

May 27, 2007 • "Heart Matters, Part 2; Some Answers" Matt Chandler

If you have your Bibles, let's get going. Ezekiel 14 is where we will start out. We'll move on from there to the book of James, but we'll start in Ezekiel 14. I was on the phone two days ago with a friend of ours here at the Village who's on the other side of the world, and he is in a country where it is illegal to preach and teach and proclaim the name of Christ. And so, when we talk on the phone, we have to talk in really complex code. And so, we talk about the kingdom of God without actually talking about the kingdom of God. We talk about how things are at work and have there been any "new hires" and is there anyone new in "the company" and do you need any "training manuals." We just had that conversation where, for an hour, you've got to figure out a way to have a conversation without actually having that conversation, and it lends itself to creativity. And then, it lends itself to getting off the phone and going, "I have no idea what he thinks we just agreed upon." But he's waiting for something I never knew that's what he was asking for. But in the end, I hung up that phone and I thought that, as we rolled into this Memorial Day weekend, that if we don't, over the course of the next 48 hours, slow down for just a few minutes and think on and remember the fact that, forever what reason, God has allowed our lives to play out in this nation where you never need to speak in code. And we never have to fear someone kicking open this door right now and dragging any number of us away without our families being informed, without a trial being set. And yet, in major sections of the world, you still have to speak in code. And this was purchased for you and for me and for our children by the blood of men and women who thought that there was a greater cause than just their lives. And I think we would be the worst of all creatures, the spoiled brat, if in the end we didn't slow down a little bit and let our hearts fill with gratitude over what Christ has gifted to us here in the U.S. I'm not perfect and I'm not talking politics here at all. I'm just saying how horrible would we be if at some point tomorrow, in our rain soaked barbecue and canceled swim parties, that we don't stop and remember. Stop and remember. Find the time. I think "Band of Brothers" is paying on the History Channel all day. That's where I'll be, baby. Let's move on.

Last week, we just asked a question. That's all that we did. It took me 50 minutes, but we just asked one question. If you're a guest with us, yes that's how I work. And so, for 50 minutes, we kind of walked through the Scriptures together. And we walked through particularly certain men in Scripture who talked about God in a way that seems foreign on the Evangelical landscape. And what I mean by this is, we looked at David, and kind David is going to talk to God and talk about God in such a way that is foreign to the experience of most Evangelicals. He's going to say, "My flesh yearns for You...I think about You throughout the watches of the night...Like a dying animal in a drought, so my soul is right now without You." He says in Psalm 27, "One thing that I ask and all that I seek, the only thing that I want is that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord in His temple." And then we moved on to Habakkuk. And in Habakkuk, the prophet Habakkuk is just basically saying this, "I don't care as long as I have Jesus." In the end, he's going, "If I'm rich or if I'm poor, if I'm safe or if I'm in danger, if everything's working well or if nothing's working well, as long as I have Jesus, I'm okay, I'm alright." And then we moved on from there out of the Old Testament into the New Testament, we looked at the apostle Paul who would say, "I count all things, everything a loss, I count them as dung compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus." We talked at length about this one, because I think it, more than the rest of the texts, kind of attacks the Evangelical mindset. And what I mean by that is that Paul says the question's not "Is it right or is it wrong?" Most of us perpetually live in the spiritual reality of "Is this behavior right or wrong. Let me do the correct behavior. And if the behavior is correct, then we'll do it, even at times to our detriment." Paul says you're asking the wrong question. The question is not "Is it right or wrong?," but rather "Does it get me more of Christ or does it rob me of my awareness of Him?" And

that's how he did his life. He would say, "Listen, I count that as a loss. I count that as rubbish. I'm not interested in that. It doesn't matter to me, it's okay if you do it. When I do it, it robs me and so I'll have nothing to do with it. I count it as dung." So we moved on from there. And we talked that not only men biblically like this, but men have historically talked like this. And we walked through Augustine and we talked about Luther and we talked about John Owen, my favorite Puritan by far. We talked through just a lot of guys. We talked Brother Lawrence. I think he's got the most memorable quote from last weekend in his book "Practice of the Present." The 16th century monk said, "I have at times had such delicious thoughts on the Lord I am ashamed to mention them." Wow! I'm of the personal opinion that the word delicious is reserved for food only, and yet he threw it on the Lord. And we talked, after that, about Romans 8 about how the universe finds itself in the same state as some of these men. It longs, it wants the removal of suppression and the weight of sin off of it and wants to be free of all of it and wants to be free in the glory of Christ. And the question we got through after all of that was not "Do men and women historically and biblically yearn and long and passionately pursue Jesus?" And it's not "Does the universe have this longing and yearning?" The question that I asked was "Why don't we?" Why are so many of us content? Why is a zealous passion for the Lord to have lordship over all areas of our life such a rarity among Evangelicals? Why is the pursuit of Him, the full on pursuit of Him such a rare commodity among the Evangelical community? What's happened to us that we have compartmentalized our life that church is over here and work is over here and family is over here, and there's very little overlap or exchange between the three, and really looking into it, it's really hard to tell if there is an overarching umbrella or if they're just different segments?

So that was the question. What I want to do today is try to answer it. I think the answer has three parts to it. I'm going to try to answer it. And I don't know that we'll get a chance to apply any of it. We're just going to answer it. And then starting next week and for the rest of June, we'll try to unpack what the ramifications are for us personally as well as for us corporately. So, why don't we yearn? Why don't we long? Why don't we pursue Him? Why are so many of us content with where we are spiritually? Why does there seem to be a zeal and a passion to know Christ deeply in the lives of most Evangelicals? Let's get to work. Let's go to Ezekiel 14, starting in verse 1, "*Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came to me:...*" I'll need to walk us through this passage. In the Old Testament period of time, God did not speak or rarely did God speak to the entire nation of Israel. He didn't, with a thunderous voice, cry out to the entire nation, "Go left!" What He did is He came to a prophet and He would tell the prophet, "Tell Israel to go left." And that's how the system worked. And so, when the rulers of Israel needed to know a direction, "Do we go right? Do we go left? Do we attack? Do we defend? What do we do?," they would beseech or come before the prophet and ask the prophet to hear from the Lord and to unpack. That's what's going on in this text. The elders of Jerusalem, the elders of Israel have come to the prophet and said, "What do we do?" So, let's look at this. "*And the word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces.'*" In the Old Testament, Israel, over and over and over again, is guilty of leaving the one true God, Yahweh, the God of the Bible, and worshiping false gods, little deities like the god Baal in the Old Testament, probably by far the most popular one in the Old Testament. And so they would worship a foreign god. This is not what is happening in this text. The accusation against them is not that they're bowing down before another deity, but rather, they've taken an idol into their hearts. So this is a different kind of idolatry, one we'll need to discuss this morning, and by doing it, they've blinded themselves. Let's keep reading. "*Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?*" Alright, these men have come to the prophet and said, "We need to hear from God. Do we go left? Do we go right? Do we attack? Do we defend? What are we supposed to do?" And God says, "I see idols in their hearts. Should I address their question or not?" Let's keep reading. Look at what God says. "*Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and*

sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols,..." Here's what God says. "Men will come to me, seeking direction for their life, and if there's idolatry in their heart, I will not answer their question, I will only talk with them about their idolatry." It's an amazing text.

So let's chat here. I think for us 2007 Dallas suburbanite weirdos, this idea of idolatry, it kind of gets lost on us. When I think idol, honestly, the first thing I think of is "Indiana Jones: Temple of Doom," whip, six-shooter, guy getting his heart ripped out kind of thing. That's what's in my mind, but honestly, idolatry, unbelievably serious, starts out in our culture, in the way it works with us, to be unbelievably innocent but in the end, overwhelmingly destructive. And let me explain to you how it happens. Idolatry in your heart and in my heart starts with a desire. And the desire isn't inherently wicked or wrong. We have a desire to have a nice house. We have a desire to drive a nice car. We have a desire to have a relatively in shape body. We have a desire for our kids to excel in athletics. Because what will our legacy be if they're not a professional athlete, Christ save us? We have a desire that we have money in the bank. We have a desire that we're safe. We have a desire that things are, in most ways, easy for us. We have a desire that our kids get a good education. And there is nothing wrong with any of those things, nothing. It is not wrong to want a nice house. It is not wrong or sinful. It is not wrong or sinful to want your kids to be safe. It is not wrong or sinful to want a little cash. I want some cash. It's not wrong or sinful to want things relatively easy. It's not wrong or sinful. It's not wrong or sinful to want to be in shape or want to look good. That's not wrong or sinful. It's just not. It starts with a desire. Like think of it as this thing in the palm of our hands. It starts as a simple desire. And then over time, the hand begins to close and we say, "This is no longer negotiable." And then all of a sudden, the nice house, it's non-negotiable; the nice car, it's non-negotiable; safety, it's non-negotiable; our kid's athletic career, non-negotiable; money in the pocket, in the bank, non-negotiable. And now, you have the birthing of an idol. And what ends up happening is we say, "God, do whatever You want...God be who You are, but don't touch this. Don't touch this. Don't touch work, because in work, I find achievement and I find self value. So, I'll do whatever You say, but I'm not quitting this job....Don't risk my kids. Do whatever You want, but I want my kids to be safe....Do whatever You want, but I want my neighborhood to be safe....Do whatever You want, but I want..." And what ends up happening is that hand closes and we say, "This is no longer negotiable." And an idol has been born. Now, here's what happens. Here's why it's so devastating. What happens in that moment is you've given an unbelievable amount of authority to whatever that desire is. So much authority have you given to this desire that people and things become a means to this end. So I would say if work is your idol, then all of a sudden, people at work are viewed by you and thought of by you, like it or not, as a means to your progression up the ladder. Now all of a sudden, your kid's soccer career, it takes precedent over everything. It takes precedent over spiritual health. You name it, it just rules it. It rules your wallet, it rules your life, it rules your weekends. You've given this unbelievable amount of power to soccer! Now, here's why it's so devastating. When idolatry rules the hearts of men, they do not, in the end, want and all knowing, all loving, omnipotent God of the universe who gives as He sees fit. Instead, they want a divine waitress to fetch them their want.

So, why don't men yearn for the Lord? Why don't men pursue Him? Why don't men and women cling to His feet? I have to wonder if the reason so few of us do is because we have an idol in our hearts and our fear is that if we draw near to Him, He will address this thing and it is a non-negotiable for us. And the good thing about being in the Bible Belt, is you can just go to church and pretend all the days of your life. All you have to do is learn when to raise your hand, what part of the song. You've got to join a Bible study or a small group. You've got to learn when to do the "Hmmm. That's good. I have not thought of that. That is good. Such insight." That's all you've got to do and you're in. And then, watch the rated-R movies you watch and be careful of how much you drink and buy really bad

Christian books and you're in. that's all you've got to do. You've got it. And you don't ever have to address it. You don't ever have to let it go. You just keep coming to church, you just keep trying to be a good person. And I have to wonder if the reason so many of us avoid pursuing God deeply is because when all is said and done, whether knowing it or whether it's subconscious, we know that if we get near something, something might happen to this thing we love more than Him. And I can't stress to you enough, it's not wrong to want these things. It's just wrong to want them with a closed hand.

If I was honest...and I know this is church and not the place for this at all. I know we got up today and before we got here, read the Bible for an hour and a half, meditated on it and prayed as we walked in...But if I was honest, do you know what I want for my daughter? I would love it if she would meet a very, very, very godly young man. And listen, the chances of that are slim. There's a lot of neat Christian boys out there. It's hard to find godly men. It's like the dodo bird, they're almost non-existent anymore. You can laugh; I weep. I weep because I've got a daughter who will meet someone who loves her like Christ loves the church. And they're just rare cats, man. We're praying them in. And I would love for that dude to just come in and romance her. I mean, just make me go, "That boy's good. I'm stealing that idea. Don't tell your mama." I want that kind of guy, and I want her to live in the burbs where she's safe and she can raise little grandbabies and I can spoil and not discipline them at all. And I want her to outlive me. And I don't want her to take risks with her life. I'll risk mine. That doesn't bother me. I just don't want her to do it. So, I'd like that for her, but my hand on that had better stay open, lest I become an idolater. Because maybe God is going to reach a group of people in some other part of the world with her suffering. My hand had better stay open. And I love my house. We don't live large, but I like my house. It's an older house. We've worked on it. I love my house. It's not wrong for me to love my house. But in the end, it's not my house. That hand had better stay open. And like I said we don't live large. I drive an '01 Impala with like 140,000 miles and it's starting to backfire. But the air works. I love my car. I love that car. Part of it's probably where I've come from, but I love that car, man. I talk to her. I love that car, but my hand on it had better stay here. I love the Village. I plan on being here the rest of my life. I love this place. My hand had better stay open, lest I get confused and think anything is mine. And that's how idolatry happens. And it's the reason we stay away from the Lord, because we're afraid that if we press into Him, He's going to address this thing. And we don't want that. Because in the end, we value it more than we value Him. And we think in the end, this is more beautiful and more necessary than He is.

Now idolatry, it takes on several faces. This is a big part. Let me show you the other big part. Go over to James 4. This is idolatry, but it's given another name also. It's one of the other reason's we don't pursue Him. I have a love/hate relationship with this text. We'll pick it up in verse 4. Right out of the gate, you'll see my hate part of the love/hate relationship. "*You adulterous people!*" Right out of the gate, I don't really like that part. "*Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?"*" That's my love for this text. Once again, if we were honest, I think the majority of us feel like God, at some level, is disappointed in the current us, but that He loves some future version of us. Like when we finally beat this or we finally overcome that or we finally quit this or we finally straighten this out or we finally unlock the keys to the quiet time, whatever it is. But right now, God is somewhat disappointed in us. But in the future, some future version of us, He'll love. This text would fly in the face of that and says right now, He yearns for the spirit He has sealed in you. He yearns for it. Yearn is different from want, correct? You can want something, and that's just kind of you want it. But yearning for something, there's a pain to it. Let's keep reading because I need you to see this next line. "*But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*" The other side, the other reason, this other piece of idolatry, this other reason why, I

believe, men and women don't fully pursue and passionately chase the Creator of all things is the idea of this thing, pride. And I would define it just simply as self-exaltation, thinking more highly of yourself than you should. And here's how it plays out among the Evangelical community. In the end, we believe that we're smart enough, wise enough, clever enough and good enough. So we view ourselves not in desperate need of grace and the things of God, but rather a tool in the hands of God to correct and help others. That's how it is. That's how it plays out. I have no idea how God doesn't rain down fire. Like, I read the Bible and I'm like, "Oh, that's coming for us." We don't need Him ourselves, we don't need to press in ourselves, we don't need to do any soul searching, we don't need to walk through any of that, we don't need to submit to any of that because I'm alright. What I am is an agent of God sent here to transform the lives of sinners. And then what ends up happening is stuff like this.

Every night, I tuck in our children. Lauren puts them down, reads them stories and then we tag and I go up. We pray and pray and talk. We have some conversations. Every night, I plead for the souls of my children. I plead for it. I plead for it. I am not going to be a good enough father to pull off salvation in my children's hearts. I'm not. I'm not going to be able to model it well enough. All I can do is commend His works to them. He's got to save them. So I plead with Him. Men and women who walk in pride, they don't need to plead for the lives of their children. You know why? Because they got it. Why would they need to plead? God forbid if their kid runs amok. You know what the issue was? The issue wasn't them; the issue was your kid. Your kid came into their life, influenced them into darkness and if you would have done a better job, if you would have watched what they watched, if you would have watched what they read, if you would not have allowed them to watch the "Smurfs" or whatever the Evangelical community is now saying is evil and wicked and after the souls of our children, if you would have done that, then in the end, "my kid would love the Lord, because I raised them to love the Lord. That's not how I raised them. Your kid was the issue." I've been in that room.

Or here's one I think that everyone sees. There are men and women who cannot sustain relationships for any period of time. Like, they have a good friend for about six months and then they've got this whole other group of friends for about six months and then they've got this whole other group for about six months. Or they go from this relationship to this relationship to this relationship. And if you sit down over a drink with them, they could tell you all that was wrong with all of those people without ever being able to see that the common denominator is them. That's pride. "Let me tell you why everyone else has issues." People who walk in pride are perpetually in crisis. There's always a crisis, always. It's never having to do with them. It's always someone else. It's absolutely devastating to the pursuit of Jesus. Because in the end, you don't believe you really need Him despite the fact that all objective evidence would say the other way. But you can't see objective evidence. It's this insane belief in our own sufficiency that robs us of freedom and life, pride. I mean, God has flat out said, "The proud I will know from afar. They will not be able to draw near to Me." Did you hear what we just read? He opposes the proud.

These two ideas pour into the last idea. Let's go to Romans 1, we'll pick it up in verse 18. Romans 1, although one of the heaviest texts in all of Scripture, it's by far one of my favorites. And if you've been here long at all, you know that because I reference it every other weekend. "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*" So here's what we're about to find out. God pours out wrath from heaven onto man kind, and that's what this text is going to be about. So let's look at and watch how wrath is poured out on mankind. And I'll ask you some questions about it, so pay attention. "*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the*

creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” Now watch this. Pride and idolatry are going to fly up here in the next part of this text. “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him,...” So although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God. So all of us have gone, “Okay, there is a Creator God, there is a God in the universe, a triune God, but this desire is more valuable than Him.” That is not honoring God as God, idolatry. They did not honor God or give thanks to Him. That's pride. The reason you don't give thanks to God for all that you have and all that you do is that, at a certain level, you believe you did it. So why do you need to thank Him? You accomplished it. So let's look at His response. “...*but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up [or gave them over] in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.*” Okay, so God reveals His wrath on mankind. Did you see anything in that text about plagues? No? Anything about disease? Anything about tsunamis? Did you see tsunami in there? No? Anything about acts of terrorism? Any of that? No? I didn't see any of that either. In fact, I see what is, on the surface, more horrifying than all of those things. So look at how the wrath of God is revealed. You and I fail to acknowledge Him as God (idolatry), we fail to give Him thanks, “Why do we need to thank Him? We did it.” (pride). So we have this thing we value above and beyond God, we want this more than we want Him, more than we want His will. So God responds by doing nothing and pours out His wrath by letting you chase your idol.

And when that happens, thinking becomes futile. Let me explain what I mean. The majority of men and women spend their time, energy, thoughts, fantasy in what is absolutely transient. There is nothing that you own or that you are now chasing that is not going to be in a junkyard 150 years from now. But all of our energy, all of our thoughts, all of our efforts, all of our fantasy revolves around transient, disappearing, non-eternal things. Thinking has gone futile. And then, this is the scary part, God darkens the heart. He hardens it. And I know this is a wildly unpopular idea among Evangelicals, who at the same time profess to believe in the Bible. No, God hardens the heart seven times in the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus is telling these parables and it's getting on the disciple's nerves basically. And so they walk up to Him and go, “Why do You keep telling these stories? Why can't You just say it? Every time we ask You a question, it's like a 45 minute story. Yes or no, please.” Starting in late August, we're just going to do the whole book of Luke. We'll probably be in it a year, maybe even a little over a year. Jesus never answers a question directly, never. “How many times should we forgive our brother?” “That reminds Me. There was once a....” They're like, “Just give me a number!” He's just always a consummate storyteller, always, always, always telling the story. And when He's confronted on it and they say, “Why do You speak in parables?” what's His response in Mark 4? “So that they'll hear but they won't understand.” Huh? “Yeah, this generation, it's a wicked and perverse generation that have turned their back on me. I have given them over to their sin. They're not going to understand. So He even looks at the Pharisees later on and He says, “You brood of vipers, you study the Scriptures in vain. The Scriptures testify about Me, but you can't even see that they testify about Me.” Why? Because God had hardened their heart and said that they would be seeing but not perceiving. Read Romans 11, overarching hardening of the nation of Israel's heart towards Christ. It will one day be lifted. Pharaoh, the king of Heshbon, God hardens the heart of men who say, “I'd rather have this than You.” God eventually says, “Have it.” Which is why I think one of the greatest acts of mercy God can ever bring about is letting you get busted in your sin. Because that's the mercy of God. It feels like the wrath of God at the moment, but honestly, it's His mercy. His wrath would be just to leave you unchecked, just go, “Okay, taste it. Go.” His mercy is, “I'm gonna bust you in this one.” He's done it before. Do you remember Abraham walks in to king Abimelech's kingdom and the king thinks Sarah, his wife, is attractive? And so Abraham lies and says, “No, this is my sister.” By

the way, I've been together with Lauren now for a decade. Choose death. I don't know that you get that one back, alright. "Here's the plan. You're my sister. Marry another man." Pick death. Even if it's long and bad, pick death. Because you are going to get reminded of that one forever. Every time there's a fight, "Remember that time you basically gave me to another man because you were a coward?" And you've got nothing to come back with on that. Walk away. She won the fight. But in this, the king takes Sarah into the harem, goes to bed that night and God shows up in his chamber and says, "I will not allow you to sin against Me." I mean, God just showed up and said, "There ain't going to be any sin in here today. No, there won't be any sinning tonight in here." I mean, what do you do with that kind of thing? God's showing up and going, "Nah, I'm not going to let sin happen today, not tonight. Sarah, go." God hardens the heart.

Now, could we agree corporately that this is a rather horrifying idea? Does that feel warm to anyone? Like, "That is great! Praise His name! He hardens and condemns forever." I would say no, that's a scary idea. And I think that some people use that to sit in their sin. Some people want to use that as a justification to be lazy about the state of their heart. But here's what I would say. If there's any part of you that's afraid of that idea, if there's any part of you that longs for your heart to not be hardened, if there's any part of you that longs for it to be softer, then I would say you have a soft heart...for now. If any of you though are sitting in here...and this will be very difficult, but I feel I need to say it to you...if you're sitting in here today and you're like, "I don't care what the Bible says, I don't care what you're saying, I don't care what God wants for my life, I don't care" and in the end, you're trying to stick it to God, it seems like biblically that the other has occurred. Do not be deceived. You will not mock God. It's not going to happen.

So the billion dollar question then is how do we know what's going on in our hearts? How do we know if there's idolatry? How do we know if there's pride? How do we know what's really going on in our hearts? Because even the Bible says the heart is deceitful, like it's hard to get a bead on it. Like, there are these days where we feel all is well or you have that spiritual moment where you've been walking with the Lord and everything feels amazing and you feel like you're walking in obedience, and all of a sudden He swings open this closet of your life that you didn't even know was there. I mean, how often does that happen? I'm 15 years in, and it happens weekly. It seems like it's always happening. It's just like, "Hmm, I'm being completely obedient. (click, creak) Man, there is a lot of baggage in there." So, how do we know? How do we know what's going on in there? How do we know what the idols are in our lives? How do we know if we are walking in pride? Because if you think about it, if we had pride, then it's almost assured that we can't see that we have pride because we're think we're so good we don't have pride. So how do you even recognize it? And how do you know if you've closed your hand on something? Some of us know. The second I said it, some of us are like, "Oh God, I don't want to talk about this. I knew I shouldn't have come. I knew I should have gone to some other place," and we're already scrolling. But some of us are going, "Do I have them? Do I not have them? I don't know." Okay, the good news is the Bible doesn't leave us hanging, the Holy Spirit doesn't leave us hanging. It gives us clear ways, clear, practical, absolute ways that we can look at certain areas of our lives and see what our close-handed idols are and what our open hand worship is. But we're out of time. So next week and for the three weeks after it, we begin to look at and examine, personally and then corporately, what our idols might be and if there's pride in our hearts. I think it's going to be difficult, but nothing of depth and beauty and value is ever easy.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for these men and women, and I thank You for an opportunity just to open up the Scriptures and have them sit over us. And I pray, more than we read them this morning, that they would read us. And my prayer is that You would begin to peel away the veneers and the false pretenses and just the Evangelical stink and that we might sit honestly and naked before You. And I

pray that this would lead to repentance. And I pray that this would lead to a deep yearning and a longing for the things of you, not matter what the cost. And in the end, I think that my hope is that You would break our hands, that You would loosen our death grip on transient things and that You would enable us to see You as supremely valuable and that we, like the man in the story, would sell all that we have and buy the field. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen.”