

Pastor Jeff Williams

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“Road to Recovery” Part 7 – “Maintaining Momentum”

This morning, we’re talking about maintaining momentum. That’s a fancy way of saying “avoiding relapse.” That’s what we’re going to be talking about.

I don’t know about you, but in those areas that I struggle with in my personal life, when I have a period of time when I relapse or fall back into old harmful attitudes, behaviors, and habits, I feel like I’m in the wilderness. How about you? I feel very alone. I feel very ashamed. You do too.

I said, “I’d never do that again.” I said, “I’d never say that again.” I said, “I’d never go there again.” I said, “I’d never-whatever…” And we just feel like we’re in such a wilderness when that happens. That’s human nature, isn’t it? It’s human nature to start out, take two steps forward and then fall one step back.

We’re going to be talking about how to avoid that. I don’t think we’re going to get to the place where we can say, “Okay, we’re never going to relapse again.” In fact, if we get to that place where we say we’re never going to relapse again, we’ve got big problems.

That’s one of the major causes of relapse, coming to a statement like that.

Before we get too far into the message this morning, I want to do a summary of our steps from The Road to Recovery. We’ve taken the word “Recovery,” and we’ve taken each letter from that word and given it a meaning or a step. Let me review. We’re almost through with this now. There’s only next week and we’re done. Let’s review what we’ve covered so far.

**R:** *Realize I’m not God. I admit I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing, and my life is unmanageable.*

**E:** *Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and He has the power to help me recover.*

**C:** *Consciously commit all of my life and will to Christ’s care and control.*

**O:** *Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone else.*

**V:** *Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects.*

**E:** *Evaluate all my relationships, offer forgiveness to those who’ve hurt me, make amends for harm I’ve done to others, except when to do so would harm those or others.*

**R:** I’m going to give you a new “R.” I don’t like the one we’ve got in our notes right now. We’re going to change that.

**R:** Instead of saying *Relapse, falling back in same self-defeating pattern*, **R** will be for *Reserve. Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to do it.* I’m going to say that again: *Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to do it*  
The “Y” of Recovery, we’ll talk about next week.

Well, how does relapse happen in the first place? There’s definitely a predictable pattern that we follow when we fall back into old habits and patterns. How does relapse take place? It happens a couple of ways. It happens when complacency sets in. We say, “I got this thing licked. The pain has eased up. Maybe the pain is not gone, but it’s eased up. It’s tolerable. I can live with it. I don’t need help anymore. I don’t need support

groups; I don't need sponsors; I don't need church! I've got it under control."

Complacency sets in, and relapse is soon to follow.

Compromise, I begin to make steps of compromise, and I play a game almost. It's the gambler who says, "I'm going to go to Vegas, but I'm only going to see the shows." It's the person who had a wrong relationship with somebody, and it may have been an immoral relationship with somebody, and say, "I'm just going to call him/her to talk. Just to talk, nothing more. Just to keep our friendship going." It's the overeater who goes to the buffet, all you-can-eat buffet, and says, "I'm just going to have a salad." And he/she starts putting themselves in situations of compromise. That leads to catastrophe.

Complacency, compromise, and then catastrophe. Let me tell you something, the collapse is not the relapse. The relapse happened a long time ago with the complacency and the compromise. The relapse is just the inevitable conclusion to that pattern of behavior.

You're driving your car, you might be driving your car down the road as you're going home today, and if you take your hands off the wheel of that car, what's going to happen? If you take them off for a couple of seconds, not much, but if you take your hands off the wheel of that car and keep driving, inevitably, you *will* crash. No mistake about it. It will happen. You might drive 40 feet or 50 feet or 60 feet, but you *will* crash.

And if you take your hands off the wheel in these areas of your life, in those areas you're trying to recover from, you take your hands off the wheel-as we're talking about here-you're going to crash. Your relapse is just a matter of time. Bank on it-it *will* happen.

What can cause a relapse? Several things we are going to talk about. **Number 1** is *reverting to willpower*. In Galatians 3:3, Paul says to the church in Galatians, "How can you be so foolish? You began by God's Spirit, do you want to finish by your own power?" How can you be so foolish to finish in the flesh what you started with God's help? Zechariah 4:6 says, "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit' says the Lord, 'You will succeed because of my Spirit.'"

There was this man who was supposedly was a great spokesman for "God." Actually, he was a "channeler." I don't remember his name, so we're going to say his name was "The Great Zucchini" because I can't remember. People used to come from miles around to see "The Great Zucchini." You'd show up at his place of business or establishment, you'd ring the doorbell and you'd open the door to be greeted with incense and music. A woman would show up in a sari, with little symbols on her fingers, and there would be flowers everywhere. A woman showed up one day, and the door opened up, and this lady's standing there in her sari with the incense and mystical Eastern music playing. There's all this ambiance and light, and she said, "Oh, you must be here to see The Great Zucchini, the one who is all-knowing, all-powerful, the one from whom knowledge flows." The lady kinda cut her off and said, "Yeah, right. Tell Sheldon that his mother's here." Every once in a while, folks, we need to be told we're Sheldon. You're not all that, all right?

You revert back to your willpower, and if willpower could do it, you would have done it; but you haven't done it, so willpower doesn't do it. Sometimes we shake our head and wonder when are we going to learn that. Willpower isn't going to get the job done.

Every once in a while, God has a way of telling us we're Sheldon, "You think you're something. You think you've got the answers. You don't know squat. You think you're responsible for your recover and your maintenance of your recovery; you're not." Tell Sheldon Mom's here.

We could start a new tradition. Anyone who gets cocky around here, starts to think they can get it done by him or herself, we can say, “Okay Sheldon, all right.”

**Number 2** is *ignoring one of the steps*. I really want to stress this one, *ignoring one of the steps*. There is no quick fix. You can’t say, “Oh, I’m going to forget about making amends” or “I’m going to bypass that forgiveness one” or “I’m not going to worry about taking an inventory.” You can start picking and choosing which steps you’re going to follow. There’s no quick fix. Relapse is just around the corner for you if you try to take a shortcut with these steps.

**Number 3** is *trying to recover without support*. That’s similar, but it’s a little different. The book of Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, “Two are better off than one because if one of them falls down, the other can help them up. But whoa to the one who falls alone.” We don’t see all of our shortcomings. We’re blind-sided. We don’t see those character defects, right?

A friend of mine was talking about moving away to deal with his addictions, and, yesterday, I told him, “The problem is, wherever you go, *you take you*. You’re the problem, not your surroundings. You need people there who can hold you accountable, who can say, ‘Hey look, Sheldon, you’ve got a problem. This attitude isn’t right, or this behavior isn’t right. We’ve got to do something about that.’”

Nobody’s exempt. Did you know that Peter, the Apostle Peter, had a problem with prejudice? Did you know that? He talks about it in the Book of Acts. He grew up an Orthodox Jew, and he looked down upon Gentiles. He didn’t associate with Gentiles. In Acts 10, God calls him to minister to Cornelius. There’s a name you don’t hear much of anymore. He called him to minister to Cornelius, the Gentile. Peter goes in this house; he says, “Look, I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for God. The way I was raised, you don’t even eat in a Gentile’s home. I’m not really comfortable being here. You’re a Gentile, and I’m an Orthodox Jew, and I’m not supposed to have anything to do with you, but God told me to be here.” Then the Holy Spirit came, and they were born again, and he said, “Now I know that God’s promises are for everybody, Jews and Gentiles alike.” Then he became the biggest proponent for sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles, right? (In Galatians 2, you can read it for yourself at home.) One day, Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians were going to share a meal together. Peter left the Gentile Christians and associated only with the Jewish Christians, just like he used to do. Paul says, “I opposed him to his face because he was wrong.”

Barnabas and others began to join him in the hypocrisy, and Paul went to Peter and said, “You are a Jew.” I’m not going to go into the whole story, but he gave him the lecture. He said it right to his face, in front of everybody, and Paul says this in Galatians 2. Peter needed it. He was relapsing back into old forms of prejudice and destructive behavior. Paul came alongside of him and said, “Hey Sheldon. You’re off base here. You’re being hypocritical. You’re returning back to prejudice, and you need to get back on track with God. Those are your brothers. Don’t disassociate from them, Peter.”

Nobody’s exempt. If Peter can relapse, you can relapse. Without support, we all will. The car will go off the road, guaranteed.

Probably the root for all of these is Number 4. It’s probably the root for the three above that we’ve mentioned. **Number 4** is *becoming prideful, becoming over-confident*. I think that’s really the root of all of these, becoming prideful.

I have a couple of little proverbs here that I thought might be helpful for you to remember. One is “Stay humble or you’ll stumble.” No matter how many years you’ve avoided a relapse, stay humble or you’ll stumble. It doesn’t matter how many years you have stayed clean; no matter how many years you have lived free from bitterness, you’ve been able to forgive; no matter how many years you’ve controlled whatever physical problem it is that you have or mental problem, whatever spiritual problem-no matter how many years-stay humble. “The man who gets too big for his britches will eventually be exposed in the end,” another proverb says.

Some of you are aware of the story of the squirrel that has been coming into my home. Rocky, the flying squirrel, cocky son-of-a-gun. This guy came into my home, and I don’t know how he got in there, but he came in and eventually got stuck in our ductwork.

There were seeds, and he somehow pushed the hose away from where the dryer hose vent went out. He would come at night, and he would get into these sunflower seeds that we had, this bucket of sunflower seeds. I don’t know what we had them for-they were just there. Eventually, I found him, and the cat and I pursued him, chased him into an artificial tree, and I put him outside. I said, “Now don’t come back!” Weeks later, we found out that Rocky was Rock-etta. She had had a litter of little flying squirrels in the walls of my home. I eventually had to cut out a portion of drywall and release the baby flying squirrels and little Rock-etta once more. And then just last week, I woke up at 2 in the morning, the middle of the night, Rock-etta Squirrel was in my fireplace, scratching and trying to get out. I sent a repairman up and said, “Whatever is going on with my roof because that squirrel keeps getting in-FIX IT!” He said, “Yeah, I had found it, a screen chewed away up here, and I had it fixed. I think the squirrel chewed through it again. He had an addiction-wanted those sunflower seeds.” He liked the warm home. So he came back. The cat was trying to get him, and I couldn’t sleep because of all the commotion-him fussing around in the fireplace, so I finally put the cat away and caught him in a Mickey Mouse mug and a paperback book. I said, “Okay, pal.” I put him outside, and he flew off in a tree. I said, “Don’t come back. I’ve got this cat here, Tiger, and he wants a piece of you. Three times you’ve been in my home. I’ve let you go. Don’t come back, Rocky the Squirrel.” Just this week, I fell asleep downstairs on the couch. When my wife has to get up early, and I want to watch ESPN, she says, “Go downstairs” in case I fall asleep. I woke up early in the morning to a crunching sound. Have you ever seen “The Ghost and the Darkness” with Michael Douglas? You know that gross crunching sound? Yeah, I woke up in time to find Rocky’s tale on our family room floor. Pretty gross, ha? I thought the squirrel was really cute, and I kinda liked him. I was hoping he wouldn’t come back, he’d stay in the wilderness. So I picked that tail up, and I said, “You cocky squirrel.” Pride goes before the fall. I told you not to come back to the house, “You poor little guy.” I went and threw out his tale. I mean if there was ever an illustration of pride going before the fall, remember Rocky the Squirrel. This guy just kept coming back and coming back and coming back until the end, a premature death for the young squirrel. That’s what relapse is. “Well, I survived it” and we go back for more. Then we’re set free and we live in freedom for a little while and say, “You know, it wasn’t so bad. I got out.” Then the relapse takes place, and we go back in, and how many times can you do that until finally it has you in its snare, whatever it is, and it doesn’t let you go until it has devoured you? There’s hardly anything left of you at all, just a remnant of what you once were.

I was talking to a friend of mine who I love with my life, who's struggling right now with addiction. When he hears this tape, he'll know who he is, and he'll know that I love him. I said, "You know why you've got to get free? You need to feel good about yourself again. You need to love life again. You need to be the guy you used to be. That guy's still there."

He said, "That's the problem. I don't like myself very much anymore. I don't like what I am." The more often a person relapses, it begins to devour him or her. Bitterness will devour you. Substance abuse will devour you. Immoral relationships will devour you. Destructive habits and patterns will devour you eventually. Don't get cocky. The Bible doesn't tell you (I'll go back to what we said last week) to resist temptation. Nowhere does it say, "Flee it. Flee temptation." It says, "Resist the devil, but it doesn't say resist temptation. You *flee* temptation."

Rocky would have been better off if he'd have stayed as far away from that home as he could and would not have taken another chance. The root of the problem. That scripture is Proverbs 16:18, pride goes before destruction.

This step, **Number 7**, is a *maintenance step*. So we want to focus a little bit on maintenance and how to prevent a relapse. It's important for us to talk about this. We said Step 7 (R) was *Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to do it*. Mark 14:38 says, "Watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation, for the spirit is willing but the body is weak." We all know that to be the case.

So maintaining momentum, avoiding a relapse. We talked about why it happens. How do we keep it from happening? I think, number one, we need to begin with Evaluation.

The scripture says in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Let us examine ourselves." In 1 Corinthians 11:28, "So then, a man should examine himself." Lamentations 3:40, "Let us examine ourselves and let us repent." **Evaluation**. Galatians 6:4, "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to somebody else."

I evaluate "what are the signs?" In your car, you have the dummy-dash or the idiot lights that tell you when things are going haywire. If you are a responsible driver, from time to time, even without the red light coming on, you will look, "How's my pressure? How's the heat situation? How's the oil?" You'll check those things out. When the lights come on, you better heed them. You better do something about it, right? The best thing you can do is keep up on the maintenance of your car. That's the best thing you can do. Keep up on the tune-ups, and oil changes, and keep it up so those problems are less likely to occur. That's what we're talking about.

Evaluation is a kind of preventative-maintenance program. It's doing a heart check.

Think of the word "heart" as an acrostic. Each letter in the word "heart" is a question.

**H**: Am I hurting? **E**: Am I exhausted? The first one is asking me what are my emotions telling me? Am I hurting? Secondly, what is my body telling me? Am I exhausted?

**A**: Am I angry about something? Am I making a demand? What's the demand? **R**: Am I resentful to someone or something? If I am, it has to be dealt with. **T**: Am I tense? If I'm tense, why? When that light comes on in the car, what does that indicate? Some of you, and I know I've done this too, when we see a light come on... I had the coolant light flashing in my car for a long time, and I just did not have time to deal with it, right? It's like the guy who's driving down the road, and his heat light comes on. He doesn't have

time to deal with it, so he takes out his bubble gum and puts it over the heat light. He keeps driving down the road, and his oil light comes on. He has another wad of gum; he puts it over the oil light. There, that takes care of that problem. He drives weeks later, and he starts to smell something funny. Sniff, sniff, sniff. What's that smell? It smells like a burn smell. "I'll fix that," he says, and he rolls down all of his windows. Air blows on through, and he keeps driving. Pretty soon, three weeks later, the car knocks-the engine knocks. He says, "Oh man. I've got some knocking here. I better crank up the stereo so I don't have to hear it." In a matter of time, the car dies-it quits. He's alongside the road, kicking the tires and saying, "That stupid car!" The collapse is not the relapse. The collapse is inevitable because the maintenance wasn't being done. It was being ignored. It was being put off. It was being denied.

If we do that with our car, it's going to crash and burn. If you do that with your life, it's going to crash and burn too. How periodically should we evaluate ourselves? Well, how often do you clean? Some of you here, this morning, you are neat nicks. You are dust-busters. You have those little dust-buster things strapped to your belt. When one of your kids drops something, or you drop something, bzzzzzzz (sound of a vacuum running). You're like that obnoxious waiter who picks up your plate before you're done. You're just spick and span. Others of you are like daily cleaners. Like everyday, I'll straighten up a little bit before I go to bed. Some of you are at the opposite end of the spectrum. Some of you say, "Well, you know, I'm going to clean once a year whether I need it or not." You know, spring-cleaning day."

Evaluation is all of the above. Evaluation is done sometimes moment by moment. When the light comes on, "Oh, what's that there for? Heart check. Check-up from the neck up, "Am I hurting? Am I resentful? Am I angry or what?" So you check up right away. You keep a short list of accounts. Then-daily evaluate. How did my day go? What did I do wrong, but also what did I do right? What are the good things I did? Maybe I held back criticism, or maybe I extended forgiveness, or maybe I resisted a temptation. Whatever that is, what did you do that was right too?

Then, there's the annual checkup. Have you ever considered having an annual retreat? When you get away with just you and evaluate your life. You say, "How's it going? Are my priorities right? Am I heading in the right direction? Am I healthy?"

So, moment by moment, daily, annually, all the above are a process in evaluation. Having friends around who we know and can trust and to whom you can say, "How am I doing?" Remember the movie Saving Private Ryan? Private Ryan is now grown up, he's an old man, he's evaluating his life, and he goes to his wife and says, "Have I been a good man?" Having people in our lives whom we can ask, "Am I doing all right? Am I on track?"

Secondly, *slowing down*. Meditation is a key in maintaining momentum. Slowing down long enough to hear God. Getting rid of the enemies of noise and crowds and hurries. I'm going to read a poem. Gaylord Reeves, in our church, wrote this poem. It's a poem called Escape. We're going to discuss what it's saying, and we're going to dedicate this to all of our hunters that are out today. It reads:

I need to be surrounded by trees and rocks and flowers.

I need my fears begrounded, there to meditate for hours.

The hustle and the bustle of the busy man-made world makes me long to hear the rustle of leaves the wind has swirled.

I need to commune with the wren to know the rabbit's thoughts, to greet the deer down in the glen, to know I can't be bought.

Then once I've charged my inner spring with nature's pure delights, I'll head back home on stable wings equipped for work-world fights.

It's important. So how do you meditate? How many of you here today know how to worry? You know how to worry? If somebody asked you "how do I worry," you could explain it to him or her. Now listen, if you can worry, you can meditate. Worry is negative meditation. Thinking on a problem, and thinking on a problem, and thinking on a problem, worrying about the problem, looking at the problem, that's worry-it's meditation in reverse. Meditation is "What does God say about the situation? What does God say about me?" And I think on it, and I meditate on it, and I chew on it, and I go over it again and again and again.

You'll find you didn't even intend to, but you begin to memorize that scripture. The Word says, in Psalms 115:11 (The Living Bible), "I have thought so much about your words and stored them in my heart so that they would hold me back from sin."

**Meditation.** God's word in the word between these two covers (of the Bible) is the key for your deliverance. It's the key for your deliverance. Mediate upon it.

But don't do like this one pastor did. This one pastor gave advice to a parishioner. This parishioner said, "I'm in big trouble, Pastor. I'm in debt to my ears. I've lost my house, I've lost my car, my wife's left me, my kids are disappointed in me." He says, "I've only got the shirt on my back. I'm just in a destitute situation, Pastor. I don't know what to do. What should I do?"

Pastor says, "The key is in this book, my son." He said, "Take this book and drop it on the floor, and whatever it opens up to, meditate on it. That's the key for your victory." Pastor saw him six months later, and the guy had on a new suit, looked like a million bucks. He had a nice watch, a nice briefcase. The pastor said, "What in the world happened to you? Six months ago, you were a wreck."

The guy said, "Oh, it's great, Pastor. My wife's back, I got my house back, I got my car back. I have a nice suit and clothes. Things are looking up."

Pastor said, "Did you do what I said? Did you find a Bible?"

"Oh, yeah, Pastor."

"Did you drop it on the floor and let it open up?" Pastor asked.

"Yeah, I did."

"Did you meditate on what it said?" Pastor asked.

He answered, "Oh, yeah, I did. That was the key to my victory, Pastor."

"What did it say?"

The man said, "It said, 'Chapter 11.' Bankruptcy, Chapter 11. Okay, don't do that!"

So if you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate. I don't have to teach you.

Thirdly is *prayer*. You can pray for *anything* at any *time*. How do you pray? That's an important question? Why do you pray? You can pray for anything.

How many of you know Chuck Swindoll? Heard of Chuck Swindoll before? Chuck was sharing on his radio program about a woman in his church who was a widow, and she had several children. She was praying for a husband, and she did it in a very unique way. She took a pair of men's trousers and hung them at the foot of her bed, and she would pray

this prayer every night before she went to sleep: “Father in heaven, hear my prayer and grant it if You can. I hung a pair of trousers here. Fill it with a man.”

The lady wrote Pastor Swindoll and said, “I’ve been very concerned since you preached that sermon. I wonder if you have some insight on what’s happening. Ever since you told that story, my 16-year old son has been hanging a bikini at the end of his bed. I’m not sure what that means.”

But you can pray for anything at any time. Remember the story I told about a month ago? I think it was on a Wednesday night of being lost, trying to find a guy in another city. I was trying to buy a collectible for my collection. It’s not big deal that God should be cared about. I arrive in the city, and I’m lost and going to miss the appointment. I went to the last place, and I said, “God, I don’t know. Help me to find this place.” I walked in this 7-11 and said, “Does anyone know where ‘such-and-such’ a place is?” The guy says, “What’s the address?”

I told him the address, and he said, “That’s where I work.” He said, “You’re in the wrong city. You need to get back on the interstate, drive, turn here, do that.”

I said, “Man!” I had just no more than said the prayer, shut the door, walked 12 feet into the 7-11, asked the question, and a guy from another city says, “That’s where I work.”

You can pray about anything.

What did the disciples say to Jesus? They said, “Lord, teach us how to pray.” How do you pray? Let’s turn to that, Matthew, Chapter 6:9. The Lord’s Prayer, “Jesus says, ‘This then is how you should pray. Our Father in Heaven, hallowed by your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

I want you to notice a couple things. Prayer is a key in maintaining momentum. Prayer is a key in avoiding relapse, but I want you to notice something about the Lord’s Prayer.

Jesus did not say, “This is *what* you should pray.” Jesus said, “This is *how* you should pray.” Jesus had just explained to His followers that we should avoid prayers of

repetitious words and just saying words to be saying them. The Lord’s Prayer is a model, not a ritual. Now, I say the Lord’s Prayer from time to time. When we finish our series, we’re going to sing the Lord’s Prayer next week at the closing of the service. But, some have said, “Why don’t we say the Lord’s Prayer every week in our church?”

Jesus did not say, “This is what you should pray. Every time you pray, this is what you pray.” He said, “This is *how* you should pray. This is a model that you should follow.”

That’s why we don’t say the Lord’s Prayer every week, but we do say the Lord’s Prayer. We *do* feel it’s important. I say it personally, but it’s not a ritual-it’s a model for us to follow.

This is how you should pray, and when you look at that prayer, as we’ve gone through these steps now-we’re almost through, do you see the steps to recovery in that prayer?

Just take a moment and look at that. Maybe you’ve never looked at it with those eyes before, but look at it.

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name”-Steps 1 and 2. I’m not God, but You are. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done”-Step 5. “Give us this day our daily bread”-turning things over to God; that’s Step 3. “Forgive us our debts”- Step 4. “As we have forgiven our debtors”-Step 6. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”-Step 7.

Folks, these principles in the Road to Recovery are as old as the Lord's Prayer. It's there. Let's pray together.

Father, as we come to the conclusion of this message, many of these are things we've already known. Others are things we've not seen before. For some of us, it's a way to organize ourselves. It gives us a system to work from. It gives us scriptural principles to meditate upon. I pray for those of us right now who are on that road to relapse. We are already in complacency-we are already in compromise, and collapse is inevitable. Lord, I pray that You would get a grip on them right now, man, woman and child. Help us to walk in humility. Help us to walk in humility. Help us, oh God, to never lose sight of our dependence upon You. And help us to be in a proactive mode, not always in a defensive or reactive mode, but help us to be pro-active, initiating and applying maintenance in our life-taken the offensive with these problems. Praying, meditating and evaluating on a daily basis, being aggressive with it because we know we could end up like that squirrel in my story. It cost him his life. There are some problems here, Lord, that are so severe; unless we understand, not only will it cost us jobs and relationships, dignity, self-respect, but it will cost our lives. This is serious business. Help us to approach it that way. Help us when we see those warning signs not to ignore them or cover them up, but to heed them-that we might recover by the grace of God in all these areas of our lives.

As we receive now the Lord's Supper, we pray that you would consecrate the bread and the cup. As we receive of the sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, for our sin. I pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.