.

Now, I spent from 1993 to 2002 traveling and preaching. And I know that sounds very attractive, but keep in mind that the majority of people I was speaking to, because of my age, were 11. And so, get all the, "Oh, he was successful" out of your head. No, a room full of forty 11 year olds isn't successful, I think. And so, I was traveling and teaching, and as I go older, the crowds progressively got older too. And so, I moved away from junior high and I started teaching a lot of high school. And then from there, as I got in later college, I started speaking to a lot of high school and college. And then in 2000, Prestonwood hired me to come teach their Monday night Bible study to college and singles, and I began

to teach there. And the thing about that little 9-10 year block of time is I got to see a lot of churches, I mean hundreds and hundreds of churches. And what began to happen to me was I would see all these beautiful, beautiful churches where the thing was alive and the gospel just seemed to work and people were starting to get excited about Christ. And I got to see these churches that were kind of dying. And I got to see just this real flex in what was happening in the Evangelical community. And I would preach at Pentecostal churches which are very different than preaching at let's say a Presbyterian. And I just got to see this kind of cross section of American Evangelicalism, and somewhere in the middle of that, in '96 or '97, God really began to stir my heart to want to pastor a church. I didn't want to just travel, I didn't want to just speak, I wanted to put roots down in a place and be there my whole life. I didn't want to climb a ladder, I didn't want to serve at this small church and then serve at this small church and then a little bigger church, a little bigger, a little bigger, a little bigger... All the Baptists know what I'm talking about. I didn't want to play that game. It's not what I wanted to do. I wanted to find a place and pour my guts into it for all the days of my life until Christ killed me or returned. And so I and a couple of friends of mine, several of which are here on staff with us now, talked about starting and planting a church in Austin. We started talking about planting a church in Austin because A) I love Austin, not the University of Texas, but Austin and B) because I didn't think anybody would hire me.

I was a young guy who didn't do seminary. I did get a degree in Bible, but I graduated with a 2.7, and you needed a 2.6 to walk. I just barely got through that mug. Nobody's looking for the guy that barely passed. And so, I didn't think anybody would hire me. So I was at Prestonwood, preaching and teaching and a small group of people approached me from Highland Village First Baptist Church and said, "Do you want to come play?" Now at some point in all of that, I began to ask myself these questions about how church was done and why it was done certain ways and could you do it differently. I got saved late. I mean, I was 18-19 when I got saved, and so you're talking about me being 26 or 27 when I'm interviewing for this job. And so, I'm kind of just going, "Why is church done this way?" I've got all these questions. In fact, Lauren and I are moving. We've lived up in Corinth since we moved here. We're moving down to Highland Village. Just everything's down here. We just feel like we need to be closer down here, and so we're in the process of moving down here. And Lauren found this box filled with old journals of mine from '96-'99, and we began to read those things and laugh. And the thing liked about it is there really is an arrogance to youth. Isn't there? There is.

And everybody who's over 40 is like, "Mhmm," and everybody under 30's like "Uh uh." That's alright, it will work itself out. But I'm laughing at all those things, but I had all these questions. I mean Lauren and I were just kind of giggling and reading. I had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of questions about "What if you just did this?...What if this is enough?...What if you just tried this?...What if instead of this, you did this?..." And so, as the interview process came along with me and the Village, we started asking those questions. And they didn't become my questions anymore, they became our questions. Our question was, "Will what has worked so well with 17 year olds work with adults?" And we asked these questions, "Will this work? Can you do it?" And I think the best way to share my heart with you is to share some of those questions with you and then to go from there and go, "This is what we're trying to do." And at the end of the day, I hope, especially if you're one of the 600-700 people that's just shown up the last couple of weeks, that you can go, "Yeah, that resonates with me," or "No thank you."

And once again, no shame in it being "No thank you." I'm just trying to get involved early so you don't have to waste three months here going, "Maybe, maybe, maybe, ugh." Let's start here. Let's go to John 5, starting in verse 37, "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me." Now, this is red letter. This is Jesus talking, and Jesus is saying, "Before I was ever born, before I got here, God told you I was coming. He told you I was coming in the prophets, He told you I was coming in the Old Testament. The entire Old Testament points outside of itself to Me." That's what He just said. "His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent." So, here's what Jesus is saying here. He's talking to men, He's talking to Pharisees here. And by the way, in order to be a rabbi, in order to be a Pharisee, you would have had to memorize the

Torah. And so, He's talking to men who had memorized Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Can you get your head around memorizing Numbers? These men had memorized these five books of the Bible, were experts in the law, knew more Scripture than you and I will ever know, and Jesus looks at them and says, "You don't know the Word." That's an interesting accusation here. Now watch what happens next. Look at verse 39. 39 was huge for me when I first stumbled across it. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." So here's Jesus' problem with the Pharisees who knew all the Scriptures. He says, "Here's my problem with you. My problem is that somewhere along the way, you began to believe that the Scriptures terminate on themselves. The Scriptures don't terminate on themselves, they lead you to Me. And so, no matter how much Scripture you know, if you don't know Me, it doesn't matter." Let me unpack it like this. Maybe this is better. When I got saved, I was a little bit late in the game and I just began to read the Bible. I didn't know anything except that God killed everybody on Earth with water. Noah's ark, great children's story.

And on top of that, that David killed a very large guy. Outside of that, I just don't know any Scripture. And so, I began to devour it and devour it. And the thing about living in the Bible Belt is people, specifically Christians, carry with them Max Lucado books all the time. So, I got saved and people just started giving me books. They're like, "Oh, you've never read 'The Applause of Heaven.' Here's my extra copy." So, I start devouring these Max Lucado books and I'm reading them and I'm reading them and I'm reading them. And it moves on from there. Someone gave me J.I. Packer's "Knowing God." Benchmark in my life that book was. And I'm reading J.I. Packer, and from there, someone gives me Wayne Grudem's "Systematic Theology," and I began to devour that and eat the word. And over this three year period of time, I just can't tell you how much time I was putting into knowing the Scriptures and knowing how they fit into a system.

And after about three and a half years, you want to talk Calvinism vs. Arminianism? I could do it all night. If you wanted to do dispensational theology vs. Amillennialism I mean I could sit down and do it all night. You want to talk Holy Spirit, role of women, role of God in salvation. I mean, you want to talk about it, I felt like theologically I had a framework where I could sit down and do it with you. But here was the thing, I woke up very, very smart, feeling very, very, very far away from Jesus. Does that resonate with anybody else? Like all of a sudden, what started to be this close, beautiful relationship faded away into a cognitive knowledge that was producing little to no fruit. And you know what I noticed as I traveled was that most people don't know their Bibles at all. I mean they don't know their Bibles at all despite the fact that everybody's like, "Read your Bible. You gotta read your Bible."

So, what was happening? Here's what I think happened to me. People lied to me. I think pastors stood in pulpits and they lied to me and they told me things that weren't true. And it frustrated me as I tried to work out what they said was true in my heart. Like here's this one. If you're church folk at all, you've heard this one. The Bible is the road map to life. Well man, I was like, "Where am I going to college?...Should I marry Lauren?...Should we move down from Corinth to Highland Village? Highland Village in the concordance..." And I would seek it out and I kind of felt like people who tell me about the Bible in this way made it out to be like this combination lock, that if I could put in the right combination, it would open up and there would be no struggles or fears or problems anymore. And so, I'm taking that thing and I'm going, "Philippians 4:13...Psalm 119:11...Jeremiah 29:11. Oh, it still won't open." And what ended up happening to me is everybody's telling that just reading this book is like some magical book that if I read it, all of a sudden it casts spells and all my sorrows and pains and frustrations and fears and sins would just go away. And so, I began to read the Bible as an end in itself. I began to read it like it was a paper. I began to read it to check off the envelope and stopped reading it as the road map to Jesus. Now, hear what I'm saying, because I know there's always, specifically in the Bible Belt, people getting really offended by what I'm saying right now. But I'm just telling you the same thing Jesus just told these guys. "Study all you want, if the Scriptures aren't leading you to Me, then you're off the rails. If you learn all this stuff and you lost Me along the way, you haven't learned anything."

And listen, I believe this is the inerrant, absolutely inspired word of God. I've been here three and a half years. We've been through the book of Ephesians, we've preached through the book of Hebrews and we're currently in Ecclesiastes. We did sixteen weeks on the greatest commandment. I mean, we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit moving through the words in this book in the souls of our people, but in the end, it's not a Rubik's Cube and it's not a genie in the bottle that points us towards Jesus, and Jesus Himself is sufficient. So, the question we asked ourselves was, "What if we just preached the Bible? What if we didn't try to get cute with it and try to take away the sting of it?" Like when John the Baptist sends word to Jesus and says, "Are you the one or should I expect another?" and Jesus fires back with a psalm out of Isaiah that says basically that the blind would see, the hungry would be fed, the lame would walk and the prisoners would go free. Except when Jesus quoted, He didn't put the last part on it that said the prisoners would go free. John the Baptist, being in prison, just heard this, "I am the Messiah, and you're going to die in prison." What if we taught that text? What if we just did that, and what if we didn't apologize for it? What if we just said, "God is big and mysterious and sometimes you're going to suffer and sometimes you're going to die in prison. Have a good week." What if we came across Psalm 115:3, where it says, "God is in the heavens and He does whatever pleases Him," and we didn't try to sugar coat that, we just let it be? What if we just taught the Scriptures and let them stand? Would it work? What if we never did a sermon on "8 Ways to Be a Good Man?" What if we never did combination lock sermons at all? What if we never did "three ways to this...four ways to this...six ways to this...nine ways to this." It's been my experience that those things frustrate the mess out of my spirit because I do the nine things and I'm still all jacked up. "Oh, you want to study the Bible? Step one...step two...step three...two turns to the right...one turn to the left...two turns back to the right," still in the same mess you were when you started. What if we just, at the end of every sermon, said, "This is what the text says, this is what it means about Jesus and this is what it means and how you relate to Him." What if we just did that every week and let it lie? What if we just taught the Scriptures?

And then, the next question was, "What if, after teaching the Scriptures, Christ took root in the hearts of people and we let the overflow of that be whatever it is?" Let me try to explain. Go to Luke 19. You'll know this text. You've even sung about it, I'm sure. If you've got any kind of church background, you'll know this text well. Starting in verse 1, "He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Just a side note here, the more you engage the lost world, the more religious people will grumble. Please tune them out. "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house." Here's the thing about love. Love's not static. It never terminates on itself. Love creates. Love motivates. Love pushes and pulls and shapes. Love never terminates on love, it moves. What if we just didn't try to keep the movement to what the church is comfortable with? What if person who got saved and fell in love with Jesus, we didn't say, "Okay you love Jesus? Here's your options: You teach Sunday school or you sing, maybe pass a plate. Enjoy." What if instead, we told the artist, "You love Jesus? Paint. Paint, we'll hang it on the wall." What if we told the poet, "You love Jesus? Rhyme stuff. Oh, you write? Write a novel. Oh, you want to do movies? Do movies." What if we welcomed creativity? What if we welcomed other forms of worship that don't just look like singing? What if we told the creative people that to have that spirit's not sinful but a gift from God? I mean, I think He's the one that came up with everything. What if we let expressions of love for Christ go and quit trying to control it and form it into some kind of hard line of "This is how we love Jesus?" What if we just let it go? That was our second question.

And what if we could do it all like this? Look at Acts 2, another popular passage. And this really answers two questions. So, what if we could just preach and teach the Scriptures? What if we just taught them and never apologized for it and

let them just be that and then let it overflow, just let it overflow into art, let it overflow into discipline, let it overflow into different ministries, let it overflow into poetry, let it overflow into song? Like, you got lucky if you're a guest with us this morning. We did old hymns this morning. We usually don't. In fact, we usually do songs that we wrote. This is an expression of the question that I just asked. In fact, Josh Drew who leads our services on Saturday night, he introduced "My Jesus, I Love Thee" as a new song. He was like, "This is a new song we're going to try tonight." I was like, "A new song that was written in 1640, I think they've been trying that out quite a while, bro." Acts 2, starting in verse 42 says this, and try to get your head around this because this is the end game for us. We don't want truth and we don't want creativity to take place in a vacuum and we don't want them to take place in isolation. Those are really dangerous. But look what happens in verse 42 of chapter 2, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The breaking of bread there is not communion, it is dinner. He's saying that they're doing dinner together all the time. I've told you since I got here that there's something very holy about eating together. There's something very holy about getting together, I'm not talking about hamburgers in your car, I'm talking about when you get together and you make a meal together and you eat it together and you tell stories and you laugh and you share life and then you clean the dishes together. That's what's happening here. He's saying they're so close, they're doing dinner together. I mean, every night of the week, they're wanting to get together with different people and do dinner. That's what's happening here. "And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." What if we tried to build a culture of community? What if we tried to attack the popular culture of this area with huge backyards and no front porch at all? What if we tried to put people together and kind of force the issue? Community, this kind of community, it's unbelievably difficult. Because if you'll risk it, people are going to know who you really are and that's probably the most horrifying idea that any of us ever have. But the thing about doing life like this, and what I mean by "life like this" is the end result was that if anyone had need, it was met immediately; anybody was weeping, the whole group wept also; if rejoicing, the whole group partied with them. To get there, you've got to risk. What if you kept putting people together? What if you just kept pushing it smaller, no matter how big it got, you just kept pushing it smaller? Like over and over and over again, you pushed it smaller, groups of 12, groups of 20, groups of 100, groups of 200. What if you never let this ideal, but always pushed it smaller? What if you tried to force the issue? What if you tried to force people into community? I mean, you can't make community happen, you can just put people around other people and hope. But what if that was the drive? What if that drive was never large crowds but transformation? What if the goal was never attendance but transformation? What if that became the air that a place breathed?

And this kind of leads me to my fourth question too. What if you never honored rich people because they were rich and never let the staff believe they were entitled to things like parking spaces up front? What if you made them park in the farthest part of the field to model for your people, for us that at the end of the day, this is not about you and your comfort, it's about the mission and the call of Christ on this place to the world? What if you honored service but not power, prestige or wealth? What if, as pastors, we never took large gifts from people? What if, with our own lives, we walked and lived out what we ask of you? Last night, Saturday night service, it was sprinkling, thank God. And I was just looking out the window and the parking crew, they've got a tough gig, man. It's been around 170°F, and then last night, it was around 170°F and raining. I just look out, looking at the parkers, a real thankless, hard job because there's way to many Christians involved in it. And so, they're always getting ignored and the occasional bird. It's just a thankless, tough job. And I look out the window and I see Josh Patterson out there. Josh Patterson is our executive pastor, second on the pole here. He is not asked nor forced to ever do anything like that. Yet on his Saturday night, not required to be here, he puts on an orange vest and a flag and works probably the most thankless job we have here at the Village. Why? Because he's going to get brownie points from me? He knows I don't like him. That isn't going to change anything. No, why?

Because somewhere along the way, he finally learned that when personal preference gets in the way of the kingdom, you're sinning. And so, he said, "Forget my personal preference of air conditioned gladness. I'll put on the orange vest." What if you could honor service more than position? I'll tell you, I think we've done a really good job of this. We have a staff of nearly forty. Only four of those have been hired from outside the walls of this church. Everyone else has been hired from within. Usually, they work with something or walk with something until it gets to big they can't do it and their job, and then we hire them. Gilbert Montez was doing small groups here long before I got here. I got here, we began to grow and grow and grow, and I'll never forget it, he took me down to a little restaurant down on Main. We're eating breakfast, he's eating oatmeal, I'm eating waffles. And he goes, "I can't do it. I can't do small groups anymore." "What do you mean, you can't do small groups anymore? I need you to do small groups." He goes, "I can't do it. I can't do small groups and do my job. There's too many groups now, it's taking too much time, too much time away from my family." He's got a girl at the University of Texas and a daughter about to graduate from high school, and he's like, "I just can't do it anymore." And so, we said, "Well, what if you quit your job? We'll just hire you. We've got like \$14 grand a year and no benefits. Can you do that?" What if we honored service and a heart that says, "This place is greater than me?" What if we honored that? What if we exalted it as an example of what's right and good? What if every time a man came into our office and said, "I want to give you a big hunk of money, and this is why..." what if we made him sign a little document that made him understand that that doesn't give him special privilege, power or bent here? What if we just did it that way?

Now, for the last question we're trying to answer. Go to Acts 19, one of my favorite stories from the book of Acts. We'll start in verse 23, "About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen." Let me explain Artemis.

Artemis was a fertility goddess in Ephesus. They basically believed that she could make it rain, make you have a baby. There were a lot of temple prostitutes involved, really kind of pagan, dark stuff. Her temple was actually one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was laden in gold and jewels, it was just a pretty unbelievable sight. And this guy, what his and the craftsmen he was gathering job was they made the idols of Artemis for the dashboards. "These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.""

His fears were well founded because nobody's been to the temple of Artemis because it did fall into ruin. I want you to get your head around this. The gospel message, because of people who believed in Jesus subversively, over a period of time, transformed the very moral fiber and business practices of a continent, not by getting the government to legislate it but by being the salt and light of Christ in the world. One of the things I see that so disturbs me is that no one wants to share the gospel to everyone, they want to gripe about the government's failure to uphold our values. Give me a break. It has never worked that way. Have you studied Roman history? Constantine goes, "We're a Christian nation now." Wasn't it like 100 years later that Rome ceased to exist? It doesn't work that way. You cannot legislate Christianity. That's a pipe dream. What? You can get people behaving better? So you've got better behaving people outside the kingdom of God? A safer place for your children? No, it's a rough place out there no matter what the law says. What if instead of saying, "When's our government..." What if we just did what the Bible asks us to do and be salt and light and grace filled people in a lost and dying world? What if we tried it that way? What if instead of boycotting stuff, what if instead of drawing up signs to stand outside of "The Da Vinci Code?" What if instead, we actually saw it? What if we actually paid \$13.50 or whatever it costs to go to a movie now, went and saw it, but saw it through the lenses of Scripture so we could better discuss things with our neighbors? Why, they're going to see it. Heck, go with them. What if we stopped making Christianity about beer and rated-R movies? What if we did that? What if we let the peripherals be the peripherals and

concentrated on the gospel? What if we quit being ignorant moralists and starting trusting the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ to be enough? What if we said, "Hey, you're a missionary in your neighborhood?"

What if we created an environment where you're welcome to come as you are? What if we didn't expect people to live this way before we'd have them at our house for dinner? What if we wouldn't beat people up with the gospel and just shared the love of Christ? You can't save anybody. That's Jesus' business, but you can be salt and light. What if we did it that way? What if we did it differently or maybe originally? What if we went underground, one heart at a time, one neighborhood? And I'm not talking about proselytizing, I'm talking about living the gospel of Christ, having people to your house and praying. And don't apologize for who we are. We pray for our dinner. I'm not trying to convert the guy by my prayer at dinner. "Father, I thank You for this pagan. And I thank You that You could save him if he would but listen. In Romans 8, you say..." No, "Thank You for the food," because we thank Him for the food and we thank Him for friendships and we eat. What if that's how we viewed this thing? What if instead of spending all our money on big buildings...now listen, there's coming a day when we're going to have to build a building. 3,000 people coming to this little ghetto thing is barely holding together. Are you warm right now? Yeah, you're warm right now because this place was not designed to hold as many people as it's already held this weekend. There'll be a day where we'll build a building, but what if we don't do the "Oh, once we're at 85%, let's build a building that gets us into horrific debt so that we can no longer concentrate on doing what's good and right in the world?"

What if we just bit the bullet and kept adding services and then finally built a building that didn't have a rock wall or a coffee shop in it or a series of basketball courts? Why? Because those things are wrong? No, they're not wrong, but philosophically, we believe that Lifetime Fitness has great basketball courts. Maybe you should go play there and rub elbows with people who don't know the gospel. Maybe instead of coming here to get your nine shots of espresso or your triple latte, maybe you should just pick a Starbucks. Good God, there's forty of them in the immediate area. Maybe you learn your barrista's name and begin to pray for them. Why don't we go to the same restaurants every week and ask for the same waitresses and waiters? Why don't we throw block parties? When did we become the anti-partiers? In Leviticus 23, God says, "If you don't party, I will kill you." Read it. Why don't we put a thing up, put a little horse thing on and throw a party for the neighborhood? Why don't we be those people? And I'm not talking about debauchery. I'm talking about instead of going, "This is who we are, and if you want to know about us, you come to Sunday school with me." What if instead of doing that, we just engaged it? What if we did it that way? Well, if you did that, you wouldn't need a bunch of programs. Do you? Which means you just saved a million dollars. What could you do with a million dollars like that? Maybe start a hospital or school or something like that. What if we tried it that way? And what if it overflowed out of this little area to the farthest parts of the Earth?

Okay, I've got no answers for these questions. Has it worked here? Some people would say yeah. We're three and a half years in, I've got no idea. I've got another forty years here before I can say it's worked. We're in the Bible Belt, which means we have to wade through a whole slew of people who are in here today just punching their clock, because you just go to church on Sunday. We're not after attendance, we're after transformation. It's not working if people aren't being transformed. If you think I'm funny and like how I talk, that's a lose for us. So, all I got is "what if's," and we're fighting trying to answer them. If this resonates with you, if you're going "Okay, alright, okay," come play. Especially if you're over 50, please come play. You can look around and go, "Ah, a lot of young people here," and you can go find an older herd or you can come help us here. Yes we're young, yes we're dumb, yes we're making mistakes. Help us. Come play, come help, come help us find the answer to some of this. Help. If it doesn't and I've been totally offensive and you can't live with me or the things that we've said or how we worship, awesome. We still love you. Sometimes, we get on my nerves. The great thing is there are beautiful, Bible teaching, gospel loving churches around here. Find one though. Irving Bible, Valley Creek, Crossroads, just get in one. Plug into one. And quit sucking the life out of one. Give, join, be a part. This thing, it hasn't been designed to be some kind of ecclesiological buffet. Get in, put down roots. I've

got this picture in my head that maybe forty years from now, after we've done life together for forty years and our kids have graduated and having kids themselves, that we're going to be able to sit back and look at Highland Village, Flower Mound, Lewisville and maybe see some of what happened in Acts 19. I'm willing to spend my life on it.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for these men and women and for a chance to come together and just talk about the things that You've put in our hearts, that You've stirred our hearts with. I don't believe at all that our way is the way. I just think it's our way, the way You've given us, and we need to stay faithful to it. I know that we have a lot of people right now who are just checking it out for whatever reason, and I pray that those who are called here and those who You're wooing here would hear and hear these things and they would resonate with their souls and they would know and start plugging in. And for those who want no part of this, then Father, I pray that You would bless them and lead them to a home where they can plug their life in. Father, we love You and we want to know You more and we want to build Your kingdom, not our kingdom. And we want to make You name great, not our name great. We want to be known in the community as anything but that. And so, retrain us and refocus us and rewire us and help. We love You, but as always, we want to love You more. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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