

I was scheduled to start a three week series on manhood. This weekend, Bleecker and I were going to fight, and then we were going to talk about what it meant to be a man and how you define masculinity and how that moved on into being a husband and a father and all of those things. In fact, if you would open up your bulletin, you would see the small group notes for the message I was going to give on manhood and masculinity. But I want to not do that this weekend, because I wanted to spend my time with you this morning addressing what happened in our community this past week. On Tuesday morning, Lauren's and my eight year anniversary, she had asked me about three months ago, "Let me plan the anniversary. I'll plan the whole whole day. It will be a big surprise. You don't have to do anything." And so, I was a little nervous about that. I didn't know, "Does she mean that? Is this a trick? Is this a test or something?" So I call some buddy and was like, "That's what she said." So I had some kind of "Plan B" in the background just in case. And I was like, "I'm not even going to worry about it....Could I get reservations for two," just in case it was a test. So I took the day off, told the staff, "Don't bother me," and I woke up and Lauren had packed a little bag and she just started taking me on this little adventure. About 6:30, we had to swing by the house real quick, and I just glanced down at my phone and I saw that I had about fourteen missed calls from the office and a bunch of text messages. So anytime in what I do you see that, something's gone wrong. So I picked it up, and most of the texts had no information; they were just, "Call ASAP...call ASAP...call ASAP..." So I called Josh Patterson, our executive pastor, one of my best friends, and he said, "Hey, I just wanted to make you aware of what's happened. I know you haven't been around your phone, but less than three miles from the church, a woman has shot and killed her husband, shot and killed her 11 year old daughter, shot and killed her 7 year old son and then took her own life." And so, we talked through what our response was going to be, and I just can't tell you how proud I was of some of our men and women who live just doors down and opened up their homes for the vigil and cooked food and had drinks and we had about six or seven of our ministers out there. They did just such a phenomenal job. I mean, we've been talking about light, and you guys were light on a really dark day in our community. So I got off the phone with them and felt like everything was covered, and Lauren and I went to dinner. I came back home that night, and Lauren was getting ready for bed. That's about an hour and a half, so I felt like I had time to turn on and watch the news. She calls me an exaggerator, and she's right...it's about two to two and a quarter hours. And so, I was sitting on our coffee table just watching the news, hearing the report and listening to the neighbors. It's just like it's always the same thing: They were normal, they were loving, it was this and there were no signs, they were involved in the community, they were involved in athletics. And to be just completely honest and transparent with you, I think the first emotion I felt was kind of sorrow mixed with rage. I mean, I'm just like, "What in the world?" And I don't know if you've ever had that moment where the Lord intervenes in the middle of your thoughts to reveal that you're a shallow moron. I don't know. Has anybody had that? Where He doesn't speak in biblical language to you, but He just goes, "You're a moron." And I had that moment. I moved from the living room, turned off all the lights and just laid in bed staring at my ceiling fan. Like how dark and lonely and desperate and frustrated of a place must she have been. And I'm not excusing the horridness of what occurred; I just can't imagine how dark of a place she was in, where she thought that was her way out.

So I didn't sleep much Tuesday night, and I started wondering how any of us survive the suburbs, with it's manicured lawns? Anybody have that neighbor who is just a freak about their lawn? There's not a lot of laughter, so I'm guessing a lot of you are that guy. Some of you are like, "Don't take that from me, Chandler. Don't take my lawn from me." Manicured lawns, SUV's, golden retriever, perfectly gifted, athletic and talented kids. Honestly, how do any of us survive this? I wonder how silly all of this looks to God, to the rest of the world. And listen, I don't think church helps. I think church makes it worse. I think it makes it worse because everything from our lawns to our cars to our kids has this internal/external pressure that "we're okay and everything's alright. And everything's great. And isn't

life good? And we've got money and we've got stuff. And our kid's one of the best readers in his class. And he's one of the best soccer players. In fact, we're already spending \$4,000 a year to get him to run around with other little four year olds and play soccer. And we've got this going on and that. Our dog's perfect. Watch this, 'Sit, fetch, get the paper, mow the lawn.' We've got this perfect life.” And then you throw church, and now “We've got to be good and upstanding. We've got to know the Bible well. We've got to have this...” And we've got all this external/internal pressure for everything to be pretty like it appears to be. And I'm just wondering how any of us survive this. I mean, do we even have a shot at walking honestly with each other? Do we even have a shot at being human?

So I thought what we could do to day was just take a few moments and look at a text that talks about walking through life and walking through life in such a way that brings about depth and wholeness and those kind of things, that I think we're all really after in the end. And I think some of us are after it and don't even know it. I'm going to go quickly, but let's look at it. 1 Peter 5, we'll pick it up in verse 6. I want to read the whole text, then I'll come back and we'll walk through it. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* So this is how we walk in a nonrhythmic, broken, fallen world where almost all of us have internal wrestles and external pressures that, given the right combination, can prove to be absolutely destructive. How do we walk? I think the most popular verse here is the one about the devil being a lion looking for somebody to devour. I think that's the kind of one we pull out of there and go, “Scary, be careful.” But I think the rest of the text is where the weight is and where I think we need to turn our attention to. The text starts out like this, “Humble yourselves under the hand of a mighty God.” Now, do you realize that the entire universe functions in such a way to teach you how small you are and how fragile you are. Now, most of our society and culture is wired to teach us how big and strong and powerful we are and how nothing can get us or beat us, but the universe is communicating a very, very different message. I think I've said this a trillion times since I got here five years ago: No one has ever stood in front of the Pacific Ocean as it raged and churned and thought about how great their company was. Nobody ever stood at the base of the Rocky Mountains and turned to their friend and was like, “Remember in high school when I could bench press 285lbs? That was great. I really was powerful back then.” I mean, the entire universe is built around communicating to you that you're tiny and you're fragile and you control nothing.

You want me to give you some examples? I'm battling the flu right now. I am hopped up right now on medicine and caffeine. It's the only thing keeping me standing. At any moment, I could just black out on the floor. If that happens, my manuscript is right here, one of you just come get it, finish reading it and dismiss everyone. Now on Saturday, I felt perfect. I felt strong, we worked outside, played with the kids, had a great day, and then all of a sudden, as the day went on, I went from feeling normal and strong to shivering under a blanket, barely able to get my head off the pillow. Something I couldn't see, something I couldn't control, something I couldn't taste, something I couldn't avoid has sapped my strength. Okay, how about money and privilege and power and glory and all those things? What does that buy you when the engine of your airplane cuts out at 40,000ft? “Well, buy us a new engine.” “By the time we get it on, it will be too late.” Or let's just do the news. Do you think the bridge that collapsed in Minnesota had any respect for who was on it? I mean, this is the universe going, “You've got nothing. You control nothing.” Everybody in here has either heard a story or knew someone personally who was a marathon runner or did nothing but eat leafy greens and do pilates, and one day

they they went for a run, this time just a three mile run, not the normal 35 mile run they normally do, they just did the three mile run, came into the garage and fell down dead. This is the universe going, "You're not God, not at any level. You control nothing. And so, the Scriptures are saying that in this kind of world where you don't control the chemical makeup in your brain, you don't control the external forces around you, you don't control the weather, you don't control yourselves, in this world that is completely out of your control, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, walk in obedience to the mighty hand of God. Humble yourself, walk in His ways because the next part of the text says that if you do that, when it all goes wrong, He'll exalt you, He'll give you that reservoir of strength, He'll provide for you in that moment when your tank is completely empty. And we see this in the Scriptures over and over and over and over again. Jeremiah, we see it. The apostle Paul, we see it. I mean just over and over again. Job just begins to unravel, and in that moment, God provides strength, God exalts.

But what ends up happening when you're not walking in that kind of humility and you have other gods, they fail you in that moment and you're nothing but betrayed. I know a lot of guys, most of them are single or single again. Women are their gods. Let me just be really honest with you. Women make lousy gods. They do. Ladies, you can get mad at me. You make a lousy god. And then I know a lot of young women who men are their gods. Men are going to be the one to make them not lonely anymore, men are going to be the one to make their life complete. Men make even worse gods than women. Men are miserable gods. Money, stuff, things, horrible god to serve, horrible insatiable gods. But when we walk in humility, walk in submission, in obedience to God, then when things go bad, then we don't mind saying it. Have you ever wondered how crazy it is that king David and the apostle Paul in particular are always so vocal about their struggles? David wrote a song that was sung in the temple that says, "My sins have outnumbered me, and I can't see. They outnumber the hairs on my head." That's a song! I mean who wants to go, "Hey, can we sing that one about sin dominating and destroying us? I'd really like to sing that song right now. Can we get together and do that?" Nobody's picking that one for their favorite. But David says, "I do not withhold my sin from the assembly." He's saying, "I just want to be honest about where I am. I want to plead the cross of Christ." So the apostle Paul goes, "Not that I've already obtained all these things, but one thing I do is press on towards the goal to win the prize....I was once a blasphemer and a violent man." There seems to be this not comfort with their sin, but an acknowledgment of their need. If you're not walking in humility, you'll never do that; you'll continue to play the suburban game, which is beauty, less than an inch of beauty.

Look at what he says next, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*" I know the Scriptures, but I always struggle with this one idea. I think at times, and I know this is wrong, but I think that God likes the future Matt Chandler a lot more than He likes the present one. Like I'm okay hearing that God loves me and that God cares for me and that I'm the apple of His eye, Zephaniah and all those texts. I love those texts, but when I hear them, I always think that He's talking about future Matt, the Matt that doesn't struggle like I do, the Matt that doesn't have the hang-ups that I do, the Matt that doesn't have the hurts, the Matt that maybe learns to do this a little bit better or quits doing that so much, the Matt that wakes up at 4:00AM and prays from 4-10 just over his breakfast. But the great weight and truth of the gospel is that "while we were yet sinners, while we were at our worst, Christ died for us." And so He says here, "I care. That weight that you're carrying, that anxiety that you're feeling, that rough marriage, that child that's gone wayward, your financial situation, that pain that you bear in your heart, that unforgiveness and anger that's in your soul, I care. Let Me carry it for you. Cast it on me." The only other place we can find in the New Testament this idea of casting on is a reference to saddling a donkey. "Put it on me. I'll carry it. You don't have to carry that alone. And please don't play that little Evangelical game of giving Me lip service going, 'You carry it, and then

I'll...' Let Me carry it. Cast your anxieties upon me. I'm stronger than you are. Come on. You're weak. You can't get your head off the pillow when you get the flu. I can get the flu. Cast your anxieties on Me.'"

Look at this next one. *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* Look at verse 9. This is where I want to spend our time. *"Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."* Alright, let's chat. All the time, I mock church and the Evangelical community. I don't want to be the bitter church kid, but I guess I am. And every time I do it, I'll just say something and get angry e-mails from you afterward. I'll tell you this one that I always do, and I'll tell you why I do it. I'll say, "Okay, how many of you grew up in church in here?" And then most of us raise our hands. Then I always say this afterwards. I always go, "If you didn't raise your hand, don't worry about it. You're probably better off than the rest us. He he he." Everybody chuckles, and then we move on. And then on Tuesday, I'll get, "How dare you, sir." Let me tell you what I mean by that. The longer you are in the church setting and the Evangelical community, whether it is spoken or unspoken, there becomes a code of conduct and a code of being that takes root in a place. And the longer you're in that place, not being completely honest about where you really are, the more we won't do the very thing we know we should do, because we feel like we shouldn't struggle with that, shouldn't wrestle with that and shouldn't have those kinds of doubts because we've been in church all these years. And so in the end, we talk about walking openly with one another, confessing our sins to one another, doing life deeply together, and those of us who have been in church the longest are much more apt to go, "I can't do that, because if I said I struggle with that or I confess doing that, how would other people look at me? Because I teach Sunday school or I work for the hospitality team or I lead a home group or I'm involved in this or I've done this or these people look to me for guidance," on and on and on. And we'll be the ones with secret sin, completely eaten up with doubt, wars waging in our souls, but we'll never come clean about our difficulty because we've been in church our whole lives and we don't want to lose face around our church friends. It's catastrophic. And I think this text is saying, "Stand firm in what you know. So come clean." I know some of you are going, "Man, if I said where I really was and what I really struggle with and what my doubts and fears were, what I really thought about God, everybody in this room would know I was a fake." Well okay, but you are. And if you'd just say it, then you're not a fake anymore. I mean, how great is that? You could stop being a hypocrite with one sentence. "I've got major doubts and some serious issues." To which anyone who is seriously following Christ in here would respond, "Whew. Me too. We should pray or something. They say we should pray and read the Bible. Come here, let's read and pray together." And this is what happens to us, and this is what I've been talking about for the last three or four weeks, why the church is so absolutely impotent and why you've got all these conversions and no transformation. Because that's what we learn in the game. "Well, I can't struggle with that because I've counseled guys in my home group who struggle with that. Now, if I come clean with that, what's that going to do with this other thing?" And you start playing this little game, as if you're God. "Oh, if I fail them, all the Christian community could turn to dust. Where would the kingdom of God be then?" God's like, "Oh man, you're killing Me." Yeah, this is stand firm in what you know. Come on, you've got to know that your sins are going to find you out, and I'm not talking post-death. I'm telling you, your sins are going to find you out. And then the way it will end for most of you is you'll just walk away and say Jesus doesn't work despite the fact that you never tried Him. You just tried to be good. Being good is really boring. I'd much rather try for godliness; that's at least an adventure.

One more thing: *"Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."* I love verse 10. I would love for any of the prosperity guys to preach on this verse. *"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all*

*grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*” A few months ago, my wife and my four year old daughter, Audrey, and my two year old son, Reid, got in our truck, and we headed to Possum Kingdom for a little week off. Possum Kingdom is a lot nicer than it sounds. Seriously, who was in that meeting that didn't go, “Possum Kingdom? Are you serious?” But that's what they named it. So we head there, and on the drive there I just reached my hand back to grab my daughter's leg. And her leg felt really, really hot to the touch. So I'm trying to not kill us at the same time, so I reach back and I felt her face and her face felt fine and she felt fine. So I felt her leg again, and then I just pulled over and looked at. It looked like a spider or something had bit her leg and her leg had begun to swell and was really hot to the touch. So Lauren and I kept heading to Possum Kingdom, and we were talking about what we were going to do about it. And so when we go there, we decided to go to the hospital. So I dropped Lauren and Reid off at the lake house, and I took Audrey to the hospital there in Possum Kingdom, which is also diner. I'm kidding. That's so not true. It's not that bad. Now Audrey is four, and as soon as your kid turns three, “doctor” means “needle.” So on the whole way there, she was like, “Is he going to stick me with the needle? I don't want him to stick me with the needle.” And I used to be like, “Of course not, baby,” but now I'm just like, “Maybe. I don't know. Good luck. Present suffering is not worthy compared to the future glory.” I think that Scripture works here. And we go, and she's really concerned about it. “Are they going to stick me with a needle? Are they going to stick me with a needle?” I'm like, “I have no idea, boo. I sure hope not. I hope they don't have to stick you with a needle.” So we get back in there and she lays down on the table. The doctor comes in and looks at here leg. He was so great, he really was great with her. He just looked at me and said, “It's an abscess, and we're going to have to lance it.” And so, Audrey went, “Lance it?” And I was like, “It's some technical term. I don't know what he's talking about. So about three or four minutes later, he left, and Audrey and I were just kind of talking about it. She's asking me if it's going to hurt. I'm like, “It probably is going to hurt. I don't want to lie. It's going to hurt, but Daddy's here and it will be over quick.” The doctor came in with a nurse. And if you haven't been to the doctor a lot, if the doctor comes in with help, buckle up. If there's someone coming in to hold you down while he does something to you, yeah. And so, Audrey's on the bed, and I sat next to her on the bed. Her legs were through here. He was so good, thank God. He's like, “I'm going to spray this cold stuff on you, and then I'm going to lance it.” And thank goodness he didn't show here the needle because it was massive. So I just told Audrey to put her face on my chest, and I wrapped my arms around her. And you could hear him spraying that stuff, and then all of a sudden, I felt her entire body tense up and she let out a scream. And she just started crying and screaming, they're holding her legs and she's looking at me like, “You betrayed me.” You know that look? That's why I always send her mom. I'm like, “Is she getting her immunizations? You take her. I ain't taking her.” But man, she is screaming and screaming and trying to kick and just sobbing. Even I'm starting to get angry. I'm like, “Hurry it up, man. Are you kidding me?” And then finally, he says, “I'm done. I'm done. I'm done.” I look back and he's got this little piece of gauze, and it just has really nasty stuff all over it. He wrapped her leg in gauze and put a little Barbie band-aid on it, which really heals the process more than you think for a four year old girl. And then Audrey and I walked out of there. And then even by the next day, her leg was back to the normal color. In that hospital, on that bed, occurred a very deep kind of love for my daughter. Because the only way that leg was going to get better was for us to take a needle and jam it in there. And there wasn't any way to numb it because it was all infected. There wasn't any other way. Our only choice in getting that leg healthy was to take a large needle and jam it under her flesh. It's the only way to get the infection out. And the cruelest thing we could have done is nothing, in the hopes that it would take care of itself.

One of my favorite quotes if from a guy named J.I. Packer. I have a picture with him and me on my refrigerator. He's like 80 something now. It's actually him and John Piper. And Lauren says I look

happier in that photo than I do in our wedding pictures. "It's just a different kind of happy," I tell my wife. One of my favorite quotes from says, "Still He seeks the fellowship of His people and sends them both sorrows and joys in order to detach their love from other things and attach it to Himself." This text says that God will allow suffering, God will allow pain, God will allow frustration, God will allow the dark night of the soul, because sometimes that's the only way to get the infection out. And to leave it there would kill you. But the good news in this text...because that doesn't sound good to me. I'm like, "Oh thanks." The good news in that text is that He says, "I have not abandoned you." Like, wherever you are, whatever your anxiety is today, whatever's unraveling in your world, it doesn't matter what it is, the text says, "I haven't abandoned you. In time, there will be a period of time, night will turn to day. I will be there to restore and mend and heal exalt. You have not been abandoned. You have not been left out in the cold. And I think that's so important because there's a type of shame and there's a type of frustration and there's a type of sorrow and there's a type of difficulty that will lead us straight into sin. We'll get bitter, we'll get cold, we'll shake our fist at God. Like, I feel this tension in me. I'm like, "I know we're worthy of hell," but you let something like this bridge collapse happen and here's the thing that constantly baffles my mind. It seems to me that God gets absolutely no credit for the millions of bridges that didn't collapse and He gets all the blame for the one that does. Make up your mind. He either gets powerful worship every time you get across one or He gets none of the blame when one of them collapses. But choose. At least be constant. But in the end, no matter where you are, no matter what's hurting, no matter what difficulty, no matter what happens, He's saying, "I haven't abandoned you. I'm here." There's a type of shame, difficult, pain and sorrow that will lead you into doubt, straight into anger, straight into bitterness, straight into unforgiveness, straight into "Forget God and His plan to relieve me of my infection. I'd rather die my way."

But then there's a type, there's this choice to walk in something different. Let me show you that, then we'll get out of here. Let's go to Luke 7. We'll pick it up in verse 36. This is honestly probably my second or third favorite story in the Bible, definitely one that haunts me. "*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.*" So don't think the da Vinci, long, rectangular table with everyone facing the camera. Think kind of round table, on the floor, lounging, probably talking about the Torah. Verse 37, "*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner,...*" Let's chat. "Sinner" in this text is not like you and I would use the word "sinner." You and I would use the word "sinner" as, "Oh, we've all sinned. Everybody's a sinner. Everybody needs the Lord." "Sinner" in the first century would have been a class of people marked by either some kind of physical deformity or some job of ill repute. So this woman is either deformed, blind, a leper or she's a prostitute. Now, the reason I think she's a prostitute and with confidence say she is in this text is because it also calls her a woman of the city, and if you would have had a deformity of disease, you would have had to live on the outskirts of the city and then come during the day to beg but then leave. You weren't allowed to stay in the city. So a woman of the city who was a sinner, we've got ourselves a prostitute here. "*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.'*" And Jesus answering said to him,..." I love this. I mean, this guy is saying to himself, "If this man were a prophet,..." and Jesus is like, "I'd be in your head right now, because that's where I am. Let me answer

your question.” I have prayed for that gift. I have not gotten it, but I have asked for it fervently. “...*“Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon,...”* So watch this, because I think that all of this is really kind of complex but beautiful. He's at a round table, sitting with men, the woman is behind Him washing His feet with her tears and hair and Jesus turns around, looks at the woman but starts talking to Simon. Watch what happens. “...*“Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”*” Notice that Jesus doesn't get involved in the conversation but stays with the woman. “*And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*” I try to get my heart and mind around the range of emotions this woman must have been feeling before she turned that doorknob and opened the door. I mean, do you know who's in that room? Do you know the looks. You can tell even in the Pharisee's thoughts to himself who and what sort of woman this is. I mean, if you move past the who and go to the what, he wouldn't even let her touch him. Do you see the pervasive religious mood? “This woman shouldn't even touch Jesus. She's defiling Him by even being near Him.” This is the mindset, this is the religious mindset in the first century. What's this woman risking by coming into that room? Do you know that by the law, they could just pelt her with rocks until she died. I mean, what's she thinking before she turns that doorknob, knowing that the majority of the room thinks she's less than human? There's a type of shame and a type of pain and a type of difficulty that will weigh so heavily upon us that we'll run to Him and throw ourselves at His mercy. And the great thing in Scripture is, anytime anyone's done that, Christ has extended freedom, mercy, grace. But it's the secret stuff that wore Christ out. It's why He constantly looked at the Pharisees and said, “You're like a bowl that's really clean on the outside, but on the inside it has like bran cereal stuck on the sides. It's just gross...You're like a tomb with flowers all around it, but inside you're just full of dead, rotting bones.” But anyone who would come clean, even a woman who was considered the lowest of lows society, Jesus was like, “No, no, no. Come to Me. Come to Me.” This is the good news of the gospel, that there's room at the cross.

So, I'd love to plead with you that if your marriage is in shambles, why don't you come to Christ? Come to us. Maybe we can help. If your soul is in turmoil, I'll throw out that invitation all of my years here. Man, pride is a powerful enemy. And most of you, no matter what's going on in you, will continue to look at your manicured lawn and your little soccer kids and your golden retriever and try to be your own god and fix what's ailing you and try to fill up your soul with other things. But my hope is that some of you would be tired enough. Let's pray. “Father, I know that there are men and women in here who are carrying some anxieties and some burdens. I know that there are some marriages in here that are just in shambles. I know that there are men and women in here with children who are wayward. I know there are those in here who severely struggle emotionally and mentally. I know there are those in here, Father, who just feel like they can't find you. Others still have a short circuit they can't even explain. Others of us are having a hard time forgiving our dad, a hard time forgetting their

mom, a hard time letting go of hurt and pain. And so I'm asking for Your help, Father. On several levels, I pray that Your Holy Spirit's power would move in here and swell in here and bring healing and wholeness. I pray that You would help the church to be the church in this place, where we could be honest about where we are and find grace and help in our time of need. I thank You for our recovery groups here at the Village. I thank You for all the men and women involved in recovery. I think they do what we should all be doing, just kind of walking in humility with one another, confessing and submitting weak areas of their lives to You and to others. I know what I'm preaching this morning and what I'm saying right now flies in the face of the facade of what we built out here away from the scary inner-city. But I pray that You would protect us, lead us, guide us and teach us how to walk in truth. Thank You that we're not alone. Father, I thank You for depth and vitality of life. I pray that You would lead us there. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen.”