

Well, good morning Grace Hills. Glad you guys were willing to come inside out of such beautiful weather to be in here with us for a little bit. We're at a spot as a church in this message series where we finally need to talk about something that isn't necessarily relevant to everyone's life. I know every week we want that, but some weeks we just got to cover some stuff that's purely informational and today is just about how to finally change your life. So I know that doesn't relate to any of you, right? We're all just where we need to be. But if you came in looking for how could I change things, how can I really change the direction of my life? How can I take the thing that I'm not proud of? The thing that I do on repeat that I wish I didn't do anymore, the thing I've discovered about myself, the habit, the pattern that does not help me, it only hurts me.

How do I finally get rid of that? We're going to talk about that today. All of the last few messages in the hearings, a healing series that we've walked through have been decision kind of messages. In other words, I need to decide that I am broken. I have hurts, habits and hang-ups. I can't ignore those things. I have to decide to bring those things into the light. I have to decide to confess my sins and my habits to God and to someone else and other people and I have to decide those things. So they've all been these sort of monumental decision kind of messages. What I want to talk about today is longer term. I want to talk today about how you live changed. How do you finally change, how do you change for the long haul? How do you experience this exchange of habits that takes place in our lives and I know after lots of conversations and after walking through painful things in my own life and painful realizations about my own life, that there's a recurring question that comes up in lots of conversations, deep conversations.

There's a recurring question I've asked myself many times and that's simply, am I ever actually finally going to be able to change this light? Will I ever actually overcome this? We get to a place where we think we're over it. We think we're past it, we think we've moved through it, we've healed from it and it comes out again. I have another outburst of anger. I go drink some more and get drunk again. I hurt people around me again. I run to a unhealthy relationship again and I ask myself after each time like, is it ever going to get better? Am I ever going to fix this? Now again, I have a feeling that probably all of us in the room will struggle with that question to one degree or another about one thing or another in our lives.

And I want to just sort of give you a big promise and not necessarily a convenient promise, but I want us to start with hope this morning and just say this about the thing that you desire so strongly to change. Here's the big truth for opening with, okay, God can change your character into the likeness of Christ to be just like Jesus, but it's hard, slow and painful. How many of you feel really motivated now? Yes. It's going to be hard, slow and painful. That is a statement that has two sides to it. On the one side is the positive hope and expectation. Yes, Jesus really does change lives. I've seen it. I've watched it. Jesus absolutely changes lives. God can change you to look like his son in your character so that you respond to situations the way Jesus would so that you make decisions in life the way that Jesus would.

Yes, he can change you, but you've got to know today and every day that it's long and it's hard and it's painful that God uses a lifetime to accomplish this. That from the moment I put my trust in Jesus until the day that I die, that he is using the rest of my days to prune and to cleanse and to burn away and to chisel away at my character until what is left for eternity is a person that looks and acts and thinks. Not looks physically, but who does life like Jesus, who has the character and the qualities of Jesus in my life, the fruit of the spirit working in me. So yes, change is possible. Yes, you can overcome. Yes, victory is within reach, all of those things, but you've got to know that it's hard and it's slow and it's painful.

Now, the reason I point that out is because again, I think sometimes maybe people who haven't been in church much or haven't ever been before might go to church one Sunday and assume I'm going to give this a shot, I'm going to go for a Sunday and something so radical is going to happen that it's going to fix everything in my life, that everything is going to be instantly better. Now, I believe that when you trust in Jesus your condition and your position and your eternity and your trajectory are instantly better, they're instantly better, but you've still got a lot of life to walk through. And while I wish Jesus would just take all my bad habits and just like heal me of them, just take it away. How many times have you prayed God, just take this craving away. Just let it be gone.

And then you find yourself walking through it and facing it again and again. And it's because Jesus takes a long time to shape us into his character. So knowing that I want to look at what Jesus had to say, every week we've started off these messages by looking into the beatitudes and asking, what did Jesus say in the beatitudes about our healing, about our recovery? Because I said at the beginning of this, I think you can take the 12 steps of recovery that we often talk about and culture, and you can look at the eight beatitudes of Jesus and see so many parallels.

It's almost like the things that have worked to change people, God came up with or something. I don't know. So let's look at what Jesus said in Matthew Chapter five verse six. The Bible says this, God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice. Some translations for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Now, most of the beatitudes that we've listened to so far that we've heard so far have been kind of paradoxical and confusing. When Jesus says happy and blessed and joy filled are those who are poor in spirit. That is we acknowledge my spiritual poverty, my lack of resources to fix my own life. And that doesn't seem to line up. Wouldn't it be happy if I discovered that I have the power in me to change my own life?

So, Jesus purposely is kind of paradoxical here. Bless the pathway to blessedness is acknowledging your poverty and so over and over in the beatitudes, he says things that don't seem to make a lot of sense naturally until you see him from his perspective. This one does make sense. This one seems right. This one seems to make a lot of sense. Blessed, happy, joy filled are those who crave God's righteousness. That seems to make sense. But it leaves me with a problem. And the problem is that doesn't describe me very well all the time. When I think about, okay, finally I got all avenues, crave righteousness, and then, and I can do that, I can do that. And on Sunday when I leave church, it's very easy to crave righteousness. When I first get up in the morning, it's very easy to crave righteousness.

And then I get out of bed and from then on it's like a challenge right, throughout my day. And I find myself wanting and desiring and craving things that aren't always righteous. And I think that's true for all of us in the room. So I want to talk about why and then I want to talk about how do we fix it? What did ... What tools, what plan did Jesus give us to fix this problem of our inability to change and to overcome? Let's dig into why it is that we do the things that we do that are wrong to begin with. Okay, so the Bible says or not, the Bible says, but, let's just lay out this truth in the beginning. Naturally, naturally, we seek to experience pleasure, avoid pain, and meet all of our needs. That's who we are naturally.

So why do I do the things that I do? Well because I'm human. Now let me be really careful here to acknowledge this is not a good thing or a bad thing. I'm not saying I'm not making any statements about sin or about sinful tendencies. I'm just describing humanity for a second. The way we are created, the way we're born into this world, what we do naturally speaking is that we try to avoid pain and we try to experience pleasure and we try to meet our own needs. Now what are those needs? Well, I think that

most people, most human beings have certain needs in common. We all need some kind of stability or security in life, right? But we also have a need for adventure and variety. I need love and connection. I need significance. I need to know that my life means something.

I need a sense of meaning. I need to grow and I need to make a contribution. Those to me are the six basic human needs that you can go back to again and again. And all of us have them. And the needs are not good or bad, they're just human needs. The problem is in the way we seek to meet those needs. So if you look in nature, you look anywhere in the animal kingdom, you'll find that most creatures tend to draw back from pain. They try to avoid paying. They try to experience instead peace and pleasure. Human beings are a little different in that we seek out purpose as well, but this is just who we are as humanity. So if you're going to understand why you do the things you do, you've got to first understand that part of this is a natural issue.

It's a human issue. I do what I do because I'm trying to avoid pain. I'm trying to experience pleasure and I'm trying to meet my needs and so far there's nothing wrong with that. I just need to understand it. Let's build on that another big truth, sinfully we seek to meet our needs through cravings that are unholy and unhealthy in other words, I have these needs that's just human. I have these tendencies, try to meet my needs. That's just human. But because of sin and because of sins influence in my life because of sins influence on humanity, we then have tried as humans to meet all those basic needs in ways that are not righteous. We try to meet those needs in ways that are not wholly, I try to meet my need for significance by prideful league climbing over people sometimes and scaling the ladder.

And so I try to meet this need in a way there. I might compromise my ethics. I'm trying to meet that need in a wrong way. Someone might continually resort to getting drunk because that provides a sense of stability. Strangely enough, it may not seem that way, but for some people, that's the routine. It's worked for me for 10 years. I don't know what it would be like to try something else so I get security out of that. There are ways in which we use unhealthy, unholy habits all the time to try to meet our basic human needs. Okay? So to understand both of those, if I'm going to overcome some things, I got to know why I do those things. What motivates me? Well, what motivates me is a basic human existence. It's just wrapped up in who I am that I'm going to seek to meet these needs, but I live in a world of sin.

I've committed sin, and because of that, I have a propensity to go the easy way, to go the temporary way, and let's face it, we need to acknowledge that a lot of the ways we try to meet our needs in unrighteous ways, they do meet our needs. If you don't acknowledge that you can't overcome it. Now they don't meet our needs long-term, but they meet our need and the moment they meet our need in at least a counterfeit kind of way, otherwise I wouldn't keep doing them. So I need to understand that I keep doing these things because temporarily it meets a need that I'm not able to overcome on my own. The Apostle Paul wrote about how we tend to do this. I want to read a passage out of Colossians. We're going to take it in two parts because I want to make a couple of different points, but I want you to hear what Paul says about us, about how human beings are in our sinful condition.

He says, so put to death the sinful earthly things lurking within you. I love that phrase lurking because just when you think you've got it all together, you're not going to struggle with anything anymore. It's lurking. It's like their, okay. Andy Stanley wrote a book called The Monster Within. It's like always inside their lurking, so put to death the sinful earthly things lurking within you, have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy for a greedy person is an idolater worshiping the things of this world because of these sins he says the anger of God is coming. And as you're thinking,

I've escaped so far, I don't tell struggle with sexual sin. I don't struggle with greed. So I'm clear when he goes on just to get all of us, he says, you used to do these things when your life was still part of this world, but now's the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander and dirty language.

Don't lie to each other for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all of its wicked deeds. So he kind of goes through, these are all the ways that we as humans try to cope with the needs that we have. There are unrighteous ways in which we go about meeting those needs. So he says you're looking for satisfaction and fulfillment and instead of finding it in God and in a relationship with him, you find it in an inappropriate sexual relationship of some kind or in multiple inappropriate relationships one after another. And so we're seeking and we're finding a temporary kind of covering this need and is not good for me and it's not good for my relationship with God, but it's a temporary weak way of meeting that need. Or we resort to anger and rage, which again is kind of a short-term way.

I'll have an outburst and I'll feel better after it. Even though I'm destroying people, I'm hurting relationships, long-term it is not God's way, but in the moment it helped me to feel vindicated. It helped me to feel as though I got things right even though I really just did more damage or he mentioned slander. Slander is one of these that we sometimes maybe helps us understand how this happens in more subtle ways that I'm sitting around with a group of people who are talking very negatively about someone behind their back and I've got a choice to make. I can either say, "Hey, we shouldn't be saying this or I can join in." Now, right now I've got this need to fit in and be accepted. So in this conversation, if I take a stand and say, you guys really shouldn't be talking about that way, you should go to their face and have a good conversation or I can join right in and I'm going to feel accepted right now in the circle of people, I'm going to hurt that relationship long-term.

So, so many ways that we wind up choosing to do things that are unholy and unhealthy and they help us to meet those needs for a minute, for a day and long-term they destroy my relationships. They pull me away from God. They don't reflect Jesus in my life. And when I choose that pathway, I am not being shaped into the character and to the image and the likeness of Christ. I'm just being shaped further into the sinful old Brandon, right? And so I need to understand naturally we seek to meet our needs. Is nothing good or bad about that, but sinfully I seek to meet them in ways that are unholy and unhealthy. So what do we do about that? Well, here's the third layer, okay? Supernaturally, supernaturally, we can cultivate new appetites and cravings that are wholly and more like Jesus. Another, when I say supernaturally, what I mean is with God's enabling, with God's power, through God's truth, I am able to now cultivate, to train, to sort of whet the right appetites, so to speak.

I can change my actual cravings. I can move from one kind of craving to another. In fact, I wanted to be very intentional in this morning about using the word craving a lot because I think all of us go, "Oh man, now he's in my life." It's easy to go. I don't struggle with that or I don't struggle with that. But the fact is all of us, I think, can identify with, sometimes I have cravings and I don't know why I keep giving into them. I don't know why I keep giving in to them. So what we're talking about today is that supernaturally, it's possible with God's help and power to replace those cravings with something better.

So Paul goes on and says this, he says, "Put on your new nature." Let me stop for a second. In this passage. He gives us a picture and it's a picture of getting dressed and he says, "You throw off, you strip away the old clothing, you take off the old patterns, you take off the old sins, the old choices, the old things that used to do, and you put on, you dress yourself and you put on your new nature, you choose to live like the new person, you put on your new nature. You are renewed as you learn to know your

Creator and become like him in this new life." Doesn't matter if you're a Jew or Gentile, circumcised, uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave or free. Christ is all that matters and he lives in all of us. Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves. So again, zero in on that. That's who you are in Christ, whether you've become it yet or not, you're becoming who you are in Christ.

So he chose you to be the holy people that he loves. You must clothe yourselves with tender hearted, mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults. Forgive anyone who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, he says, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony and the peace that comes from Christ. Rule in your hearts for as members of one body, you're called to live in peace and always be thankful. So he says, we all have these old habits and tendencies and patterns. The things that we run to that involves sexuality. They involve substances, they involve a relational issues that involve the way that I try to impress people, that they involve false ways of gaining the approval of others, the affirmation of others. Sometimes those unmet needs might trace their way back to childhood or adolescence moments where God intended for my parents to give me stability or authority and they didn't or God intended for me to have a sense of significance because someone in my parental authority says, I'm proud of you and that never happened.

And so I've got these leftover unmet needs and in adulthood we have figured out how to cope in ways that feel stable. They seem to meet the needs for the moment. And Paul is saying that we can take those old patterns, those old way of meeting those needs, throw them off and put on righteous patterns, put on righteous ways of meeting those needs. Now let me just back up for a second and say there's a lot of hope in this message that it's possible to change. There's a lot of reality in that it's going to take time and it's going to be hard and at times it's going to be painful because pruning is a painful process as certain things are pruned away and what is left behind is healthy and grows new life in me, right? So, so I know that there's hope, I know that it's going to be hard, but I know that it's possible. I know that it's possible and now I understand how it happens so we're not done yet.

We have another major thing to tackle together, a big topic to deal with, a big question to wrestle with, but I just want to stop and say you need to believe change is possible and that change is sometimes painful, but it's meant for your good. It's painful, but it's meant for your good because change, repentance, confession, apologies, forgiveness, adopting new patterns. That is a challenge to me because I have to leave behind what is familiar even if what is familiar has been killing me. Okay, so I have to commit to the change and believe that it's possible. The problem is I'm still hung up on this idea of cravings. I think that for a lot of us, we've sort of come at this from a common sense angle. Okay? And common sense can get you far in life. It won't get you everywhere you need to go.

Sometimes you need some uncommon sense and sometimes you need some divine intervention and wisdom about situations. So the way most of us handle the patterns in our lives that we don't like, that we know are unhealthy say I come face to face with the fact that I am addicted to blank, fill in the blank. It's going to be different for everybody in the room, but I acknowledge that that's me and I keep repeating this behavior. I keep going back there, and so now my plan of action, knowing that I can change my plan of action is to stop, which is actually a great plan, isn't it? I mean, think about it. It's a great plan. If it worked, if it worked it's a great plan, I am never going to overeat again, just not going to do it. "Hey, we're set now. It's going to be easy from here on now, right?"

I'm just going to stop it. I'm never going to have an angry outburst again. I'm just not. I'm just going to see it come and go and go in there and so we're going to stop it. Now, how are we going to stop it? "Well, I'm going to try harder. I'm going to try harder. I'm going to be smarter next time." And that's how we go about life. We go read another self-help book. We have some prayer time. We do some repenting and we have some conversations to go, "Hey, I know I've messed up like this a thousand times in the past, but it stops today." And we make declarations and they're not bad declarations. They're just sometimes a little empty of power because all it says is stops here. I'm not doing this ever again. Never going back there. And then it's like Tuesday and things go badly and I'm weak and that's where I go again.

So the question is how do I change my craving? How do I change my craving? Because that's what we're really after this morning. I can't just change my behavior. I have to go deeper than my behavior. I have to get into what I'm thinking and what I'm believing and to go even deeper. Why am I believing that? Why do I believe in this moment that this will meet my need? Why do I believe that this is going to solve my issue even though it's unholy and it's unhealthy? How am I going to deal with the craving itself? And here's the thing, Jesus gives us not only the promise that we can do this, he gives us the plan to do this and he gives us the power to do this. Now you can get plans from lots of places and lots of books and courses and but you can only get the power to change for eternity from the creator who designed you and made you and gave up his son to redeem you from the curse and the power of sin to set you free to change your life forever.

So it all starts, as I said at the beginning, it all starts with a decision. I'm going to trust Jesus to redeem me and save me and change me and break the chains and set me free. But now how do I change my cravings every day? Because what I've found is that the old Brandon still hangs around. The old me is still here and he still likes the old things he used to like, so I got to change what I'm hungry for because Jesus didn't say, blessed are those who do everything perfectly. Now, if you did everything perfectly, I'm sure you'd be blessed, but Jesus wasn't talking to perfect people. Instead, he's talking to people he knows are sinful, so he gives them a different wording and he says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. So it's not just the things I do, it's not just the actions I take.

Jesus gets down to the level of want into the level of cravings, and he says, "Somehow you need to change your cravings." Now, this is a revolutionary thought. I came to this realization years ago. It helped me in immense ways. I still haven't mastered it. I'm still working on it and God's still working on me. So I don't want you to think that I've perfected all of this, but I came to realization that changed the way I lived life and handled certain unholy or unhealthy patterns in my life. And so just get ready to absorb this. Maybe write this down or just emblazoned on your memory or something. You choose what you crave. You choose what you crave. Now that's revolutionary because most of us will say things like, "It's just who I am. It's just what I always do. I don't know any better. It's just who I am naturally." We'll sit down and talk with, with a guy, for example, about lust or pornography and they'll go, "Well, I just can't help what I want." Yes, you can. You can help what you want. You can choose what you crave.

I'll give you an example of that. I happen to like, I know this is gonna sound crazy. You're not gonna believe this. I like sugar. Anyone else? Okay? I like sweet things. So what I've found is that if I just freely give myself to as much sugar as I want, what I've found is this going to sound crazy, but it's never enough. It's never enough because I'm cultivating an appetite for this. I'm seeking fulfillment. And guess what you might say people try to be helpful and they're like eating all those sweets isn't really going to help you. It's not gonna make you feel any better. And I just want to go, "Yeah it does." Somebody

brings like a key lime pie over to my house the whole time I'm eating that I feel awesome. It's fun, I feel good. It meets the need in the moment.

Then another problem is if I don't cut it off and, and, and begin to cultivate some different craving, I'll just crave more and I'll crave more and I'll crave more of that. Now on the flip side, if what I decide to eat today is lush, lean, clean, green things, guess what? I wind up craving, sugar. But some of you might chase that another way, but, oh, I still crave sugar. But when I'm capable, when I'm able to see it, I'm then able to go. But this actually makes me feel better. It makes me feel better. I have more energy when I have less sugar. When I'm not overworking my pancreas, I feel better after this. And I like that. I crave that. I crave feeling better. And so I can begin to cultivate that craving. I can begin to intentionally desire and repeat the pattern and replace something.

Now the reason why this is so important is because there is not a person in this room who is really strong enough to just stop all the bad stuff. You can stop it for today. You can stop it for an hour. You might stop it for a week or a month, but you won't stop it forever unless you replace it, unless you replace it, just guaranteed. Because what happens is we're kind of a vacuum in this way. And so when I empty my head and I empty my heart and I decided I'm going to stop this and I create now a pocket, I had a need that I was meeting that way. And so I'm going to stop doing that thing, right? I'm not going to get drunk anymore. I'm not going to sleep around anymore. I'm not going to do those things anymore because they're bad. They're hurtful. I know that now. So I want to overcome them.

And so I quit. And now I'm standing here with the same need and it's unmet and eventually I'm human and I'm sinful. So guess what's going to take over, my tendency to figure out a way to meet this need and I'm either going to go back to it or I'm going to replace it with something else. So the only way to really overcome and change long-term, day in, day out throughout the process of recovery and healing and growing, the only thing you can really do is replace unrighteousness with, and this is revolutionary righteousness. So when Jesus said, blessed are those, God blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. I don't think he was saying who naturally hunger and thirst for righteousness because we don't, none of us do. The scriptures are clear about that.

All of us have sinned. All of us have gone our own way, but, but I think Jesus is getting at when you learn to replace your natural hungers and thirsts, your temporary way of meeting your needs and finding satisfaction and fulfillment in ways that are fleeting and don't last. When you come over here and you start to cultivate a hunger and a thirst for righteousness, for the good things of God, then you are now replacing the things that were so destructive in your life. Now again, now that you know that, right? All I got to do is replace it. Now it's easy, right?

No, we said at the beginning it's hard. It's slow. It takes a lifetime. So realizing all of this doesn't make it easy, but it does give me a tool. It does give me a plan to follow. It gives me something to work with. Elsewhere in the scripture Philippians chapter four Paul wrote this, he said, "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about the things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all that you have learned, which has to do with the mind and received from me everything you heard from me and saw me doing and the God of peace will be with you." Look at the beginning of that. Fix your thoughts. Fix your thoughts. Where do my actions come from?

They come out of my thoughts every time. My habits are the result of actions on repeat. Where do the actions come from? What I'm thinking? Where does my thinking come from? What I have cultivated in terms of my beliefs and my cravings? So when I begin to cultivate and feed an appetite for things that are righteous and holy, I find the alternative that God gives to me, not the world's way, not my flesh's way, not Satan's way. But when I had discovered the way God wants me to be fulfilled and for God to satisfy me, and I discovered that and I start replacing and cultivating that in my life, now I'm filling my mind. I'm fixing my thoughts on God. And this requires intentionality. It requires the work and the discipline. And so if you're looking for like I wanted to come to church today and get a quick, easy fix and make me feel better.

And I'm ... No, I just use the D word discipline, right? It requires the discipline of I need to wake up in the morning and think about the right things. I gotta change my thoughts, got to change my thoughts. Because if I dwell on the thing that I'm addicted to and I wish I could have and that's what I'm thinking about, but I'm not going to do it when I'm thinking about the key lime pie all the time. But I'm not, I'm just, I'm not going to do it, but I'm not going to. So I keep going back to the thing that I'm focused on that that isn't good or isn't. I don't even like key lime pie that much. I want you all to know don't leave here. But anyways, it's just an example. But if I'm always thinking about the thing I wish I could have in this moment, I'm probably eventually going to give into them.

My thoughts haven't been intentionally replaced and cultivated with different thinking. And this starts from the moment that you open your eyes in the morning. It starts then, fixing your thoughts on what is good and pure and noble and noteworthy and praiseworthy and all of those things. It's filling the mind with the things of God. Now, let me be careful for a second because when I say the phrase filling my mind with the things of God, some of you in this room instantly go religious. I am not talking about religion and ritual. When I used to hear that phrase, I need to fill my mind with the things of God. I assumed what that meant was go to church more, sing more, listen to Christian music more. Go to Bible studies more often and the more I do those things and more I do those religious activities, the better I will get.

But the problem is there're people who might be in a dozen Bible studies a week and all they listen to is Christian radio and still mess up over and over and over. We're not talking about religious activity when I say the things of God. I'm talking about the relationship in which I find myself with Jesus. I'm talking about knowing him. And that happens when I'm listening to other kinds of music. I can know God and listen to Creedence Clearwater Revival. I guarantee it. Okay? I can know God more closely while doing other things in my life, not just going to church, not just doing Bible studies, but while I'm going to work, while I'm making the things that I make at my job, I can be close to Jesus. I can focus and fill my head and my thoughts with the things of God as I go about my daily life and all of my relationships.

It's not just being religiously active, it's being relationally close to Jesus Christ. It's getting to know him and so understand that all of us have a mind that has capacity, it has capacity, and it's going to be filled by something, by someone. When people say things to me about parenting and they say things like, "I just, I don't want to make my kids believe anything or tell them what to think or believe and so I just let them decide for themselves. I mean they're already four, they'll get their own worldview down." And they say things like that and I always want to go, somebody's going to tell him, someone will tell them guaranteed by the time they hit 18 a bunch of people have spoken to them about what they should believe. So our minds, we are born with minds that have a capacity and when they're empty or filled

with the wrong things, they are then they take us in an unhealthy, unholy direction. So every day, my choice is to fill my mind with the things of God and to let God fill me with his presence and his power.

When the New Testament says people are filled with the spirit, that's our English translation. And we kind of kept that from the King James and used it in other modern translations because it's familiar, filled with, filled with, I like that phrase. It's not a literal translation. When we talked about being filled with the spirit, literally it has to be influenced by, to be controlled by, but I like the phrase filled with because when I'm filled with the spirit, it's that I come empty and I let him have that capacity. I let him have my thoughts, my mind. He gets his way there and so my head is going to be filled with something guaranteed. I want it to be filled with the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit who helps me to cultivate the right cravings. You decide what you want in life. You don't always decide what you're naturally prone to in the moment because lots of factors, the way we meet needs sin, all kinds of things influenced that, but you get the power of choosing whether you're going to want something and crave something is healthy or unhealthy.

How do you choose it? You cultivate it. You practice it. You work on it day in, day out. Is it possible to change? Yes, absolutely. Is there a plan for it? Absolutely. Is their power for it? Absolutely. It is a matter of fixing our minds on the things God gives us and listen to the way Jesus closes it. He said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice." And don't miss the last phrase. "They will be filled." And that's where some of you are. It's where some of us are right now, looking to be filled. Where am I ever going to find real lasting satisfaction, hope, security? Will anybody actually love me and stick it out? We'll anybody stick with me? Yes, his name is Jesus. Will I ever get real security in my life or do I just keep having to try to find it in one way or another?

Yes, you get real security promise. I'll never leave you or forsake you. He meets those needs. Every need I have that God helped me to have from creation that I've met in an unhealthy way. Jesus has a healthy way in a relationship with him to meet those needs for ever. They who cultivate a hunger and a thirst for righteousness and justice will be satisfied. They will be filled and I want to leave here filled. I want to get to Tuesday afternoon filled. I want to walk through the hard seasons of life filled. I want to go through those hopeless moments filled and the only way to do that is to decide over and over and over. I choose to want God's plan over my own. Want us to bow our heads?

Father, I want to ask you right now to just make this clear to someone. God, if it's confusing, if it's been hard to figure it all out, Lord, just connect the dots. Can I change? Yes. Change my cravings, changed my cravings, want God's best, want God's best. Father, I pray for people in this room who are trapped in patterns that are unrighteous, unholy, unhealthy. Begin today to break those patterns. Begin today to help us to replace those habits, those tendencies with holy, healthy cravings that bring us real satisfaction forever. God, we praise you. Ask you to do this. If you're here this morning and you don't have a relationship with Jesus, I believe with everything in me, you'll not have satisfaction, fulfillment for eternity without Jesus and you can come to know him today. The invitation is wide open. You simply echo from your heart and your intention. Jesus, I believe in you.

I receive you as my savior today. I turn from my sins. I repent. I confess that I have sinned against you. I receive your forgiveness that you purchased on a cross for me, and I will believe that you rose again from the dead. I give you control of my life. I receive you today. If you're a believer here today and you continue to wrestle with an unhealthy, unholy pattern, addiction, repeated behaviors, guilt and shame will motivate you to apologize, but they are not what motivates you to change. What will motivate you

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to change is the promise that Jesus gives you. If you'll just trust me with your cravings, I will satisfy you. I will satisfy you. Jesus I pray that satisfaction, that fulfillment for every believer in this room, as we learn to find it in our relationship with Jesus, God, may you filter that through our lives to every other decision we make. God, we praise you and worship you in Christ's name. Amen.