

## Exodus: Work and Rest

### Matt Chandler

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in, and, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

Good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. If you're here and you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. As I always say, I want you to see that I'm not making anything up here. Once you have that, we're going to be in Exodus, chapter 31. I'm going to go back and cover some things we didn't cover last week in chapter 30, but our primary text, the place we're going to camp out, is there in Exodus 31.

I want to recap where we've been the last few weeks, because one of the reasons I was really eager to get to the spring... We started studying Exodus in August. One of the reasons I got really excited to get here is I knew we were going to go on this stretch where the theme was about the presence and power of God in our lives. So that's where we've been. In fact, the thrust and theme of the last four weeks has been that we have available to us the presence and power of God in our lives.

It started with the tabernacle, the idea that God is going to tabernacle among his people, that he's going to set up a tent. He will live among, be among, his people. That's what the tabernacle is. Then we saw that Jesus is the fulfillment of the picture of the tabernacle, so that as Christians, the Holy Spirit inside of us is the Spirit of Christ dwelling among us and us being with the one primary need we have.

You've come in here today, and I don't know what you've identified as your greatest need, but the Bible says your greatest need is the presence of God. All that you're really after in life that is good, right, and beautiful is found in the presence of God. That is your number-one need. The tabernacle was this evidence that God wanted to dwell and be among us, which is good news. God will never dispel us again or shove us out again. We will be and live with our God.

Then we moved on last weekend to talk about the high priest and the garments of the high priest and how they represented an ideal high priest that we fall short of, and then we saw how Jesus was the fulfillment of that and we now reap the benefits of the coming of Christ. So much so that Moses and Aaron and the people of Israel would look at where we are right now with such jealousy for what we get.

How did *they* get into the presence and power of God? There's a sacrificial system, there are garments, there's blood, there's sacrifice, and even then there's great trepidation into the presence and power of God. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us making available the presence and power of God anytime we want it. Moses, Aaron, the Levitical priesthood, the people of Israel would have to look at us now and go, "Man! That's amazing."

What's crazy is we're looking back at *this* and going, "That's incredible," and they would be looking at us and going, "Oh, please." It's like a seventh-grade track meet. No offense if you're a seventh-grade track athlete. I'm just saying that having to sit there for 5 hours to watch 37 seconds can be testing of our affection and love for you as our child, and yet we stay. We take the sunburn and beating.

We talked last week about how the indwelling of the Holy Spirit inside of the Christian all the more allows us to walk in power and in the presence of God. We talked about what it means to be a kingdom of priests, because that's how the Lord addresses us: as a kingdom of priests. So what does that look like? We looked at the lampstand and the altar of incense, which are both always going, and we said in that lampstand, what it means to be a kingdom of priests is we embrace ordinary life and the power of God transforming us in ordinary life.

We never despise the ordinary. You and I live in a day and age where if it's not extraordinary and big and loud and fast and famous it's discarded, but so much of what God is going to accomplish in your life is going to take place quietly over a long period of time with you just being faithful where you are. We should never despise that. You should just never despise normalcy. God is at work in normalcy. The light of Christ burning inside of us is one of the ways we live as a kingdom of priests in this world.

We're faithful to our wives today. Do you know why? Because 60 years of that means we've been faithful for a lifetime, and we're faithful to our husbands today because 60 years of that is faithfulness for a lifetime. As good a parent as we know how to be today... Because that's all we can do, right? We're just trusting that God is at work in the ordinary, shaping and doing something over decades that we'll reap the benefit of in 40 years and 50 years, but in the now it feels stressful and it can be exhausting and it can feel like, "Gosh, am I going to make it?"

I'm saying you've been given mercy and power to make it. Everyday, ordinary faithfulness. Yet on the other end of the priestly garments is the idea of this alter of incense that's always burning. For both of these, the command is they should never go out. The light should always be on in God's house and incense should always be rising up to the throne, and it represents the prayers of the saints. You and I, as Christians, live in the balance of embracing the ordinary while praying for breakthrough.

We embrace the ordinary. Do you know what Monday is going to be? It's going to be Monday. That's my expectation: Monday is going to be Monday. Do you know what today is? It's Palm Sunday. I've prepared all week. I'm prayed up. I've come in here, and I know that more than likely we're going to hear the Word and just slightly be shaped by the Spirit of God, and yet that has not stopped me from praying and pleading all week long for something more than that.

I want to embrace the ordinary and pray for breakthrough. If you're sick in here, I just want you to know I've prayed that while we sit here and study Exodus your disease just goes away. I've asked for that, and I'm expecting, and I'm holding all that loosely, because he's God and I make a crummy one. This is the tension you and I live in: loving the ordinary, begging for the extraordinary. We just do that day after day, month after month, year after year for a lifetime.

What's going to happen is God is going to shape us in the ordinary, and then there are going to be these moments where he breaks through and it blows our minds and fuels gladness in the ordinary and has us pleading all the more for the extraordinary.

This is the rhythm of the Christian life. If you get too far over into the ordinary without expectation of the extraordinary, you get crusty. If you're always over *here*, you're going to burn out, and you despise the ordinary means of God's grace. That's not a good thing.

Jesus' ministry was small, and it looked on a global stage to be insignificant, and yet here we are 2,000 years later, a global church. So don't despise the ordinary, but plead with God for the extraordinary. I want us to walk in this tension. So that's what we covered last week. What follows now after the altar of incense is what looks like odds and ends. It looks like, "I don't know where to place this. Let me just put it *here*." Yet I think what we're seeing is yet again an invitation into a life marked by the presence and power of God.

I want to walk through chapter 30 with you before we get to our primary text. After the altar of incense, you get the command for a census tax. Count the people. Specifically, count males over the age of 20. Now a census in the ancient world can only be taken for two reasons. First, to count your numbers for war or, secondly, to count your numbers for taxation.

The people of Israel had no right to do either. At this point, they are under a theocracy. God is their King. He's speaking through Moses, but it is not Moses' authority but God's authority they're operating on. They don't go to war unless God unleashes them to make war, and they don't tax the people other than the temple and tabernacle taxes that have already been implemented.

What you see in this text is this really strange, atoning payment to the temple for any census the people of Israel will take. We're going to see throughout the rest of the Pentateuch... You get into Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and you're going to see multiple censuses. The Lord is going to make war against the people of Canaan. He has given them 400 years to repent, to turn away from sheer brutality and grotesque child sacrifice.

I mean, you name it. The kind of wickedness in Canaan would go beyond what we could handle in our heads and hearts, so God is going to destroy them. He is going to make war. So they're going to take census on multiple occasions, and every time they take a census, the men over the age of 20 would pay a temple tax. Here's what's happening. It's a weird process, but I think there's something there that we need to tap into.

The drift of the human heart is never... Your heart, my heart. I'm not being ambiguous. The drift of your and my heart is never toward presence and power. It is always toward self-reliance. *Always*. If you just let go, if you un-anchor, you will not drift toward the presence and power of God. You *will* drift toward your own self-reliance. You're enough. You can make it happen. You can get it done. This is the state of your heart. You couldn't argue against that.

Your drift will always be toward you're enough. You can't help it. We're born broken, bent toward self-reliance. What happens here is God is going to go, "You cannot afford to be self-reliant. It'll be by *my* power that we drive out these people. It'll be by *my* power that we have the funds. It'll be by *my* power that we get things done. It

will not be by *your* power.” In a small way, every census is a reminder of, “We won’t be enough; God will take care of our fights. We won’t make ends meet; God will make ends meet.”

There’s this weird practice of opening up the wallet and giving a half shekel, which was next to nothing, just as a symbolic reminder against self-reliance and on, leaning into the presence and power of God. How did they get out of Egypt? By making war? No. By *God* making war. How are they being now established now that they’re out of bondage? Is it through the work of their own hands? No. It’s through the work of the hands of God.

So the temple tax is about, “Hey, be reminded I’ve got you.” Then after that in verses 11-16, you have the bronze basin in verses 17-21. Here’s what it is. It’s important to know that what’s happening in all of these odds and ends is a simple message made clear via ritual and object. The bronze basin is there so that Aaron and the high priest... Every time they went into the presence and power of God they would wash their hands and feet. It’s a reminder.

Here’s once again where they would be jealous of us. Even though they had been consecrated and washed with water before, they’re dirty again, so they would need to symbolically cleanse themselves again before they entered into the presence and power of God. But you and I have not been washed with water. We’ve been washed with the blood of Christ, which means we will not get dirty again. That’s unbelievable.

We're not putting on 400 pounds of high priestly garments. We're clothed in the righteousness of Christ. This is where Aaron, who is putting on this uniform again, had to look at us and go, "Are you serious? Clothed in the righteousness of Christ? I have bells on the bottom of my skirt hoping I don't get lit up in there." But not us. Clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

So the bronze basin is there to communicate, just like the census tax, "God is holy, we are not, but God has made a way. God is pure, we are dirty, but God has made a way." That's the imagery. That's what's supposed to be going on to the heart of the high priest, to the heart of the Levitical priest, to the heart of the people. When they watch the priest wash their hands and feet, it's this ritual, this picture of, "God is holy, we are not, but God has made a way," just like the census tax.

Then after that you had the anointing oil and incense, and don't think I don't know you Young Living essential oil people are freaking out right now, going, "Preach that, brother!" What happens now is two things. First, they're all symbolically doing the same thing. When we talk about the anointing oil, we're talking about cleanliness and protection against defilement.

So not only did the high priest and the Levitical priest need to cover themselves in oil before they walked into the presence and power of God, but all of the instruments and the altars and everything had to be covered in anointing oil, and then you had the altar of incense. Keep in mind that the altar of incense was always supposed to be burning.



So how do you get this incense? Well, there were four things that had to be gathered up from four separate sources and mixed together to make incense, and you had better be making a lot of it, because God had said, “Don’t let this go off. This thing needs to be lit in the evening. It needs to be lit in the morning. Incense should always be flowing up from this altar.”

They had three plants they had to find and scrape bark, and they had to find this clam mollusk thing that was only in the Red Sea and cut out a piece of that, and they had to mix it all together, and they had to make a lot of it in order for it to keep burning. Then you have artists who are supposed to use their gifts and abilities and talents to make all of this happen.

What you get is this kind of frenetic religious activity that’s meant to communicate to the people of God that God is holy, they are not, but God has made a way; that God wants to tabernacle with his people. He wants to forgive their sins. He wants to look past it and give them what their heart most desperately needs: himself. Yet because our hearts, your heart and my heart, drift toward self-reliance and not presence and power, things like this almost always take on a type of legalistic bent.

Here’s what’s crazy. I want you to hear me say this. There is no action that is legalistic in and of itself. There is only a heart that has, in a spirit of self-reliance, made an act salvific and not a symbol or an opportunity to enjoy its privilege. Maybe I can say it

this way. Legalism is taking what's good and right and beautiful and using it to exalt one's self and judge others. That's legalism.

There is no act that you can name that is legalistic in and of itself. Your heart is what makes an act legalistic. If somebody is like, "Hey, you should read the Bible; you should pray," you can't be like, "That's legalistic!" No, you can approach that legalistically, but the action itself isn't legalistic. It's the heart that takes... What is that? It's self-reliance. "I can do. I'm strong enough. I make my own way." It's an exaltation of self in order to judge others.

Think how brain-broken we are that something like service can become legalistic. "I'm going to serve others. Am I the only one around here serving people? Do you know what's wrong with you folks? You don't serve. You should serve." It's this crazy legalism built around serving people. Something is wrong. We can take anything and champion it and make others feel small and exalt ourselves with it.

So God, knowing the tendency of the human heart is self-reliance not presence and power, puts some brakes on the drift. That's our text for today. Look at Exodus 31. We're going to pick it up in verse 12. **"And the Lord said to Moses, 'You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all...'"** Now listen. If you write in your Bible, that's a pretty significant piece right there.

We've had a lot of laws, a lot of things concerning the tabernacle, a lot of stuff concerning the presence and power of God, and what God just said to Moses is,

“Teach the people of Israel *this*. Above all, so more important than anything else I’ve said, is *this*.” (What he’s about to say.) That’s a pretty significant moment.

**“Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.”** What does it say about the nature and character of God that above all he says, “Take a day off”? Think about that for a second. You have this frenetic activity, and then he goes, “Moses, you have to tell them above everything else I’ve just said they need to...” He’s very serious, as you’re about to see. This thing is going to escalate.

“You need to take a day off and do nothing. You need to rest. Stop your toil, stop your busyness, and remember that I the Lord am your God.” When I said it escalates... Look at verse 14. **“You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death.”** That took a hard turn. Isn’t that a weird...? Like, “You’re going to take a day off or I’ll kill you.” Something is going on here that’s very, very serious to the heart of God.

How serious is this moment of rest to the Lord that the punishment for being disobedient is death? Think about how counterintuitive that is for us as Westerners. Which one of you has a boss who goes, “Hey, if I see you on Sunday, you’re gone”? No, no. We get rewarded for busyness and long hours and crazy activity. That’s championed to the detriment of our souls.

God says, “Because you have a bent toward self-reliance and are prone to forget my goodness and grace, you’re going to take a day a week and stop everything, and you’re

going to remember that I am the one who has delivered you. I am the one who fights for you. I am the one who provides for you, and I am who I am.” He institutes the Sabbath.

What’s interesting to note about the Sabbath here is what God is doing is creating a nation that sits in the middle of the other great empires, and he’s showing the world what it looks like to belong to the Creator. What he’s doing is not only accomplishing in the hearts of his people sanctification and a break toward leaning and drifting toward self-reliance, but he’s revealing to the other nations that he is the great provider and protector by letting his people just rest.

Do you want to know just how insidious the heart of man is? The heart of man is so insidious that he even takes the brakes and makes it self-reliant. In Luke, chapter 13, starting in verse 10, Jesus walks into a synagogue, and we’ll pick up the story from there.

**“Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your disability.’ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.”**

That’s church. Is that not church? Are you kidding me? If we just gathered in here, and I’m preaching through the book of Exodus, and somebody who had been sick

for 18 years, like bent-over sick, all of a sudden just straightens up and is like, “Wow!” you would be like, “Hey, shut up, Matt. Let’s sing. We’ve got it...Exodus. But look at that. That’s amazing! That’s church.”

A woman with a disabled spirit comes in. Her back is broken because of this demonic oppression, and Jesus sees it, walks over, and says, “Not anymore.” He loosens the bonds of demonic oppression, and she straightens up and glorifies God. Remember, the Sabbath is there to remind us of the power and presence of God and to woo us away from self-reliance and into dependence on that power and presence. Let me show you what happens. She’s glorifying God. The synagogue is going nuts.

Verse 14: **“But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, ‘There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.’”** So this woman has been healed, and he’s like, “Hold on, guys, for a second. Everybody calm down. Love that that has happened, Betty. That’s legit. We’ve been asking for that.

But here’s the thing. If you’re sick in here, I don’t want you to look at this woman now and rejoice. This is Saturday. We don’t heal on Saturday. We try to concentrate on the Lord and glorify God on Saturdays. We don’t like to heal on Saturday. So if you’ll come back Monday through Friday, we’ll see if maybe we’ll do that then.” Seriously. What has happened to this man? There are people in the Bible who deserve beatings. This is one of those men. So Jesus gives him one.

**“Then the Lord answered him, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?’ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame...”** In the NIV it says *humiliated*. **“...and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.”**

If you're a person in this synagogue and you see someone miraculously healed... You see the power of God working in that way, and you start to get really excited about what God might do for you and how he might work in your life, and somebody gets up and crushes that and says, “Oh, you know what? That's not what we do here. We're not about those things. God said...” The argument from the high priest is a twisted biblical argument. He's using the Bible to justify that Christ can't do this. That's crazy. He's like, “Well, it's the Sabbath.”

Jesus rebukes him and says, “You hypocrite! Don't you untie your ox? Don't you untie your donkey and walk it over to be watered? If you can untie your donkey or ox, then certainly I can loose the bonds of this daughter of Abraham.” And the people rejoiced and exploded in gratitude. The high priest missed the point, as we so often do. Things that were meant to be life giving and to orient us around the presence and power of God are replaced with a rigid religiosity that's emptied of power, and we begin to make weak, foolish arguments like this.

Here's what I want to answer in our remaining 15 minutes together. Since the Sabbath is something instituted by God and, as we clearly read, is a covenant with his people forever, does that mean you and I need to have one day a week that's set aside, like old-school blue law... If you're under the age of 30, *blue law* was it used to be illegal for businesses to be open on Sunday. That's not on your radar, but I remember when it actually happened, where they repealed the blue laws.

Should we have a Sabbath day on which we do nothing but think about the Lord and rest in the Lord? Maybe, but not necessarily. Here's what I mean by that. In the same way that Jesus fulfills what's happening in the purpose of the tabernacle and fulfills the role of the high priest, so Jesus Christ *is* our Sabbath rest. It's not confined to a day; it's an ever-present reality.

So once again, like the tabernacle is kind of cool but Jesus so blows it away, and the high priest was so cool and yet Jesus blows it away, so Sabbath and the idea of one day on which we can orient our hearts around the grace and mercy of God is a shadow of what Christ has brought to bear on our lives. It's another reason that Moses and Aaron, the Levitical priests, and all of Israel would look at us and go, "Man, that's amazing! This is weak what we have here. What you guys have is incredible."

We don't wait for a day. The rest that is found in God is always available to us. We're going to have some real talk here just as a family. Life is not going to slow down. I'm kind of at the fulcrum point of life. I'm 42. I have a teenage daughter, an 11-year-old

son, and a soon-to-be 8-year-old daughter, and the error I could make is, “Okay, let me just get through this season and it’ll be awesome.”

But I know empty-nesters now, and they’re taking care of their parents and are still worried about their kids. What’s coming into view is the chaos of our lives is not slowing down anytime soon. Don’t you already get a sense of this? Don’t you already start to go, “If I could just get through this season, if I could just tie off this project, if I could just get this done,” and then you get it done, and there’s a whole other season waiting for you on the other side.

You’re like, “I can’t wait. I have this one day off. I can’t wait to get to that one day. I’m going to breathe out on that day.” The universe doesn’t care that it’s your breathe-out day. Do you think the world is like, “Oh, you know what? Let’s just cancel everything because this sister needs to breathe out”? Nobody cares. It’s wave after wave after wave, and sometimes it feels like we’re not going to make it. It’s why it’s such good news that Jesus is our Sabbath rest in the midst of the chaos of life.

Most of my friends have four kids, so anytime I talk about the stressors of having three, I feel like they roll their eyes at me, but Saturday is a total “divide and conquer” day. Like, I need a driver. Lauren and I are like, “Okay, I’m taking Reid to football. Okay, I’m taking Audrey to a race. Call your parents about Norah.” Except apparently 6,000 kids were born in this month who are around my daughter’s age. I should have bought stock in Target for the sheer volume of birthday parties this month I’ve had to shuffle my 7-year-old to. It’s like every 20 minutes a new one starts.



That's probably what we could do with her on Saturday, just drop her off and have one of *those* parents take her to the next birthday, find *that* parent, take her to the next birthday, and take her to the next. We're just birthday partied out. It's just chaos. I kissed my wife goodbye Saturday morning. She sat by me in the 5:00 last night, I saw her when I got home at 9:00, and then we went to bed. I got up at 7:00 this morning. I came up here. She didn't take the trailer off the truck, so she could reload it and head to a race in Denton with my 7-year-old this morning.

I'm going to get done here, swing by Chipotle, where I've already put in an online order, and run home. We're going to scarf that mug down, get in the car, and drive out to what's called a *play day* to watch my 7-year-old ride a horse around some barrels and poles. You know, don't you? I mean, what have I described except most of our lives? And do you know what happens? It starts all over again on Monday.

The good news here is that Jesus is our Sabbath rest, that you and I have the opportunity to walk in centeredness, presence, and power anytime we choose to enter into the privilege of that. No one was more centered than Jesus Christ. In fact, one of my favorite stories about Jesus... He's walking through the synagogue, and there are hundreds of people around him, and he stopped and said, "Who touched me?" His disciples are like, "Everyone. Like, 400 people did, Jesus. Why?"

He's like, "No, no. I felt power leave me. Someone touched me who had a need, who was desperate." Then this woman who had been sick for decades knew it was her and said, "I did, Lord." Then there's this beautiful conversation around her healing. He was centered. He was aware of what was going on in that given moment. So what I

want to do with our last 10 minutes together is be really, really practical about how we can step into the privilege of his presence and power every day at any time.

John Calvin talked about something called *rule of life*. Rule of life is kind of looking at the broad spectrum of our lives and considering years, months, weeks, and days, and then filling those natural transitions and seasons with things that orient or re-center the heart around the presence and power of God, acknowledging that our drift will not be toward those things but self-reliance.

What I thought we'd do is just talk through a rule of life, and really the only one I know is mine, so I want to walk through my rule of life. I need you to hear me say this. All that I'm about to describe to you is inconsistent and messy, so just breathe out. The next book I'm going to write is going to be called *Inconsistent and Messy: A Guide to Christian Living*. I want to walk through my rule of life. I'm going to start with day, and I'll make my way through year.

Here's the great thing. All that I'm about to cover... None of it justifies us. You spending time in the Word orienting like this is about you enjoying the privilege of power and presence. It's not about salvation. You've been covered in the righteousness of Christ, but you can walk in greater power, a greater awareness of his presence, and be a more centered, joy-filled person even in the midst of trial. So let's walk through rule of life.

Here's my rule of life for a day, inconsistently and with a lot of mess. I try to get up about 5:00 to 5:15 every morning, Monday through Friday, and I want to spend an

hour in the Bible and with my journal. The reason I'm up at 5:00 and not 6:00 is my two littles get up at 6:00, and I am not the personality type who can continue to read, think, or write when there are two small children slurping cereal on both my sides.

Maybe you can handle that. It just does something weird to my soul, so I have to shut everything down and just enter that space with them until they learn to eat like human beings. When they get up at 6:00, I close everything down, and then I just start to help. I help them get their bowls and then help them remember to put them in the dishwasher and that their mom is not their servant. Then I pour a cup of coffee for Lauren and get Lauren, and then Lauren comes and joins us.

Then we wake up Audrey, and that's a process. If you have a 14-year-old, they don't pop right up and go, "Yay! It's a new day." So we get her dressed, and then about that time, usually, I have to head off to my first meeting. I use the five minutes in my truck to the office, to the breakfast, to the elder meeting, wherever I'm going, to just pray through what I have. I just pray through my calendar. I just want to ask the Lord to bless those moments I have that day. I want to honor the Lord. I want to be mindful of his presence and power.

When I meet with the elders, I'm asking for supernatural wisdom. When I'm meeting with a member of the church, I want to ask for words that encourage and build them up or the courage to point out some foolishness they've given themselves over to, but even then I want to be kind and compassionate. I'm just praying through my calendar.

Then I want to build in natural buffers as best I can so that my day doesn't cascade. I'm looking for natural transitions in which to reorient my heart around who God is and what he has accomplished for me in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What that means is I want to create a 10-minute gap between meetings or tasks where I can stop, pray about that task, orient my heart around my need for God *in* that task, and then enter into it.

Then right before I leave for lunch, I read a prayer out of *The Valley of Vision*. It's an old book of Puritan prayers. We read it a lot here. It's a beautiful resource for guided prayer. So I read a prayer, and then I head to lunch. On my drive to lunch I'm praying for who I'm having lunch with. I'm asking for wisdom and discernment, and then on the way back from lunch I'm praying about what I have next. I'm praying about what just happened at that lunch.

At the end of the day, before I leave my office, I want to take stock of my heart. I'm an achiever, which means I can get really frustrated if I didn't get done all that I wanted to get done that day, which is, by the way, every day of my life, I think. I don't want to carry that frustration home with me, so I just want to remind myself that God is God and I am not and I'm leaving all this here and I'm not going home to work another six hours on it. I'm going to leave it right here, and the Lord has it while I eat and sleep and fulfill my obligations as husband and father.

Then I get in the truck, and one of the more important drives I ever make is that drive home, because I need to shift my mind and heart into second-shift mode. In my stage of life, I have no idea what I'm walking into. None. I could walk in the door to

a waft of dinner being cooked and the children doing a little devotional at the table and the house is clean or I could walk in and something could be on fire and Lauren could look at me like I've done something wrong against her and her entire lineage and we could have lost a kid on the trails.

I have no idea what I'm walking into, so I want to stop for a second, breathe out, and remind myself that I get the distinct privilege of loving Lauren Chandler, Audrey, Reid, and Norah and that this is a gift that has been given to *me*. Not any other man...to *me*. I get the privilege of walking in, and if crap is burning and an animal is missing and we can't find Norah, I get to step into that space and just go, "How can I help you, Boo? What's the priority? The dog is not the priority, baby. It's Norah, our child, who's lost on the trails."

Listen. I'm most tired and most self-reliant starting around 6:00. I just am. I am such a selfish person starting at about 6:00 at night. I've been up since 5:00. I've been grinding all day, and when I'm grinding, I don't have view that anyone else is. Right? Isn't that a weird thing? Like, when I'm grinding, it's out of my head that Lauren is doing the same thing at home. So I just need to reorient my heart before I walk in the door or I'm going to sin against my wife and sin against God.

Then we're going to have dinner as often as we can together as a family. Again, this is inconsistent and messy. As often as we can, we're going to gather, and we're going to pray for our meal, which orients our hearts around God's provision for us, and then we're going to play the high/low game. It's one of my favorite things we do as a

family. My littlest, my 7-year-old, is actually the high/low police. She's going to always go, "High/lows. You start." I'm like, "You're not the boss. I'll start."

What that is is, "Hey, what was your favorite part of the day, and what was your least favorite part of the day?" If you have optimist children... I have two optimists and one who's not. They're like, "There wasn't a low today." I'm like, "No, no. What's your least favorite awesome moment then? That's not how this game works. What's your least favorite good thing?" We want to just celebrate the goodness and grace of God. We're going to pray about the things, or if it's a significant low we want to stop and pray and minister to one another in that.

Then we're going to start the bedtime process, which is where I need the strength of the Holy Spirit of God unlike any other domain in which I operate. Like, "How can you be that thirsty at 9:00 at night? I don't understand what's driving this..."

"I can't sleep."

"We're not in the desert. Get back in your bed."

It's prayers, and it's snuggles. Then I go down, and Lauren and I catch up, and then I get in bed, and here's what I do. I want to lie in bed at night and recount... This takes five minutes. By the way, everything I'm talking about here is two minutes here, a minute here, three minutes.

I don't care if you're the president and CEO of "Giga-mega Industries." You have a drive to work. You have two minutes before lunch. You have a minute and a half on

your way. You have all this space. This doesn't require a seminary degree and nothing to do but study the Bible. This is presence and power made available to you.

I want to lie in bed at night and recount how God has heard my prayers and answered them, and then I want to remind myself as I drift off to sleep that none of my behavior that day affected God's love for me. The reason I'm saying *inconsistent and messy*... If I go out with my crew and I don't get in until midnight, then the godliest thing I know to do is to sleep until 7:00 and not get up at 5:00.

I might have just blown your mind. You're like, "I can't believe he said that. What is more godly than getting up early and getting in the Word?" Well, according to the angel who spoke to Elijah, eating a good meal and getting some sleep. I am a terrible human being if I am exhausted and starving. I am so in my flesh if I'm exhausted and starving. So sometimes the godliest thing you can do is get some rest and eat something.

If I forgot *The Valley of Vision*, if I didn't get the chance to do that before lunch, or I didn't do some other things or we didn't high/low at dinner, I'm not going to lie in bed at night and go, "I'm so sorry, God. Please! I'm so sorry." God's affections haven't been shaped like that. I'm cloaked in the righteousness of Christ. What I missed out on is the privilege to walk all the more in that power and presence. His affection for me hasn't been affected. My awareness of that affection was affected. That's why I'm telling you this is an invitation into privilege. It's not punitive and it's not law.

Then on the weeks, my family worships at The Village Church every week. Last night we sat right here in these seats. I sit with my family at the 5:00 on Saturday nights. We sat right there. This is something we do. We believe God supernaturally shapes us in the gathering of the saints and commitment to an imperfect group of people. We feel most comfortable here *because* of the imperfection of this place.

If you're new, we'll let you down soon. Okay? You're like, "This place is great." Give us time. Just give us a little bit of time. You're just new to the family. We have weird uncles here just like you do in *your* family. So we're going to be serious about that. We're committed to The Village Church. We're committed financially. We're committed in gifts. We're committed in energy, thought, prayer, life. We're committed. We're going to worship weekly.

Every Wednesday, I fast from breakfast and lunch, and my metabolism is still up there, so when I get really hungry on Wednesday it's a reminder to me that I have a hunger and a desire that's greater than that desire. It just for a second reorients me. It's not legalistic. It reorients my heart, and the moment it doesn't do that I'm not going to do it anymore.

That is weekly. We try to have a family devotional every week. It's inconsistent and messy. Again, I just want to let you breathe a little bit as you cloak yourself in the righteousness of Christ and take advantage of the privilege of power and presence that's made available to you.



Then every month I have something called “The Day.” It’s a day that I don’t turn on my phone. I don’t open up my computer. I take my Bible and my journal and just try to press into the Lord all day. As romantic as that sounds, there is no day that I do that’s more difficult for me than that. It’s like 11:00, and I’ve prayed for everyone, including every country I can think of, and I’m like, “Okay, what are we doing the rest of the day, Lord?” Waiting on the Lord...

I wish I could tell you that on the day every once in a while an angel shows up and is like, “Hey, this way. Jesus wanted me to tell you some stuff.” That hasn’t happened. It’s exhausting to me. Again, I’m an achiever. My inner persister-achiever is just so stressed out. “I want to *do* something. Let me do something for you, Lord.” He’s like, “No, no. You need *me*. You don’t need to do anything. *I’m* doing stuff. I’m just using you, dummy. Get over here. What you need is me.”

Over the last few years, God has used that to profoundly shape me, but every time I see it on the calendar there’s this real mixture of “Oh.” I know it’s good for the heart, and I know it’s going to be difficult. I can thrive if you give me a project to drive home and score. I get worn out if I’m just sitting and thinking and praying. “Lord, help us.” It’s just hard for my personality. It’s not a personality. It’s hard for all of us. Why? Because our drift is toward self-reliance.

Then when we talk about years... My family celebrates Advent. We want to remember and mark annually the coming of Jesus in the flesh. Then what we do... Every New Year’s Eve, for the last nine years, my closest friends... We come together at my house on New Year’s Eve and just have this epic feast. They show up

at 4:00. This last year it went until 2:00 a.m. We're preparing the food at the house. It's good food. I don't want you to bring something weak like pickled beets nonsense up into this house. We're going to *get* it.

There are good bottles of drink and good food that we're cooking. We're going to start at 4:00, and we're going to rejoice and celebrate that Christ has come into the world to save us from sin. Right now, we're in the middle of Lent. I'm not doing Lent because it pleases the Lord. I'm doing Lent because it orients my heart around my need for the resurrected King.

Then this Easter we're going to do a little family lunch, and, once again, at 4:00 my crew is on their way over. We've already started divvying up who's bringing what and who gets the grill when, and once again we're going to get it. There are going to be 170 kids. It's going to look like somebody kicked an ant pile, and there are going to be no rules around what those kids can or can't eat. Like a big bowl of buttered noodles... Get it. You don't have to eat no veggies. Christ has risen!

We're just going to get after it, because celebrating pleases the heart of God. What's broken in us that we can't celebrate these things? I mean, *celebrate* them. We need to get better at this. So next Sunday, after preaching I think a bajillion times (I haven't counted it up), I'm going to go home, sleep for a few, and then we're going to get after it. I'm not working on Monday. The kids don't have school. I don't know when it'll end. I'll come back and report.

This is good. It's formative. It shapes us, and it's a reminder and an invitation into our privilege: the power and presence of God. Not in the tabernacle, not through dead ritual, but through a living invitation to dwell in and with the Spirit of God. Think how this might mark us as a community of faith. Here's what I would say. Husbands, look at me real quick. The best version of you that exists is one rooted and centered in a relationship with God through the Spirit.

You can have a long list of the things you want to do for your spouse, but if we're honest, almost all of us are intention over action. We have a thousand good intentions that we never get around to. Do you know when you're at your best? When you've been in the presence of God. Wives, you're at your best when you've been in the presence of God. You're the best parent when you're in the presence of God. You're more generous when you've been in the presence of God. You're more alive and energetic and filled with life when you've been in the presence of God.

To not enter this privilege is a foolish punt of our rights as children of God. If you're looking at rule of life, here's how I want to encourage you. Don't go, "Oh, that's awesome. Starting tomorrow..." No, you'll burn yourself out. Here's what I want you to do. However you are orienting your life around God right now, I want you to just add some little thing to it for a month. Don't add anything else. Just one little thing. If you're like, "I'm better than that..." No, that's a drift toward self-reliance. I'm sure you *are* better than that...for about four weeks before you'd stop doing it altogether.

So if you don't have that time where you're orienting your heart around the things of God for the day, start with getting up a little bit earlier and getting into the Bible,

writing down what's going on in your heart, writing out your prayers of what you want to see God accomplish in your heart, in your life, in your family, in this church. If you miss two days, God isn't like, "Really? On Easter week you're going to miss two days? Are you not aware of what's going on right now? So apparently my life isn't worth five days. Apparently it's just worth three."

That's not how the Lord thinks. That's how *you* think, because you're trying to build your life on self-reliance rather than presence and power. Let's just try, as consistently as we can... Let's get up a little bit earlier. Let's get in the Bible. Let's get naturally curious. "What's going on here? What is this word? What is *that*? Why is *this* in front of *that*?" Just get naturally curious. That's fun. Then after a month of that, just add a little something.

Just some little tiny... "I'm going to pray on my drive to work for the activities of that day" or "Right before I go to lunch, I'm going to stop for a second," or maybe the situation you're in right now is you need to immediately add that drive-home "prep your heart" thing so you can walk into your home with light and life in you rather than expectation and selfish desire in you. Then after a month add something else, and after a month add something else.

Here's the thing. Think about your life in terms of decades and not just seconds. Everything in our modern day is trying to get you to think of life in 140 characters. That's not how God sees us or desires to shape us. You don't have to right now jam all of this into the world as you know it. No, no. Just little steps over a long period of time produce a type of fruitfulness that's beyond our wildest imaginations right now.

Step into your privilege as sons and daughters of God. I know you're great and gifted and disciplined, but all of that's self-reliance. The reason God is saying here, "If you don't honor the Sabbath, I'll put you to death," is because to not honor the Sabbath is to put yourself to death. To step out of presence and power and into self-reliance will not produce the type of fruitfulness you want in your life.

Jesus says in John 15, "Apart from me you can do nothing." The good fruit that our hearts desire to bear, that we want our lives to produce, is found in abiding with Jesus, this invitation to walk into it. You can do this. You drive to work. You have a Bible. You can orient your heart right before lunch. You can orient your heart on the drive home. You can do this, and we would be a more vibrant and alive fellowship if we would give ourselves over to these things. Let me pray for us.

Father, we thank you for your mercy and grace. I pray for my brothers and sisters in here. Our drift, our bent is toward self-reliance. It is not toward dependence in your presence and power. Help us with that. Free us from the trappings of self-exaltation. We thank you for Jesus, the great High Priest. We thank you for Jesus who embodies the tabernacle, and we thank you for Jesus, our Sabbath rest, not just today but hourly, daily, monthly, annually, forever.

Thank you for the growing experience of the grace and mercy of God in our lives through Christ and the Spirit. Help us now, even as we sing about the beautiful, powerful, wonderful nature of Jesus Christ, that you would orient our hearts anew to your beauty and grace. It's for your name that we pray, Jesus, amen.

