



Marked (Part 6) – Service

Matt Chandler – September 17, 2017

[Video]

Male: My name is Josh, and I work at a nonprofit in the city that helps refugees. I also serve on the Connections team at the Dallas Campus. I remember when I first arrived at The Village feeling welcomed and loved by people, and I'm thankful for how God used the church to serve me and to help me grow. Now it's my privilege and responsibility to serve others.

I think God has given us so many gifts in the body of Christ, abilities and our time that don't even really belong to us, but he has given them to us so we can serve others. I really love our church and the ways God has used our church to help me to grow and to love him more. In the same way that the church has served me I want to serve others.

[End of video]

Good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. Romans, chapter 6, is where we're going to be today. We're going to look at eight verses in the middle to the end of that chapter. While you're turning there, I'll catch us up. We are in the sixth week of our fall series we've called *Marked*.

What we're doing is preaching through the statement that about seven or eight years ago we wanted to form as we thought about what it meant to be the people of God in this place at this time. We just kind of grabbed the Bible and tried to wring it out into a couple of sentences where we could just go, "Yeah, that's what we're supposed to be about. That's who we are." \

This was the statement we wrote. It says "We exist to bring glory to God..." That's why we exist. That's the reason *all* human beings exist, but we exist to bring glory to God "...by making disciples..." Then we get into how we believe disciples are made. "...through gospel-centered worship..." So, worship but rooted in the truth of the gospel. "...gospel-centered community..."

Which is a community informed by and shaped by the gospel, and then for our time together today, "...[and] gospel-centered service..."

One of the unique things about the statement is that all of these pieces are a part of how human beings are actually hardwired. Let me tease that out for us. The idea that your life can bring glory to God is hardwired into you as a human being, which means you *will* glorify God with your life.

If you're here today and you hate God, you hate Jesus, you will still, in your hatred of God, bring glory to God as an object of God's justice. What's heartbreaking about those who shake their fists at the heavens, angry with a god they say doesn't exist, is that rage actually serves to show the justice of God in his glory. So even those who hate Christ will bring glory to God.

The second thing is that all of us are hardwired around being disciples. The way you live your life, the way you see the world, how you've organized and constructed your life, has a source: the way you do things, see things, live out your life to not spontaneously combust when you turned 18. You have been shaped and molded. As a created being, you have been created to follow, so you follow. You follow and have been shaped by your parents, by your friends, by the world itself.

The culture itself bears its weight on you and shapes your values and your views on how the world functions. On top of that, we said last week that all human beings, regardless of where they are in the world or what their culture is, will form loose connecting communities because God himself is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and has said, "Let us, the triune God, make them like us."

So we're hungry for connection and communion, and even people who are antiestablishment will form antiestablishment communities. They just can't help it. We've been hardwired. We said last week you saw this in high school unless your senior class had 14 people. If you went to any high school of size, we grouped up around an overlap of intent, experience, and other kinds of markers of identification.

All of the athletes hung out together, and all of the nerds hung out together. Now we're working for them, but they hung out by themselves. Then you had *this* group and *that* group. Then you had the group that didn't want to be a part of those groups, so they formed their own group of not belonging to a group. You can't help it. We've been hardwired for these things.

What has happened is sin has entered the cosmos and fractured those things. All of those were hardwired into our spirits for our joy and God's glory. Sin has fractured that, and we have replaced the original intent with broken patches. Now we don't want to bring glory to God in the ways that are good for our souls and really, truly reflect the beauty of God's grace, character, and might. We want to bring glory to ourselves. We are glory-hungry to make more of ourselves than we actually are.

When it comes to discipleship, following Jesus is just a little bit too costly, so it's easier to just let the stream pull us down. When it comes to worship, everyone is a worshiper. We just worship things that cannot support the weight of our worship, so they crumble, disappoint us, let us down, leading to all sorts of other communal breakdowns. We're hungry for communion with other people, yet for many of us, the best we can find is loose connections. They don't really know us in the deeper parts of who we are. We use connection now to hide. We know everybody so we know no one.

When we get to service, we find more of the same. Remember, what we're doing here is not saying these are things we *do*. We're saying this is who we *are*. We *are* disciples. We *are* worshipers. We *are* a community of faith. This is who we are. We *are* that, and God is making us *more* of that through a process of sanctification. We're back in this same statement and looking at what it means to be servants of God, and we're going to see more of the same. Let's look at this together.

In Romans 6, the apostle Paul is giving a defense of some accusations that were made against his preaching. Here's what was being said. Paul was preaching the gospel, as most of us (I pray *all of us*) know, that in Christ all of your sins, past, present, and future, are fully, freely, and forever forgiven in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Righteousness has been imputed to you, and on the cross of Christ he has absorbed all of God's wrath toward your sin, leading to eternal life rather than eternal death.

The Judaizers of that day were saying that if you preach that, if you say that, men and women will say, "Praise God. He'll forgive me for whatever I do, so I'm just going to do whatever I want to do and God will forgive me." The accusation was that this gospel leads to licentiousness and not holiness and that God is serious about holiness; therefore, Paul's gospel cannot be true. The book of Romans actually is a fund-raising letter, but we don't have time for that. Ultimately, it's written in defense of the gospel that Paul preached. Let's look at this, starting in verse 15.

"What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." I love this little passive-aggressive bit here.

"I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What you're seeing here is more of the same. The question now is not...*Are you a servant?* but...*Who are you serving?* If the *slave* bit is throwing you off here, the word is *doulos* in the Greek (not that you care), which means slave or servant. It's an interchangeable idea of you belong to someone. You don't get to choose whether or not you're a servant to something; you *are*. The question is...*Who are you serving?* There are two options according to the text.

You can serve sin, ultimately leading to death, or you can serve obedience, ultimately leading to righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life. That's it. That's what you have. Who, then, is your master? That's the question we have to get to the bottom of. Now, it's 11:15 in Dallas at a church. How do you think I think you're going to answer the question? I'm fairly confident that all of us are like, "I know who *my* master is: Jesus." Great. Well, let's just dive in and look at it.

The first thing we want to look at here is what it looks like to serve sin as our master. That's where the text starts, so that's where we want to start. What does it look like for sin to be our master? Jesus is going to explain it like this. In John 8:34 it says, "**Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.'**"

This little word *practice* is a fascinating word in the text. It's this idea that it's not like you live mostly upright and stumble every once in a while. It's that you practice sin. It's that you have a habit of sinning. You have a rhythm of sinning in your life, and Jesus is saying everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. Now let's talk about slaves and servants.

Because of where we live, when we hear the word *slavery* we think primarily of the grotesque stain on American history of the African-American slave trade. We're hearing this through those lenses. We understand this through those lenses, although this is going to be somewhat different. Not better, just somewhat different than that. That's another sermon for another day.

Here's something important to note about slaves and servants: they have no will of their own. Their will is the will of their master. If the master said to his servant, to his slave, "I want dinner at 6:00," no slave responds with, "Well, okay, but the game starts at 6:30, so I'll have your dinner at 11:00. I get that that's what you want, but I'm not feeling that right now, Master, so, no." No, no, no. A slave has no will of his or her own.

The apostle Paul would later write about it like this: you are dead in your trespasses and sins. Despite the proliferation of zombie movies, shows, and video games...news flash...when you're dead, you're dead. You're not anxious about anything. You're not worried about things. You're not trying to decide what you're having for dinner. You're dead. You don't move. You don't desire. You are stuck in deadness. You're dead.

When this text is saying that to practice sin is to be enslaved to death, he's saying that we're stuck in death. We just can't get out of it. We have no will of our own. Our will is actually serving our master, sin, that leads to death. Now the text is kind, because he begins to explain how this plays itself out. Look at the second half of verse 19. **"For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness..."**

Here's how sin leads to death. Let me show you how it escalates and ultimately destroys. What the Bible says is that we give ourselves over to some sort of impurity that leads to lawlessness that leads to greater lawlessness. Here's how I would lay this before you. Sin, no matter how small, always escalates. It always goes farther than we think it will go.

In 20 years of pastoral ministry, I have never, never on a wedding day had a man pull me aside and

go, "Here's my plan. Over the next seven years, I plan on creating some emotional distance from my spouse, and then I'm going to, in a really innocent way, just flirt a little bit with this coworker. It's not going to turn into anything. I'm just going to flirt a little bit.

Then what's going to happen is I'm just going to betray my vows to God and to this woman, and I am going to drop a bomb on my family. I'm going to disorient my children and make them question their own value. I'm going to let their brokenness carry on into *their* marriage. I'm so glad I'm married now, because I'm eager to destroy the next seven generations of my bloodline." I've just never heard a man say that. I just haven't.

I've never heard a woman go, "I plan on emasculating him so often. I just plan on tearing him down and chirping away. I know where he's weak, and I know where he's frail. I'm just going to dig on that every time he doesn't do what I want. I'm going to so emasculate him that I can bend him to my will and, while I do that, really torque and twist the souls of my children as they watch me emasculate their father so that they carry that into *their* marriages, leading to the next seven generations of brokenness." I've just never heard anybody talk like that.

What happens all the time is these tiny little decisions that lead to lawlessness that lead to greater lawlessness. It's just a little bit of flirting here. It's just a little pill to take the edge off. It's just a little drink to calm my spirit down a little bit. It's just a chat room because I'm bored. You name it. It's these little bitty decisions that, as they escalate can literally wreak havoc in a family. This is especially true of husbands and fathers.

I'm not trying to undersell the damage a woman can do in the marriage. I will just continue to preach what I believe the Bible says, that there is a unique position given to the man to create environments where there's either flourishing or destruction. When a man gives himself over to sin and death because in his pride he thinks he has mastered sin rather than sin has mastered him... You're just on the clock, men. I know *you're* not because you're so freakin' awesome, but you're on the clock.

The way I've tried to teach this, the illustration that I think lands best on people is from that show *When Animals Attack!* Have you ever watched this show? I love it. That says something about me. I'm always rooting for the animals, because I believe the humans are dumb and they should just pay the price on this. I know we're humans made in the image of God, greater dignity, value, and worth, but here's the thing. It's always this strange moment where the human just thinks...

They've had little Boo-Boo since he was just a cute, cuddly little thing. "We cuddled with that baby lion. We fed it out of our hands. We brushed his mane. Boo-Boo is just obedient. He loves us. He's one of us." Boo-Boo now is 700 pounds, and your kenneling is not working. You haven't been able to cage him up anymore. Then all of a sudden he snaps and tears somebody to shreds and you're like, "I never saw it coming."

This is how sin works. You can giggle, but this is exactly how sin works. It's just this little cute thing. "I can manage this. Oh, look. It'll cuddle." It kind of feels good. "Oh, I know he's going to get big, but I've got this. I know he's bigger, but look, he eats out of my hand. I know he *is* intimidating. Yeah, he's really big, but watch this. Sit. See? I've got this." What happens is you buy into the lie that you're sin's master, and what you don't know is you have been owned by sin and it is *your* master and you are creeping closer and closer to implosion or explosion.

Look at me. This is universally true. If I could ever write a tell-all pastoral book, which is not ethical (I just realized no one will ever confess again), the thing I would want to get across to you is how consistent that story I just told is, how many of you I know today think you're managing your sin when ultimately you've been enslaved by it. You buy into this lie that you're going to be the one strong enough, brave enough, powerful enough to manipulate demonic, spiritual, eternal powers.

Give me a break, bro. I get that you're on creatine and your bench is higher than ever, but listen to me. You are screwing around with things that have killed billions of people since the beginning of humankind. You will not master these spiritual principalities. They will own you, destroy you, and put something in your bloodline that will continue long after you unless you grow up, quit being a boy, drag Boo-Boo out in the backyard, and shoot him in the face.

Is that too graphic? We're from Texas. I know some of you are transplants from California and are like, "What? Where would I get a gun?" Ask your neighbor. Your neighbor would be like, "Oh man, all right. Here you go. Wait, let me... There you go. Don't point that at anything but Boo-Boo." *Pow!* I know we're laughing here, but if you're not serious about this, you have to know your Enemy *is* serious about this. You can play around here, but there are powers at play.

They're not playing around. They have one purpose: to seek and to devour, to kill, to steal, to destroy. They breathe that, live that, have done that since nearly the beginning of time. You will not win this outside of confession and repentance. We drag it into the light. Otherwise, it *will* kill us. It

even talks about the process by which it does kill us. Look at verse 21. **"But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death."**

Here's what he starts to do in the writing. He's saying that the way sin eats away at your soul and destroys you, eventually imploding or exploding your life, is through the concept of shame. Let's talk about the difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is, "I've done something wrong. I know I did it wrong. God, forgive me. I knew what was right. I knew what was wrong. I chose what was wrong." That's guilt. There can be even a sweetness about guilt. "I know I did this wrong thing. I want to confess and repent of this wrong thing, and I want to do what's right."

Guilt doesn't destroy the soul. Shame does. The root of shame says, "I am an unlovable person, and something is broken in me in unique and different ways than it's broken in others." When that's the script that's running underneath our souls, "I am unlovable and I am broken in ways that are unique to me in a different way than other people are broken, so I am therefore unlovable..." When that's the script running in your soul, you cling to image. You have to cling to image.

When we talk about here, and we talk about it all the time because we live in Dallas and we need to talk about it all the time... When we talk about this projected image of yourself that you show everybody, how you're put together, how you don't struggle, how you have this image of you out onto the world of how you really *are* worthy and you really *are* great and really the script is that you're unlovable, what ends up happening is you have to become a controlling person. You have to become a perfectionist.

If you are a perfectionist, you tend to procrastinate. Do you know why you procrastinate? Because if you're a perfectionist you know it's not going to be perfect, so you start to feel paralyzed, because what if there was a crack in your armor? What if people saw that you *weren't* perfect? What if people saw what you know to be true, that you are unlovable? So you cling to control and perfectionism and procrastination. This begins to create a chasm between you and others.

You're constantly managing the external image rather than being able to receive anything that transforms the soul. Even people who seek to try to love you, you will be unable to receive that love, because in your heart, knowing that you are unlovable, it will be that projected image of you that gets to be loved, and you will not be able to benefit from extensions of grace or extensions of love,

because you will have spent so much energy controlling and manipulating this projected image that you will have hardened your heart toward all that makes life fun to live.

This is why, yet again, confession is so important. To step into the light with all our brokenness, all of our fears, all of our doubts, and all of our imperfection (which, by the way, all of those things are distinctly human) and say, "This is me," and to have people then love you, have people then show you grace, have people then enter into your loss, your fears...

Do you know who's experiencing grace? Do you know who's being transformed by love? *You*. But as long as you're willing to manage the image, the root, the very base level of your soul saying, "I am unlovable" it robs you from everything God has for you in Jesus Christ.

Now the good news about all of this is that when Paul is writing he's saying it in past tense. "You *were* this. You *were* a slave to sin leading to lawlessness that led to lawlessness that led to lawlessness. That's not who you are anymore." So let's talk about what it means to be slaves of obedience leading to righteousness.

It's important to note that in order to understand Romans 6 we have to embed it into the letter in its entirety. This letter we're in today would have been delivered to the church at Rome, and they would have opened it and read it to the congregation.

It takes about 45 minutes to read the letter of Romans, which is why I can justify my sermon being 45 minutes, because apparently that's how it was since the beginning. I know some of you are like, "What about Titus, bro? Titus is like seven minutes long. Read *that* one." But we're in Romans, so you get 45 to 50. In fact, now that you brought that up it added a couple of minutes.

We know, as Christians, that our righteousness is not rooted in our own obedience. That would be law-based Christianity, and there's no such thing. Christ has fulfilled the law and set us free from the law. So then, how are we to understand slaves to obedience that leads to righteousness? Well, we understand it in light of what Paul has already taught us in Romans, chapter 5. Let me read just two verses.

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men." Verse 19 is key for where we are today. "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the

many will be made righteous." Here's Paul's argument before we get to chapter 6: in the same way that our unrighteousness has come through the line of Adam, so our obedience comes through the line of Jesus Christ.

When Christ imputes his righteousness to us, what we're getting is his perfect obedience. So when he moves on in the argument and says that we are slaves to obedience leading to righteousness, he's saying that we are slaves to Jesus Christ, that he is our master, that our "yes" has been laid down in front of the throne of Christ and we are his and we belong to him and he is ours. Jesus now becomes the model, the template, the picture of what obedience and being a servant of God actually looks like. I think you get that picture most beautifully in Philippians, chapter 2.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

If there was ever a man born of woman who deserved for the rest of humanity to serve his will it's Christ, and yet Christ introduces into the economy of the world kingdom economics and empties himself and chooses to serve as both an example and as a call to his people to be people marked by service to Christ. He humbles himself. He washes the feet of his disciples. He's obedient to death, even death on a cross. He models for us what it means to be servants or slaves of Christ.

Then look at verse 17. Here's the celebration. Here's how that happens to us, how we once were slaves to sin and death and now we're slaves to righteousness. **"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."**

I love this concept. What he's saying is that you have heard the standard of teaching. He's talking about the gospel. We've heard the gospel message, and the gospel message has landed in our hearts and has transformed us. It is not an ethereal concept. We heard it, and it did something. The Spirit of God turned something, changed something, and we became slaves to obedience. Something happened in us, and we want to follow Jesus.

We went from following the world to all of a sudden a shift in allegiance, and now our allegiance is on Jesus and we want to follow Jesus. That happened because a standard of teaching, the gospel, fell on our hearts and transformed us from the inside out. That's not the same thing as, "I've seen the effects of my alcoholism, so I want to change my ways." This is "Christ changed the value system of my heart, and my allegiance now belongs to him. I bow my knee to Jesus. He is my boss. He is my master. I am his servant."

Then he gets into how this plays itself out. It's like Paul knew we might still be a little bit confused. Look at verse 19. **"I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification."**

There was a way you spent your energy, natural giftedness, money, discipline, and imagination before you knew Jesus Christ. When you served a different master, you were disciplined in obeying that master. You were creative in obeying that master. You spent money, studying, and imagination to serve that master. The Bible is saying since you're now servants of Christ, you have been empowered to take all of that and put it on what's true, right, and good. Here would be my illustration.

My plan, before Jesus wrecked all that in a really beautiful way... I can remember most of what I read. I can see arguments really well. All that was natural. That was there before I became a Christian. There were a lot of whippings in my house. I'm sorry if you get offended by that. Time-out did not exist when I was a kid. That's just not how they rolled.

When I was a kid, there were just a lot of spankings and things being taken from you. Right or wrong, it's what I grew up with, and here I am. You're like, "Well, that explains a lot about you." Okay, whatever. There are some things wrong with *you*. In the middle of all this, here was my plan:

"I'm going to be a lawyer. I'm going to be a lawyer because Tom Cruise got Jack Nicholson to scream out 'You can't handle the truth!' and I'm going to be a lawyer because apparently they make a lot of money and I want a super hot wife and a BMW, maybe even another wife after that. I don't know. I just want a lot of money and a lot of toys. I want a boat and a BMW 7 Series and a house I could get lost in, and law is my way to do that."

That was my plan, and I was heading down that direction when the Spirit of God showed up and was like, "Oh man, that's really cute. Here's the thing. Here's what we're going to do instead. I'm going to reach in there and shift *that* around, and now that ability you have? Let's turn that in *this* direction now. That zeal you have? Let's turn that over *here*."

Here's your new Book. I want you to get to know this Book really, really well. That way that you stay up and research? You're going to do that now, but you're going to do it for me. Those desires you have? I'm going to switch them up on you, and you're going to do it all for me now. Those dreams and wishes and that imagination, discipline, and fire that you had for *you* and serving sin as your master you now will use to serve *me* as your master."

This is what he's saying here. If you think about life when you were wilding out, if you had that phase... I remember. It took some imagination. It took some discipline. It cost money. The argument here is you have a new master. All of that now is repurposed under one master, not under two, so you should serve the Lord with all that you have and all that you are, because he is now your master. In the same way you used to serve sin and death you now serve your new kind master.

I want to land this on the ground, because you have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do these things. It is not that you cannot do this. You *can* do this because the Spirit of God lives inside of you. What would this look like on the ground? In everyday life, going to work, going to church, what does this look like? In Ephesians, chapter 6, you get this command from the apostle Paul on the church at Ephesus that you are to work for God and not men.

This is great news. Your boss is Jesus Christ. If you're like, "It's actually not; it's Jim, and he's a jerk, and I hate that guy," listen. Jim might be managing you, but Jesus is your boss. You don't work for Jim the jerk. You work for Jesus Christ, so when you're at work, you're not working for *their* bottom line; you're working as you're working unto the Lord. This frees us up to be one of the best workers at our place of business, regardless of that place of business.

Why? Because we work to the Lord. I have one master. I have one boss. His name is Jesus. He's kind and gracious, which compels me to work all the more for him. But what does that look like in the other areas of our lives? I love when you ask questions that are next in my outline. Galatians 6:10: **"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."**

There are a lot of things on the horizon. Next weekend will be a huge weekend in the life of our church. We're going to make some announcements next weekend about the future and direction of our church that I'm really excited about. Two and a half years in the making with a lot of prayer and hope and anticipation of what God might do. We're going to announce that next weekend.

I have found my heart hungry for God to do a couple of things specifically in our household of faith, so I want to lay those two things before you. Here's the first one. We prayed about this earlier here at the Flower Mound Campus. I have specifically prayed that God would increase our capacity to bless and live generous lives. In a world that's cynical and jaded, blessing and generosity confuses and confounds, and it's easy.

I don't know if anyone else is experiencing this right now. I don't know what's going on in our public schools, but every time I pick up my children they need Sonic or Whataburger or something. They feel like they're dying. "I need something from Sonic." I'm like, "Do they not let you drink at school? Are there not water fountains? Didn't you go with a giant thing this morning?" "Yeah, but I need a Nerds slushy or something."

Because my role in our family unit is to be "fun dad," I will usually give in to that. So I picked up the kids this week, and on the way home they're like, "Oh, we're not going to make it, Dad. We're going to need..." I was passing by Whataburger, pulled through Whataburger, and ordered some drinks for my kids and a couple of their friends. I don't know if you know this, but a medium drink at Whataburger is seven liters of liquid.

I ordered what I thought was safe: medium Sprites. Then here they are. I was like, "Oh, okay. Well, there you go." I'm handing out those Sprites, so I ask... Here's a rule I live by. I would just encourage you to do the same. Don't talk on your phone when you're around service people. People who work in the service industry are human beings. You're going through a drive and you're like, "Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, all right." That's such a jerk, dirtbag move. Don't do that. They're human beings.

So I'm there at Whataburger, and I just asked the lady, "Hey, are you doing all right?" She didn't look like she was doing all right. When you ask that in the drive-through, let me tell you what you're going to get. "I'm fine." But in a rare moment of transparency, here's what she said: "Man, I'm not good." She started tearing up. I'm like, "Oh gosh. How do you play this?" I have six kids in the car, two cars behind me.

Here's all I knew to do. I just said, "Man, I'm sorry. You just need to know that God hears your prayers, and I just want to bless you right now. Whatever is going on in your life, I want you to just hear me. God has heard your prayers." I don't even know if she had been praying, but I know that God hears the prayers of those who are hurt. I just told her, "God hears your prayers. Keep the change." It was like five bucks.

I don't know that after I drove off she was like, "He hears prayers," and she became a Christian and just left on a missionary journey to India. I don't know that that happened, but here's what was really easy and really powerful. I just blessed her in the name of Jesus. We can do that everywhere, always, and you're not going to find that that really upsets people.

I just don't think you're going to find your neighbor is like, "You know what? I'm sick of it, Steve! You're always blessing me and my family, blessing my children in the name of Jesus. No more! You bless me one more time, brother..." That's not going to happen. You're just free to bless and be generous. What would happen if you actually did it? Just every conversation you were seeking to bless. It's easy.

If their kids are playing sports... "I'm praying that they learn all that they could learn from sports about discipline, about character, about hard work. Just blessing you in the name of Jesus." Tough season at work? "Man, I get that. I've been there myself. I'm just praying for you right now. I want to bless you in the name of Jesus that in this season God is going to strengthen you and provide what you need to do all that he has asked you to do. I just bless you in the name of Jesus."

You should just be obnoxious about that. "People are going to think I'm weird." We *are* weird, brothers and sisters. The sooner you embrace that, the brighter we'll shine in this darkness. The more you need to be cool and seen *like* the world instead of different from it, the more we'll be handcuffed and will not play the role God has us to play in the world.

Now I want to move to my uncomfortable last point. I have to do this about every six years because of the pull of our culture. The second thing I've been praying for our church across all campuses, all 12,000 to 15,000 of us, is that we would be a church that not only is marked by generosity and blessing but that we would be a place that takes seriously the biblical command to outdo one another in honor.

There's a rule in organizational science called the *80/20 rule*. The rule is basically that 20 percent of your people are going to do 80 percent of the work. In different seasons and at different times, that has very much been what The Village Church has experienced. I want you to hear me say this.

For where we're going as a congregation, where we're going as the church in an increasingly hostile environment, you being a consumer, someone who sits in the seats and listens to sermons and sings songs but does not enter the community of faith and belong, will not be enough for what's on the horizon for us.

Something I think is unique to The Village (maybe not) is that some of you brothers and sisters have been coming here for five or six years and participate in nothing other than jamming up the systems and structures that are meant to build a strong core here so that we might be the light of the gospel in this part of the world.

What happens is the culture shapes you to believe that this is some sort of consumeristic endeavor. This isn't Chick-fil-A. Not that Chick-fil-A is not delicious. It's just that we don't exist to serve you. We exist to serve one another. Without that, what happens is 1,200 people get the life sucked out of them serving 12,000 people. We can't stay here.

Listen. Let me give some caveats. If you're new and you're banged up and you're coming out of a terrible season of life, and you just need to breathe, I want to give you the grace to breathe and figure it out, but some of you have been here six or seven years. That is not your story. You're lazy, you're consumeristic, and you think we exist for you.

I just want to lovingly say, six or seven years in you know. I want you to get in, or will you find someplace you can get in with and leave here and get in there? We can't be what God has called us to be as long as you're sitting there eating popcorn and not getting in the fight. I don't want to be in the trench if you're not going to be in the trench.

Who I'm committed to are the men and women of The Village. I'm giving my life to those brothers and sisters. If you like my preaching, listen to the podcast. If you like Michael's singing, he has a couple of records.

Here's my gentle admonition. If you're like, "This is gentle?" Yes. The last time I did this we pulled it off the Internet. We plan on, with all of our hearts, pursuing Jesus Christ as King of our lives, and we

long to see his power poured out in this area. I am not interested in being a preacher who tickles ears. I'm just not interested in it.

I won't give my life to it, but if you want to get in here with us, I'll have my life wrung out for you. I just want to gently at the end of the sermon make this awkward and say that I want you to come in or I want you to leave, but you can't just keep sitting in here week after week after week with no intention of serving the body of Christ. That's not what the church of Jesus Christ is.

If you're hearing, "Oh, he's telling us to leave," no, no, no. I'm inviting you in. I'm saying get in here. We need you. What we *don't* need is people just sitting in seats, oblivious to the needs and hurts of others. I'm just trying to lovingly encourage you and in a weird way remind you that my allegiance is to Christ and not to trying to build some megachurch.

Do you want to play? Do you want to get in the trench? My "yes" is down. I'm with you. I'm 43. I plan on running until 60s or until the Lord says something else. So let's get after it. There's much to do, and Christ is being generous to us in an outpouring of his Spirit in unique ways. Do you know Recovery is starting to meet in *here* now? They literally outgrew the room. People are coming to our church in droves who have never actually been to our church.

They're just coming to Wednesday night Recovery and meeting Jesus and having their lives transformed. Do you know we're starting to see miraculous stuff all over the place? That's what God is doing. I want to get right in the middle of that and ride that thing out, but I'm not interested in entertaining you. I'm inviting you in. In Connection Central, in the hallway...all sorts of opportunities for you to serve.

If it's on us that you're not serving, if you're just not quite sure where you fit, we have a whole department. Its purpose is to help you find that spot. If you hate kids, we're not going to ask you to work in the nursery. If babies wig you out, that's not your spot, but there are spots to play. You have gifts. You have abilities. The Bible teaches us that you have these gifts and abilities. Servants of the Master do not get to hoard the gifts and resources of the Master. To do so would be to sin. Let me pray for us.

You are kind and gracious and good, Father. We love you. We bless your name. I know a lot has been said here today. I just ask that we might grow all the more into servants. We *are* servants. You *are* our Master, and yet, Father, I know that we have far to go and ways in which we must grow, so I

just ask, Spirit of God, that you in your mercy would sanctify us all the more, that you would help us see in a very real and beautiful way that we're not the point but rather have been invited *into* the point.

I pray that you'd give us a real zeal for one another, a real heart for one another, a desire to bless one another, serve one another, and show kindness to one another. Help us in these ways. We need you. I pray against the consumeristic swing of life in 2017 and the evangelical bent to cater to that and ask instead that we would lean into self-sacrifice and service and love for one another that shows that we have a Master that is not us. We'll need your help in all these things. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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