

Sept 17, 2006 • "Ecclesiastes, Part 9" Matt Chandler

Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 7. I am a military brat, and so that means that my extended family outside of my mother and father and sisters, there was limited contact with the rest of our family. In fact, I would say probably once a year, growing up we made the trek. We were in California and they were in Missouri, but if you're from that state you call it Missouri-ah. You know, we would make the trek out there in the back woods and hang out. I didn't get to know them much. My dad's dad, I never met. He died before I was born. And my mom's dad, a Baptist preacher, died when I was young, like 3 years old. So, I never really got to meet him. I mean, I have these really vague memories of him, but never really got to meet him. And maybe it was watching movies or something else, but I always kind of wanted a grandfather, you know. I mean, like an old, surly, like killed commies kind of grand dad, you know. Are you tracking with me? The type that you could come over and he wouldn't even ask you what you wanted to drink, he'd just give you black coffee. If you asked for milk or sugar, he'd slap you. I just kind of wanted that. And then, we could sit down, we could drink coffee and he would tell me about the times he had to kill a commie with his bare hands. He had no other choice; there was no other option, that's how it had to happen. And he could impart to me all kinds of wisdom that's only gained with age. And I kind of always wanted that, and I never got it. Solomon, he's going to be a good replacement for us tonight, because here's what's going to happen. For the last six chapters, Solomon has said this, "I'm better than you. I mean, I am prettier than you, I am more powerful than you, I am more wealthy than you will ever be. I have bigger houses, bigger yards. You will never get what I have accumulated, never. I have built a house that took 14 years to build that took 153,000 men. I have ranches. I have people who cook my food, people who chew my food. I have 700 wives. I built each one of my wives a house. On top of those wives, I have 300 concubines. That's right, 1000 women! You will never get to the point I have gotten to. You will never be as successful, you will never be as powerful, you will never be as wealthy, you will never have more sex, you will never be more entertained, you will never throw bigger parties. I have done it all." In fact, he goes on to say, "You can do nothing on Earth that is not a repeat of what I have done, and not only a repeat, a junior varsity repeat. Not just a repeat, but a repeat that would make me go, 'Pshaw! Please.'" And if you'll remember back, he starts outlining his parties: 20,000 people, enough food to feed them all, enough wine that vineyards are getting shut down because of these seven day a week parties, 1000 women, he plants forests. Alright, you throw in a hackberry bush and a crape myrtle. He planted national parks. And now, he's this old man, and he picks up the phone and he calls us and says, "Why don't you come hang out with me?" "Seriously?" "Yeah, I'm old. I don't joke around. Come hang out with me." And so, we're freaking out because granddaddy called. He called and he wants to hang out with us. And now, he's growing older and he's getting closer to death. And for some reason, he called us. He's got all these grandchildren, but he calls us. And we walk in his front door, which by the way is huge. We walk in, all the stuff is covered in plastic. We walk in, and he just puts coffee in front of us. He doesn't ask, he just puts coffee in front of us, and we sit there in silence for a while and sip our coffee. And then he starts unpacking what he's learned. This man, who is beyond us, this man, who has everything, we can honestly say this, there's nothing that you're pursuing that he hasn't gotten the fullness of, nothing. So, for those of you who are trying to be successful, he's going, "Been there, done that. I got so successful, there was not another level of success to attain." For those of you who are pursuing sex, he's going, "Do I have to remind you about the 1000 women again? I think I don't." For those of you who are pursuing houses, cars, stuff, he's going, "Okay, I got it. I've got so much stuff, there wasn't

any more stuff to buy.” And now this man, who has chased everything, we're currently chasing, except he actually got them, he's now invited us over for coffee, and we're curling up on the couch and he wants to start unpacking wisdom for us.

And so, this is what we'll do for the next two weeks. Because chapter 7 is just this. He finally shuts down the whole “life is a treadmill, life stinks, everything is vanity,” and now he just starts going, “Okay, since you're young and I'm about to die, let me try to impart some things to you. And maybe you'll hear them and maybe you won't, but let me try. Maybe you'll think I'm a kooky old guy or maybe you'll hear me. Maybe you'll listen and take these things to heart and maybe you won't, but I have at least got to try.” And so, he kind of rambles, and it's like there are certain parts where he stops this line of thought and he goes and gets more coffee, and he comes back and goes, “and another thing...” But you'll see those parts. So, let's go. Ecclesiastes 7, starting in verse 1 as our grandfather starts to unpack for us life. “*A good name is better than precious ointment,...*” The funny thing here is, in the Hebrew, this is a joke. Because the word “name” and the word “ointment,” which means cologne basically, have a one letter difference between the two. So he's kind of playing this little word game here with the Hebrews who would be reading this. But here's what he says when all is said and done, “Listen, there are some things you can do to make yourself more attractive.” I mean, there were some things you could do back then, and there are certainly things you can do now. I mean, you can go to the gym and work out more, you can put on make-up, you can have surgery, you know take some fat off your bottom and put it on your nose and reshape it. You can get in a tanning bed, you can eat nothing but meat, you can eat leafy spinach (but you had better not!). Hey, isn't it ironic, irony of ironies, leafy spinach will kill you, alright. Let's move on. You've got all these things that you can do to make yourself more desirable. You can drive the right kind of car, you can put on the right kind of clothes. There are all these things you can do, all these ointments, all these colognes, but grandfather Solomon, sipping on his coffee, looking across from you says, “Who cares how good you smell if when your name is mentioned, everybody at the table rolls their eyes? Who cares how attractive and beautiful and right you look if on the inside you're so wrong that your name is synonymous with something you don't want it to be synonymous with?” And over a cup of coffee, granddaddy looks across the coffee table and he says, “Hey listen, in the end beauty is vain and sure you might want to tuck in your shirt. Sure can get your teeth whitened. Yellow's not that sexy. But in the end, you can do everything right externally, but as you get older, what people value is character. So, who cares if everything looks right on the outside for your life is two inches in depth?” The funny thing is, if you'll look at the generation that's older than you, the people who are 10-12 years older than you are, what is it you find valuable and admirable about their lives? Let me give you an example. I have a three-and-a-half year old precocious daughter, a ten month old son, and do you know what I value in older guys right now? Let me use Gilbert Montez as an example. This morning, I walk across from here to the Martin Building to check out the Kid's Village, and Gilbert Montez is sitting on this bench in there. And he's got two 22 year old daughters. One just got married and one's a junior now at UTA, and they're sitting on each side of him, touching him, talking to him. They love their daddy. And for me, I look at that and go, “That's what I want.” Like, have you ever come across someone who just has a deep soul? And you admire that and you want that, and you're going, “There is a depth to this person that I want.” That's what Solomon is trying to unpack for you. He's going, “Why are you spending all this time on externals and you spend no time on what's inside and what really matters?” Okay, I'm 32, which means I'm not horribly old, but I don't look at older dudes and I'm like, “Man, I hope that when I'm 52, I'm built like that. Look at that guy's abs. What is he, 50? I wish I had abs like that when I was 50.” Okay, it's just

a different value system. Or how about this, the older I get you know what I admire more and more and more? Courage. Like the courage to do the hard thing, the right thing that's the hard thing, even when there's nothing to gain from it but the right thing. So granddaddy says, "Who cares if you're bringing sexy back?"

He moves on then, and he's going to say something that's kind of shocking and something we've got to work through. Especially if you're in here tonight and you're a believer in Jesus, we've got to get into our hearts and into our heads. Because now he's going to move on and he's going to go, "Okay, what's inside is more important than what's on the outside. And now, look at what he says next, "*A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.*" So, our grandfather, this is a guy who's lived life deeply, over a cup of coffee has just said, "Why don't we quit worrying about the external so much, and why don't we start looking on the inside. What if instead of us looking the part, what if we start playing the part?" And then he moves on as this elderly man that's about to die. He says, "You know what's better than being born? Dying." And I think maybe this is one of those moments where you're like, "Cuckoo! Grandfather's lost his mind." But I think he's onto something. Okay, watch this. Birth is all about potential. Like my son, my daughter being born, I loved them in that moment. It's this magical, euphoric, joy-filled unbelievable moment, but I can't help even now...my three-and-a-half year old is going to be an artist. She's just very creative, very verbal. She's always pretending, you're this character, the dog is this character, a rock is this character. And that's kind of what she does all the day long. Reid just head butts stuff 'til he bleeds. So, when I hold my children, when I pray with my children, I can't help but dream for what their life is going to look like. Like, I've got these hopes and they don't revolve around them being athletes or anything like that, but I've got these hopes and dreams that they would know life deeply and they would know Jesus passionately and that I would never do anything to make them hate the church. So, I've got these dreams, and birth, it's about potential. But death, death for the believer is about fulfillment. It's like, in that moment, I've got all that Christ had for me, like all that He wanted me to know, all that He wanted me to experience, all that He wanted me to feel and know and do, that I am full, that I've got all that He wanted me to drink. And so, He pulls me out. And this is hard for people, and in it, we show how sinful we are. Because what we like to do is this, "Aw Chandler, you're 32. It would be a tragedy. You have a three-and-a-half year old daughter and a ten month old son, a young wife. That would be a tragedy if on the way home tonight, you died. How could you say that that's more of a cause for celebration than the birth of a baby?" Well okay, do I want to see my daughter get married? Do I want to stand up and watch her walk down with a kid that I hopefully like? Yeah, I really do. Do I want to watch my son and daughter have kids and get to play the role of grandparent? You know, the role where you can just keep feeding them candy corn and never spank them. I want that bad, alright. I want that so bad, just making my kids' lives a nightmare, alright. "Candy corn, no punishment, go!" I can't wait. I want it. I am looking forward to that day. Do I want to be 90 years old with Lauren on the back of a porch, one of my kid's porch, sipping coffee as we suck their resources out of them? Do I want that? Yeah, absolutely I want that. Do I want to grow old with Lauren? Absolutely, I do. But listen to me, she's not mine and neither are my kids. They belonged to the Father long before they belonged to me. They are nothing but on loan. And any other view than that is idolatry. I don't own anything.

Or how about this, how about we start saying really goofy trash and when stuff like that happens. How about all that I didn't get to do, how about we quit focusing on that and we focus on all that I did

get to do? If you stole my computer from me, we would hunt you down, but before that, if you clicked on Microsoft Word and you scrolled through my documents, you would find one in there called "Don't Cry For Me." And that document exists just in case I die. And what that is, is any time I have that moment, anytime there's that moment that just resonates with my soul, I go put a one sentence blurb in that document. It's about three and a half pages long now. So, it reads like this, "Don't cry for me, I've kissed a beautiful woman. (That's my wife by the way); Don't cry for me, I've been to India; Don't cry for me, I've been to China; Don't cry for me, I've laughed so hard I threw up; Don't cry for me, I've eaten a perfectly cooked fillet; Don't cry for me, I have great, deep friends; Don't cry for me, I've been called "Daddy"; Don't cry for me, I've been loved;" And the very last line of this document always reads the same, "Don't cry for me, I'm home." Now, what if instead of going, "Oh, he was robbed," what if we instead said, "Oh, all that he got to do! All that he got to feel and be and experience and drink." That's what makes us such blasphemers. That's why I just can't comprehend how God doesn't just kill all of us. Like okay, here's the one, I heard a pastor say this one time and he said it like this. You want to see how blasphemous we are? How about this, "On average, there are 400,000 flights that take-off every day. No one ever praises Jesus that they all land. But you watch one fall out of the sky, and watch us shake our fists at Him." And that's the same thing with death. So many of us view it as our enemy, and Solomon, sucking coffee, our grandfather, this wise beautiful man that's lived deeper than we'll ever live, looks across and says, "Death? Oh no, death is better than birth. Death is the real beginning. Death is the real adventure." Then he sips his coffee and chuckles.

And then he keeps talking. Let's look at what he says next. *"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart."* What will the living lay to heart? The house of mourning. So, here's what he says now. You're sucking on coffee, you're talking about how death is the fulfillment of all that we were created for, and then he moves on from that and goes, "On top of that, wise men walk into funerals and not only mourn, but use those moments to look at their own lives, to be introspective and to pay attention to where they currently stand with God and life." He says, "Listen, I love the house of feasting." He says, "I love to party, I love to be with friends and I love that moment where all the stars are lined up, but no one in that moment thinks deeply about life. No one's cutting into that perfectly cut fillet with a glass of merlot and going, "I wonder if I'm okay. I wonder if everything's alright between me and God. I wonder if I were to die right now, how things would play out." Nobody does that. They're just too busy laughing at exaggerated stories. And so, Solomon goes, "No, no, no, no. The house of mourning's better. You know why? Because it will make you think." The wise man, he walks into a funeral and not only does he mourn, he starts thinking, "Man, one day that's me. How do I want to be remembered?" And he begins to take stock in his life. So, grandfather Solomon sitting across from us, sucking on coffee, he says, "I've been to a lot of good parties, but it's at the funerals that I grew."

Now, he's going to move on. The next couple of verses read very similar. Verse 3, *"Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad."* He wants to stay on this idea of sorrow and grief and frustration and death being this place in which we see ourselves very clearly. Like, here would be the example that I would give you. Whatever your iniquity is, whatever your bent is towards, whatever you struggle with, in times of stress, in times of frustration, and in times of grief, those things will boil up to the surface, won't they? If you're an impatient person, you let stuff start going wrong and it rears its head in a moment, doesn't it? If you're angry, if your issue is lust, if your issue is violence, I mean, you name it, if you fill in the blank there, there is nothing that churns it to the surface

quicker than hardship, difficulty, pain and disappointment. And so in this text, Solomon is saying, "Listen, quit railing your fist at God when things go wrong because it might just be His very, very deep mercy towards you to let these things be revealed in you so they can be worked on. It's a bad thing when the doctor just starts treating pain, because it means they can't cure the disease. And so, Solomon's going, "You know, the thing about sorrow is it churns up all these things and we're forced to deal with them. We're forced to deal with them in such a way that maybe we can heal."

And then, look at his next line. He's going to start doing this "this is what a wise person does; this is what a fool does." Look at this, "*The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,...*" Okay, so let me try to explain this. Sorrow, grief, frustration, anger, pain, death, these are things God uses at times to grow us, to reveal the issues that we have, to churn those things to the surface so that we might do business with the things that we need to do business with. Without those things, maybe we would never see those things. And so, God sends frustration, sends grief, sends these things to churn up in us, to do surgery if you will, in us. And he says there's two options you can take: 1) you can head right into the house of mourning, where God has you. You can surround yourself with family and friends and people who will pray with you and walk with you and encourage you while you are being operated on by God Almighty. That's what the wise do. Look at the next line, "*but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*" Here's what he just said, "Sorrow, grief, pain, frustration, you name it, it comes for all of us. The wise surround themselves with godly men and women who will pray and protect and walk and encourage, but the fool goes to the strip club, the bar, the porn site or any other place he can go to numb his pain. He uses mirth to cover up his pain. And instead of running into Jesus and allowing Christ to operate and break down and work and grow and reveal and move through, instead they pretend there's no pain and they numb their reality with whatever vice you want to name." And it doesn't necessarily need to be, maybe this isn't a strip club crowd. Maybe they're not here tonight. Maybe it is though. Maybe it's not that at all. Maybe it's not drugs and alcohol at all. Maybe you're a relationship junky. Oh, I know this is a collegiate crowd. "I'm lonely." "Well, why are you lonely?" "Who cares? Man, woman." "Okay, well the issue is why are you trying to find fullness of life in something other than Jesus?" House of mirth. New gadgets, new clothes, this is the house of mirth. "Something's not right in me. Something's wrong. I don't feel right. Something's off. I'm not synced up. Let me numb it. Let's head to the house of mirth." And granddaddy Solomon takes a sip of his coffee and says, "Foolish. Foolish." And we'll go back to why that's so foolish. If you're treating pain and not the disease, the end is death.

Alright, so all this stuff is kind of heavy and our coffee's kind of gotten cold. And so, granddaddy doesn't say "excuse me," he just gets up and walks away. So, we're kind of wondering, "Is that it? Do we leave? Do we..." But then, he comes back in with the pot, and he heats our coffee up and he pours some more for himself and he brings out what looks like croissants or something. Then he rubs his old skin and he sits down, and you just kind of sit there in awkward silence for a few moments. And then, he starts up again. Look at what he says next, "*It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.*" So, we sat in granddaddy's living room and he starts unpacking all this kind of random stuff, like, "It's what's on the inside that matters not what's on the outside. You need to spend more time on your inside than you're spending on your outside." And then, he starts saying, "Hey listen, death isn't our great enemy. Death is the fulfillment of what we were created for. And then, he moves on from there says, "You know where I've learned the most? I've learned the most in sorrow and strife." And then, he comes back with a fresh cup of coffee and says, "You know what I'm

most grateful for? Of all that I've acquired, of all that I've built, of all that I've done, do you know what I'm most grateful in my life? Deep, real friends who are not afraid to walk into the throne room and say, 'There is a problem, and it's you.'" Sometimes sorrow, grief and pain are because the actions of others. Sometimes we don't do anything. Sometimes sorrow, grief, frustration and pain are self-inflicted. And Solomon says, "I am unbelievably grateful that I had the kind of men in my life that weren't afraid to walk up to my face and say, 'You're the issue. You're the problem. You're what's wrong.'"

And listen, I have never enjoyed that. In fact, I kind of have these five stages that I go through every time it happens. Like, somebody will come up and confront me over my sin, and the first thing that happens is just outright denial. "Uh uh!" That very quickly moves into, "Oh, I've got an issue. Why don't we talk about you for a little bit? Yeah, yeah yeah, I've got an issue. Let's talk about you though. Because it's funny that you've been noticing some things because I've been noticing some things." And I just want to get it off me, I want to get the light off of me. And just on a side note, if you run around with people who always have an enemy, the real issue is them. Like, if you are around people who if every time you ask them how they're doing and somebody did them wrong or somebody's doing that and these people over here and that group over there, the truth is they have real issues themselves, and the only way they can get away from that fact is to create other enemies. Because by doing that, they don't have to look at themselves. I know it, because it's stage three for me. I know it intimately well. And then I move on, and I hate stage four. Stage four is when I start knowing they're right, but I don't like it. So I revert back to stage three. "No, I've got issues. It ain't no lie. But I didn't kill anybody." And I immediately don't want to think about me; I want to think about them. And then, there's finally stage five, where I just go, "Sorry. How can I get better?" And guys like Patterson, Bleecker and Gilbert Montez, they've gone through the five steps like 400 times with me. Because when I came to the Village, I could be king here if I wanted to be. I don't want to be king. I want the table to be round; I want the org chart to be flat. I'm a moron. I'm like, "Why don't we try this?" "Because that's illegal." "It is?!?" Alright, you don't want me running this joint; you want me teaching the Bible, teaching the Bible and dreaming, and take like 5% of my ideas and maybe work on them.

You know what else I like about this text right here? He says, "Hey listen, praise Christ for great friends who aren't afraid to get in your face." And then, he points out this really weird thing about life. He said, "Morons, they always run in herds." It's what he says. I mean, you've got to know Hebrew to read it like that, but he basically says, "Hey, wise people, people who are wise, they will put men and women around them who are not afraid to engage them at a very deep level. Fools put people around them who will never say, 'They're right.' They will instead put people around them who sing songs to them and encourage sinful behavior and wickedness, sometimes all under the umbrella of spirituality." Are you trying to build those kind of relationships? Are you inviting that in your life? See, the thing I want to do is invite it. Like, we're at the end of the year right now, and I've sat down with three of my executive staff members here and I said, "Talk to me. How am I doing? Be honest with me. You've got to be honest. I can't grow if you don't tell me where I'm weak. Help me." And I want to invite that kind of feedback. And they'll give it to me, and I'll start the five steps. And then, I'll move on and I'll heal. I'll get better.

And he's got one more for us tonight. And then, he's going to get tired and need to take a nap, so we'll finish it up next week. There's a lot of wisdom in this next one. It's also one of the most painful to

hear. Verse 6, *“For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.”* Solomon, as he sips down the last bit of coffee, looks across the room right at our face and says, “Wise people don't laugh when they're on fire, they scream 'Oh my God, I'm on fire!!!’” It's what he says. He says, “You want to know a fool? A fool will sit there, burning alive going, 'Ha ha ha, what's up?’” “You're on fire.” “That's alright.” “What's that smell?” “It's my flesh.” Wise people, they don't giggle when they're on fire, they scream at the top of their lungs that they're on fire. And it's this one, more than anything else Solomon, our grandfather who has lived so deeply, wants to impart to us today. He's going, “Listen, quit giggling while your world burns down.” Okay, I think the most destructive force in the universe is pride. I do. I know some of you are like, “What about the atomic bomb?” Okay, but if that ever gets used, I can bet you that pride is somewhere in the ranks. Now, I want you to follow me here, because here's how I want to unpack this crackling pot, giggle thing. Do you know how many marriages could have been saved if early on, somebody would have screamed “fire” instead of giggling? So, what happens is, they grow apart and they grow apart and they grow apart and start smelling smoke. And they grow apart and they grow apart and they grow apart, and all of a sudden, this one's mind is wandering, this one's heart's wandering. There's coldness, but there's commitment. There's coldness, and then it's another step apart. And now, the flames poof up. And they're further apart and further apart. And the whole time, they pretend that everything's alright. The whole time they chuckle like everything's going well, and the whole thing is going up in smoke, burning right before their eyes. And no one wants to scream “fire.” Do you know how many people are constantly stuck in these devastating cycles of secret sin where they're being owned by their lust or these behavior patterns that they can't get out of. And they just hide it and giggle like nothing's wrong while all the while, their life, their world, their spirits are burning to the ground. And Solomon goes, “The wise scream out, 'I'm on fire!' they don't laugh. They don't laugh, they don't giggle, they don't pretend.” And listen, the thing that makes this so frustrating for me is that so much of this has crept into the church. Like, do you want to hear something that's really interesting about the Bible Belt? I keep running into people who love Jesus very much but don't really like the church at all. Like, we just moved into a new house, and I got to go across the street to meet some of our neighbors. And they just seemed to have a real vibrant spirituality. They had a real vibrant understanding of Jesus and who He was and what He's done for them, but they hadn't been to church in like five years. Do you know why? Because everybody's walking around on fire, pretending like they're the only ones in the world that have never been burned. Which is crazy because Jesus goes, “No, I've come for the burn victims. I didn't come for the well. I didn't come for the ones who haven't been burned. I've come for the ones who are currently being incinerated and for those who have had the flames put out and now want to be healers.” One of my favorite parts about us is we do some of this well. I mean, this is a shady place, seriously. Your purse should be between your legs, zipped up right now. And I like that we're that, but I still think that what even ends up happening when you create an environment where it's okay to not be okay, is that people still use that language to stay stuck in their sins. And so now, they've replaced this old religious language with new religious, bull-corn language. So, they mimic and mock the idea of really healing, all the while burning down. And Solomon goes, “Wise people, they don't giggle while they burn down, but fool does. The fool pretends that all is well despite the fact that the world's going up in smoke.”

So, Solomon puts his coffee cup down and gets four or five of his wives to come help get him up. And he hugs us and kisses our forehead, and he tells us to stick around, go for a swim or something in the pool, one of the many. But he just needs a little nap, then he'll get up and we'll finish our talk. And he

leaves the room, and all of sudden, it just goes really quiet. And we're left there with our thoughts, thoughts about, "Are we wise or are we fools? What do I care about? With the actions of my life, the money that I spend, the time that I spend, do I care more about what's going on outside of me or do I care what's going on inside of me?" I don't want to be remembered when I'm gone, when I die. What would happen if tonight's my night? I think I would sit on that couch and wonder if I'm numbing my pain. "Am I in pain? Am I numbing it? How am I numbing it?" I think for a while, I'd sit there holding my coffee cup, it would probably have proverbs on it. I would think about whether I was on fire or not. See, I don't think I'm on fire anymore. I think my eyebrows haven't grown back in yet and I can't move my left arm and my skin's all jacked up, but now I just want other people who are on fire to quit burning.

I made this promise to myself a long time ago when it started to become evident that I was going to become a preacher. Some of my friends still think it's funny that I'm up here. I didn't ever want to leave you ambiguously hanging in religious language. Like the thing I don't want to do tonight is, I don't want to just now say "okay" and pray and dismiss you. And then over coffee, you're like, "I don't know. Funerals and fire. I don't know. I think maybe I'm burning, but I don't know. Okay, I liked it, but I don't..." Alright, so here's the truth. I think you know if you're on fire. I do. I think you know. I think that maybe in this moment, right here is probably when you know the most clear. Are you being owned by something? Is something owning you? Are things falling apart in your world? Are things burning down? I mean, you recognize smoke in your own life, I promise you. Okay, so how do we put out the flames? How do we start healing? How do we get our eyebrows back? Man, there's so many different ways, to be honest with you. I mean, I know in my own journey, I'm a big fan of Celebrate Recovery. I'm just a big fan of somebody walking me through confession and dealing with and making right relationships. I'm just a big fan of that. I'm not telling you it's fun or pleasant. I don't think I enjoyed any part of it, either time. But on the other side, things started clicking for me. I started seeing a little bit better. I'm a big fan of biblical counseling, not a psychologist who goes to church. I do not want to lay on a couch, and I don't want to talk about my dad. It's not what I want. But I do want somebody to open up the truth of the word of God and say, "Well, here's the problem, idolatry. This is what the Scriptures say. This is the way you're living. This is the issue." Because I found my own soul to be this tangled mess of webs. So, what would happen to me and maybe you can relate, is I would spend years thinking I was making progress through the jungle of my own soul. And after years, I would come back to the wreck that was my life. I'd be like, "Trash! I just walked in a huge circle." So, I need someone with a better compass than mine. So, I got involved in CR, I started going to a biblical counseling center in Abilene, and as soon as I got here, Jerry Meade, Michael Snetzer, several of our guys here at the Center for Christian Counseling right down the road from here. But then, there's other places too, you know. We've got this grief recovery group that meets because sometimes you need to sit in a room with other people who have felt pain as deep as you have. And then, there's another group of women and men who get together who have experienced a lot of pain and hurt and wounds over an abortion, either guys who have paid for and pushed for that and now regret it or women who just emotionally and physically are just so wounded. And then there's one for ladies who have miscarried. Another for women who have trouble conceiving. And on and on I could go. I mean, we just pray and cry and want so badly for this to be a place of healing and healers. It's dangerous work. So okay, I haven't left you in ambiguous church land. I've said okay, you've got to move. You've got to do something. You've got to take the step. You've got to decide with that coffee cup in your hand, sitting on a plastic covered couch in the living room of the smartest man that's ever lived.

You've got to decide. Now will you listen to your grandpa or will you not? He's old and he's crazy and he's definitely eccentric, but he knows exactly what he's talking about.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for these men and women and a chance to come together on a rainy Sunday night to open up the Scriptures and talk about You. I thank You for Solomon, who gently sits across the living room and just unpacks what he's learned. I pray that You'd speak to the deep places in our hearts tonight and that we might be able to get up out of these seats and know what steps that need to be made. I thank You that You've come to put out the fire, not start it. And I thank You that You've called the church to be a place where it's okay to scream "fire" and not be judged. I pray that we might be that kind of place. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."