

## WHAT WENT WRONG

### WONDER

Genesis 3:1-24 // Craig Smith

September 26, 2016

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**CRAIG:** Good morning.

**TOGETHER:** Good morning.

**CRAIG:** I am glad to be with you this morning and I don't mean that in a generic way, I mean like I'm really glad I made it. Friday, I spent most of Friday being sicker than I can ever remember being. And I think it must have been food poisoning. It was just awful. And I remember laying in bed and just, you know, reflecting theologically, which basically boiled down to, "Why God? Why is life like this?" I'll be honest, I don't sick well, I don't pain well. But yeah, I was just laying there just going, "Why life is like this?" And then I remembered, "Oh, actually I know the answer to that." It's the sermon this week.

So if you have your bible, why don't you turn it with me to Genesis Chapter 3. And if you've ever had the experience wondering why life is hard, we're gonna talk about the answer to that because it's part of the story we're looking at. As you're turning there, let me just do a quick little recap of the story as we've seen it so far because there's two important truths that lay the foundation for this. The first truth that we saw, the first part of the story is that God is the great king, he's the flinger of the stars and he's bigger than we can ever begin to wrap our heads around. And then only when we begin to get that, do we understand this incredible truth that we saw last week which is that we're his image. We are made to be represent him, we're made to be the conduit through which he makes his presence felt in his creation which is an incredible honor. It means every human being have tremendous nearly infinite value and significance. And somehow we have to both hold both of those things intention, that we are of tremendous value and significance and worth in God's eyes, but at the same time he's still God and we're not. And we tend to get that a little out of order sometimes.

But one of the ways that God shows this that he is still the king is that he continues to set boundaries, even for us as his image. And one of those boundaries is very important for understanding what we're gonna see in Chapter 3 and that boundary is given to us in Chapter 2. So if you've made it to Chapter 3, just look back a page or so. Let's take a look at one of the boundaries that God sets up in Chapter 2:15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat it from it you will certainly die". We would probably have to ask the question at this point, what is this tree? What is this knowledge of good and evil? Because on the surface I think we naturally assume, well it's the ability to tell right from wrong. Doesn't that seem to be the natural way to read that? But it doesn't really make sense that God wouldn't want us to be able to tell right from wrong because if we couldn't tell right from wrong, we would end up doing wrong accidentally. And the reality is that doing wrong accidentally is still doing wrong. In fact, the old testament has a number of commands for sacrifices that have to be made to pay for sin that's committed unintentionally or even unknowingly. So accidentally committing sin is still committing sin. It's still a real thing, it still has consequences. So why wouldn't God wants us to be able to tell right from wrong? If we can't tell we would accidentally be doing the wrong thing. So I'm left going, "This tree, this tree of knowledge of good and evil, it's an odd thing for God to not want us to have access to."

And what I wanna give you this morning is I wanna give you a working theory for what this means. And rather than spending a whole lot of time defending it, I'm gonna give you the working theory and I'll explain it very briefly. And then I just wanna see if this theory fits the facts as we continue to see this story unfold. What I want to suggest is that what God is forbidding here, he's forbidding them from seeking their own good rather than God's. Okay? God is forbidding them from seeking their own good rather than God's. In other words, it's not primarily about being able to tell that's morally right and that's morally wrong, it's



about choosing what path you're gonna walk. It's about deciding who's kingdom you're gonna build. And what God is saying is, "You're my image, your purpose is to represent me, your purpose is to seek my kingdom, not your own." And I realized that's kind of a hard truth, isn't it? Because our whole culture is oriented in the opposite direction. Our whole culture is oriented to say, "Listen, if you don't set your own path, if you don't seek your own good, if you don't chart your own course, you're never gonna get the good stuff in life." Right? Because, of course, you've gotta look out for number one? Yeah. And ironically, God says the same thing, "Yeah. If you want good in life you gotta look out for number one." He just has a very definition of who number one is. God says, "If you really want good in life, seek my kingdom." In fact, Jesus himself later on said a very similar thing. He said, "Seek first my kingdom and all these other stuff will be added to you. If you really wanna good, you gotta seek my kingdom."

And that's counter-intuitive, it's not the way that we tend to think because of the world that we live in now. But the reality is that because we were made as God's image, our greatest good is always to be found in seeking his purposes rather than ours. It's not that God doesn't want good for us, on the contrary, God wants great good for us. But he says, "Your greatest good is always going to be found when you are seeking my kingdom rather than yours. But if you choose to set out and decide, I think I know what's good for me, I think I know what's bad for me. I'll chart my own course, I'll plot my own path. In that decision we don't find the good that we're looking for, in fact, in that decision good gets pushed forever out of our reach."

So Chapter 3 says this, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'' Now you probably don't have to spend much time in the church to know that, of course, the serpent is really who?

It's Satan. I had somebody ask me a couple of years ago, "How do you know that?" And I remember thinking, "Because it just is." Like, "How do you not know that?" But actually it was a really interesting question. I started looking and I realized that, you know, sometimes those things that we assume are obvious are not quite so obvious. People haven't spent as much time in the church as we have. But there is a clear answer to it. It's actually Revelation 12:9. Revelation 12:9 we're told this, "The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent..." And that word "ancient" immediately calls back in mind the Genesis stuff, the beginning of days kinds of things. "That ancient serpent..." there is that serpent language. "called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray." And what we're seeing in Chapter 3 is the leading of the world astray. So the scripture very clearly makes this connection between the serpent and Satan, you know. But after this guy asked me that question, I started asking myself this question like, "I wonder why he's not called the devil there? Why isn't he called Satan? And what's this snake business? I mean did he possess a snake? Did he like manifest as a snake, is it symbolic language?" I mean those are interesting questions, right? I'm not answering any of those today. And the reason I'm not answering them is because I think sometimes we ask the wrong questions and we don't get to the heart. And actually what God wants to say to us here is probably more important than those interesting sort of philosophical questions.

What actually God does here is he gives us some tremendous insight into Satan's tactics, the way that Satan works. That's important for us to understand because it's not just the way he worked with Adam and Even, it's not just the way he works with other people, it's also the way that he tends to work with us. So it's important that we understand the kinds of things that he's engaged in and there's really two things that I think are revealed here. One is that Satan sows doubt and second that Satan twists truth. He sows doubt and he twists truth. When I say that he sows doubt, one thing that I think he's doing here, Satan is calling into question God's goodness.

Look at this comparison of what God said versus what Satan said. God said, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Satan stepped up and said, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" And that "did God really say" business, you understand that's not a request for clarification. He's not looking for additional information, he's not uncertain that he got his facts straight. What he's doing is he's sowing doubt. That question, it's sort of like...it's a very craftily, crafted expression of fake surprise. It's like, "What's up with that guy? I can't believe it. Did he really... What's he thinking? What's... Man, what's that guy's motives?" See, Satan calls into question



God's goodness. This is incredibly important because I think this happens in our own lives over and over and over again because the reality is, some of what God calls us to is not easy. Can I get an amen on that?

Following Jesus is not always the easiest thing you will ever do. And if you question God's goodness, if you have significant doubt that God is good, then obeying what God tells you to do when it gets hard becomes impossible. And so Satan knows that and he begins to question God's goodness. You know, "Maybe God really doesn't have good for you, maybe God's not really good, maybe if you follow him what you're gonna end up with is missing out all kinds of great stuff. And maybe he's happy if you miss all that because that's who he is." So he sows this doubt.

So if you're here today and you're struggling with something and then there's a part of you in there that's going, "I don't know that I'm willing to get on board with what God says about how to live life." Ask yourself, "Is it really because I'm not convinced that he's good?" In which case, ask yourself, "Where did that doubt come from?" Second thing Satan does is he twists truth. In this particular case, what Satan works to do is to focus our attention on what we lack rather than what we have. I mean, compare those two sentences. See, God's statement is entirely generous, it's all about the generosity, right? He says, "You can eat from any tree." It's like the buffet is open, there's just one thing you can't eat from. From my perspective, that'd be like, golden cow [SP] it's all ready, just don't worry about the salad bar. Okay? I'm good. So the focus is on the generosity, but you see what Satan does is he focuses on the one thing that was prohibited. Not what was provided, not all what was provided, he doesn't say anything about that. He focuses on the one thing that was prohibited and he blows it out of proportion. "God didn't want you having any good." That's twisting the truth, but it's focusing on what we lack rather than we provide.

When Claudia [SP] and I were engaged we had our premarital counseling with just this incredible man, his name is Bruce Sheppard [SP]. Love him, he's a close confidant and adviser to this day. And he gave us some great marriage advice and taught us a lot of great lessons, most of which, I'll be honest, I do not remember. But there's one thing that I vividly remember, I remember Bruce sitting at his desk and he goes, "Here's the thing, when you get married this is what...it's gonna feel like this, click." And you're just gonna be amazed at how well how you fit together and how you're her strength when she's weak, she's a strength where you're weak. And you're just gonna be like, "I can't believe how well we mesh and how well God's provided... This is just awesome." He said, "He's what you gotta work to avoid." He said at some point, inevitably, you're gonna realize, everything is so well taken care of except this guy. This little need, in some ways she's not quite everything she could be. It's no big deal because we got all these, but over time, that one little unmet need takes on a huge significance.

He said if you're not really careful it's gonna come to a point where that's the only thing you pay attention to. You don't pay attention to all these other stuff that meshes so well, it's this one thing that you lack. And that thing takes on a life on his own because we're focusing on what we lack rather than what's been provided. And if we continue to focus on that, we feel like, "I've gotta do something. I gotta fix this. I gotta take charge and I gotta somehow take care of that." And he said, "And the chances are then that Satan is gonna bring somebody into your life who meets that little need". And what happens so often in the marriages that we see that break up is somebody focused on that one little thing and this person takes care of that and then they destroy families, break vows and they're like, "But I gotta take care of this one thing". And so, all right, divorce and remarry... "Oh, finally, a need's met". Except now there's this one.

So this is what Satan does, he consistently causes us to focus on what we lack rather than what we have, what God has prohibited rather than what he's provided. And in our focus on that, again, we begin to question whether or not God's really for us and whether or not God's really good. And we have to work to avoid that temptation, to focus on what God has provided rather than the one thing that he hasn't yet or the one thing that he hasn't in the way we think he ought to. Because when we focus on that one thing and we take it into our own hands to get hold of it, what actually happens is the good that we're looking for we push forever out of our reach.



The woman said to the serpent, “Well, no. We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.” But even here I think you see doubt that’s been sowed beginning to bear it’s rotten fruit. I can almost hear her her tone of voice, “But...” Yeah. “But God did say, he did say you must not eat from the fruit in the tree that’s in the middle of the garden. You must not touch it or you will die.” And Satan seizing on that. He says, “No, no, no. You will not certainly die,” serpent said to the woman. “God just knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good from evil”. You’ll be able to chart your own course, you’ll be able to plot your own path. God just doesn’t wanna share that with you. God wants to keep you under his thumb. God wants to keep you in slavery which isn’t surprising because you know what, I never really thought he was good.” The irony, of course, is the decision that I’ll find my own good, I’ll plot my own path, I’ll chart my own course, the good that we thought we were moving towards actually gets pushed further and further out of our reach.

“And the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom”. And I should probably pause and say, there’s probably a play on words going on here because the Hebrew word for wisdom is also the word for success. And you can understand why they’re linked, because hopefully if you live wisely you succeed in life. But I think there’s play on words going, what the woman’s looking for is not so much wisdom as the ability to succeed in her path, to get what she’s looking for. And so she took some and she ate it. And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. And then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. And so they sewed fig leaves together and they made coverings for themselves.

You know, ironically, in seeking their own path to their own good, not only they did not get what they were looking for, but they got something they never bargained for, which was they experienced shame which they’d never experience before. And suddenly the whole world took on a very different and a very darker cast. Now, I think, they could have done something at this point that would have radically changed the way the story went. That moment when they realized we didn’t get what we thought we would get, when our decisions about how to live life didn’t pan out the way we expected, they could have done something that would have radically changed the story. Here’s what they could have done, three pieces to it.

First of, they could have confessed. They could have gone to God and they could have owned what they did. They could have said, “God, we did wrong. We started seeking our kingdom and not yours even though that’s not what we’re made for and it went wrong”. We’re gonna own what we did, we’re gonna confess it. They could have done that. Second thing they could have done is that they could have repented. They could have said, “We started heading down this road. Nope, we turn around, we go back to where we went wrong.” That’s what repentance is, by the way. It’s to turn around from the road that you’re walking and to go back to where you went wrong and get back on God’s path. So that they could have confessed, they could have owned it and then they could have disowned the path they were walking. And then they could have said to God, “We broke something, will you fix it?” They could have trusted him. Confession, repentance, trust, was a viable option. And how different would things have looked if that’s how they’d responded to that moment when they realized they were broken, that things weren’t panning out the way they expected.

We’ll never know because that’s not what they did. Instead, they sewed fig leaves together and they tried to cover their own naked... They tried to cover their own shame. In other words, instead of walking God’s path they said, “I think I’ll just walk this way and I’ll get my own good. Well, this isn’t turning out very well, but maybe if I just keep going, maybe I can take care of this, maybe I can fix this, maybe if I just try hard enough, maybe if I just spend enough effort, I can fix it.” But it doesn’t fix, it’s just gets worse and worse and worse. And most of us know that, most of us have been in that place where we’ve done something and we know, if we’re honest with ourselves, we look on and we realize, “I have done wrong.” And not just one or two but a lot are wrong. And I did it because I said, “I’ll take of myself, I will walk my own path, I’ll chart my own course”. And we’ve realized that it’s going wrong and rather than owning it and disowning it, rather than confessing and repenting and going back and asking God to fix it, we go, “I can take care of this.” And so we try to cover it over.

In fact, most of us know the pain of living a life that’s basically just piling cover on top of cover, trying to hide the reality of what’s going on. We’re so desperately afraid that anybody would find out how broken we are and how bad things have become.



And yet, there's something in us that instead of confessing and repenting and asking God to fix it, we go, "Yeah. Okay. Let me just try one more thing. I got one more card to play. I got one more trick to pull. Maybe this will take care of it." It's never gonna fix it. What's gonna happen is you're gonna continue further and further down the path until things are so broken that everybody's gonna find out. Everybody's gonna discover the very thing we were looking so hard to hide.

"The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Basic theological truth here, sin makes you stupid, sin makes you stupid. Sin somehow cause us to think that we can do what no rational person would ever think possible. Just get this for a second, just push this in for just a moment. This is the all-powerful, all-seeing, all-present God and they're hiding from him. What makes you think you're gonna pull that off? Maybe I could just...like right here he won't.

Years ago I was in a church in Cincinnati and I came out of my office, there was this long hallway, and it was... I don't know why they built this hallway because it was like 20, 25 feet and it was just all wall board, it was just all white wall board and it was really dark. And I think somebody figured out that it was like a scary tunnel of scariness and so they put a bunch of lights. So this was incredibly bright lit like hospital type of a thing. And I came out of my office and I turned and there was a little girl, she's about six years old. And she was pressed up against the wall about halfway down. And she wasn't looking at me so I went over and I kinda knelt down and said, "Hey, Karen. What you doing?" She was still...she goes, "I'm hiding." "Wow. Here's the thing, I can see you". And her little shoulders slumped and she finally looks at me. She goes, "I know. I'm not very good at it."

But, I mean, how often do I see that I do the same thing? I get off the track and I start trying to do something, choosing my own good, my own bad, my own path. It's not working out, but maybe I could just...one more and one more and I... you know, we're hiding. We're hiding from other people, we're hiding from the people that God's put in our lives that could be God's grace to us, but we're still hiding. We're trying to hide even from him. You can't hide from him. He sees, he knows. And what we see happening here is the first of three major consequences of walking our own path, of choosing our own course. What we see here is a breakdown of the relationship with God. Previously, when God came walking in the garden, when the presence of God was there in the Garden, they ran to him. But that's not happening anymore.

When I was in the road speaking a lot, especially when my kids were really young, I had this sort of thing that we would do. I'd come into the house when I get back from a trip and I would try to sneak in and see how long I could be in the house before they realized that I was home. Usually my golden retriever would give me away. But the best part was when they figured it out and I'd hear this little voices, "Daddy's home. Daddy's home." And Rochelle would come racing down the stairs and grab me and grab my leg and a big hug. And Lenee[SP] would come racing down the stairs. Lenee never touched the bottom four or five stairs, she just jumped. Like for the first eight years of her life, I think, she never touched those stairs. She just... And I'd grab her and she'd just hold on. And everywhere I went for a while, I would drag them with me. It was just the best.

And I remember reading this story a while ago and reflecting, well, what if I had the opposite experience, what if I heard the realization, "Dad's here." And then I heard the little thumping feet, but instead of running towards me they were running away from me. Instead of running for me, they were running away from me. Like I can't even imagine like the heartache that I would have felt. But if you can push into that moment for just a bit and you can feel that, you understand that you're just perceiving in just the vaguest of ways what God must have experienced that moment when his children stopped running for him and started running from him. That's the first consequence of choosing our own path rather than seeking his first. We experience this break in our relationship with God.

And God said, "Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" And finally the man steps up to the plate, owns it. You know, oh right, right. The man said, "The woman..." It's worse though, "The woman that you put here with me". It's really your fault God, I didn't think it was a good idea. I didn't wanna say anything, but really it didn't work out so well, did it? "The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it." The Lord God said to the woman who at least steps up. No, no. He said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said,



“The serpent, he deceived me and I ate it.” You see what’s happening here is the second major consequence of choosing our own path rather than God’s and that is that we begin to experience a breakdown in our relationship with other people. God made us to be in community. You know, in the beginning, in Chapter 1 what we see consistently is that God makes something that it’s good, it’s good, it’s good, it’s good, it’s good. At the end it’s all very good. The first time we get any hint that something’s not perfect is when he made Adam and he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” And so he made Eve. Because God made us to be in community. And there, I think, we see one of the powerful hints that God himself is a trinity, that there’s relationship within God because he said, “To be my image you gotta be in community” because that’s who he is. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always been in this intimate relationship with one another. And so he made his image, those who were supposed to represent him in creation, he made them to be in community. But you see that community begins to break down here. They turn on each other.

And the third major consequence is that creation itself begins to experience a breakdown. As we said last week, Paul says, “All creation groans under our sin” and we begin to see that. We won’t read all the passage, just quick summarizing. For the woman, he says, “I will make your pains in child bearing very severe, with painful labor you will give birth to children.” What was supposed to be a joy now involves tremendous pain. To the man he said, “Cursed is the ground because of you, through painful toil you will eat food from it all of the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you’ll eat the plants of the field.” See, their relationship with God is broken, their relation with others is broken and their relationship even with creation itself, things are beginning to fall apart. It’s not supposed to be that way. We often think that what God cursed them there was hard work and that’s not right, that’s not biblical. Hard work was there from the beginning.

When God said, “Let’s make mankind as our image” and he went on and say, “Let them rule and subdue.” That subdue word is a hard work word. The difference was, that before the fall when they worked hard they had something to show for it. They succeeded in all of their effort, they were able to, at the end of the day say, “God, I did this for you. I did this for the sake of your glory and for your kingdom.” And there’s something tremendously satisfying in that. But now what happens is that there is the curse of futility. Now you’re gonna have painful work and at the end of the day you’re not gonna much to show for it. You’re gonna plow and plant and you’re barely gonna eke out a living. You’re gonna build and it’s gonna fall apart. Things aren’t going to succeed in the way they were supposed to and you’re gonna be constantly frustrated because creation itself is now spiraling out of control. So everything’s kind of a mess because this is what happens when we seek our good, from our perception, rather than his. It’s not the end of the story.

Genesis 3:21 we find then what I think was one of the most powerful verses in all of the book of Genesis. “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them”. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and he clothed them. In that one sentence, we have the entirety of the gospel. Remember, when they first realized they weren’t getting the good they thought they were gonna get they tried to cover it up themselves too, right? What did they cover themselves with? Leaves. The problem is that leaves can’t pay for the price of sin because leaves doesn’t involve death. You can take a leaf off a plant and the plant continues on. And the problem is that the wages of sin is death, it’s not a kind of thing that can be covered over by a new coat of paint. Death has too high a price. And the reason that the wage of sin is death is because it’s the natural consequence of things.

Think about this, if you’re out camping or you’re at a campsite and, you know, you go to the shower at night and there’s that light on. When you’re done with your shower, you turn your back on the light and you walk away from the light. And if you walk away from the light, where do you end up? You end up in the... That’s not the light’s fault. Okay? It’s just the way things are. If you walk away from the light, you end up on the dark. And if you unplug from the author and the creator and sustainer of life by walking your own path, if you walk away from life, you’re gonna end up in death. It’s not God being vindictive, it’s not God punishing, it’s just the way things are. You can’t walk away from life and end up in life. If you walk away from life, you end up in death and so the wages of sin is death. Leaves aren’t gonna pay it, the consequence is too high. The only way to take care of death is to pay the price with another death.

God clothed them with skins. Pretty sure he didn’t find a second hand store, picked up an old used fur coat. No, no, no. He killed



some animals in front of them and then he covered their nakedness. And they had to see it, they had to recognize the seriousness of what they had done by setting out on their own course. And that's the gospel. It's an anticipation of the gospel that God said, "I'm gonna show you in a picturesque form what I'm eventually gonna do for you because I love you so much". And he sent his own son to die and the shed blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to take care of all of our sin, to cover all of our shame and to dress us, to make us righteous again.

That's the gospel, that all we have to do is say, "I messed up. I thought I could chart my own course, I couldn't. It all went bad and I recognize it". All we have to do is confess it. But we also have to turn from it. I can't keep walking that path. We have to go back to God and say, "Would you do what I can't?" That's faith, confession, repentance and faith in what God has done with the person of Jesus. That's the gospel. It's right there on page one. And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." There's that "us" language again. And I said last week that I think at least one of the things we have to make sure we grasp is that this "us" language, it's the royal plural. It's about God as king and he's making statements of tremendous declaration, of tremendous importance for the sake of his kingdom. Here, he's making a statement about the fate of his representatives. He says, "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and to eat and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the garden as his exile. Banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken".

And what I wanna point out here is that in that banishment, we also see the redemption that, it is in the pursuit of God's kingdom that we find the great good that we thought we were gonna find in pursuing our own path. So we thought we'd pursued our own path, we thought we'd find great good but we find nothing. And God says, "If they'd stayed with me, they would have continued to have access" to what? To the tree of life. It seems to be a promise of what I might call conditional immortality, that we could have lived forever. But to live forever we have to stay in God's garden, to stay in God's path, to pursue his glory, to pursue his good. And as long as we did that, we'd have access to a good that's far beyond anything we're ever gonna find breaking out on our own.

But he said, "Now that you're out on your own you don't have access to that." But we're not cut off from it forever. Because when we get to the book of Revelation, the tree of life shows back up again. And for those who are willing to confess, to own it, to repent, to disown that way of living and to put their faith on what Jesus has done, we have access to the tree of life again. But you understand what I'm saying is that the greatest good...because we're the image of God, the greatest good is always to be found and in the pursuit of God's purposes and not ours. What we thought we had to strike out on our own get it, God says that it was here all along.

I'll give you three things that I think are worth wrestling with, three things that I continue to wrestle with as I think about the reality here. The first one is this, I have to ask myself constantly, where am I attempting to decide for myself what is best rather than seeking what God says is best? Why am I still following the old tendency, I'll break out and I'll get what I think I need. Where am I seeking what I think is best rather than what God seeks and says is best? I have to wrestle with that question constantly. I've never found a time in my life that I didn't have an answer. There's always a time that I go, "Maybe it's in my marriage, or my relationship with my kids or in my handling of money or in my handling of compassion or kindness or my neighbor". I mean, there's always a place where I go, "I'm not following God here. I'm not seeking God's purposes I'm seeking mine."

And I'll tell you a second question that I think is helpful to help me identify that place and it's this, "In what area am I most experiencing the consequences of deciding for myself?" What of these three breaks that we talked about, is it with others that I'm experiencing something that's breaking down or is it with God? Is it with creation itself? Those are often an indicator of where I'm trying to decide for my best. If my marriage is struggling, that's often an indicator. My marriage is breaking up, it's struggling because it's right here that I'm trying to do things according to my plan and not God's. It's my course and not his. If I'm feeling distant from God in some way, it may be that I'm trying to live life on my terms not his. And so that becomes the red flag for where it is that I'm charting my course rather than obeying his. Is it something else I'm experiencing in creation with the way my money is going? Or those kinds of things. Is it because I'm dealing with my money in the way that I think is what's gonna



be best rather than what God says is gonna be best? And there's a third important question which is this, when I identify those things, am I ready and willing to confess, repent and trust? Because that's all that it requires. Own it, disown it and trust that he can fix what I can't.

Would you pray with me? Jesus, thank you for loving us enough to be willing to pay that ultimate price. I'm sure that there's some people here today who have never trusted in the sacrifice that you made for them. Would you give them the courage right now simply to say to you God, I admit that I have done wrong. I charted my own course and it didn't work out because it's never gonna work out. I'm sorry. I'm not gonna walk my own path anymore, I'm gonna come back to you. Would you forgive my sin? Would you come into my life? I'm gonna live for you and not for me anymore. Though would you speak to each of us because whether we've made that decision to trust in the sacrifice of Jesus or not, we still have this temptation to trust or to mistrust your goodness and to think that we can plot our own course. So would you speak to us about the ways we're doing that, we're living life on our terms and not yours. Give us to courage to confess, to repent and to trust. In Jesus name, amen.

