

## I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood.
- B. We are talking about the Art of Thriving, and today's message is part 3. Let's get right into our key verse for today:
  - 1. *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26, NKJV)*
- C. Our topic today is *Total Responsibility*.

## II. Dominion

- A. Travel back in time to the beginnings of the human race. There, in the Garden of Eden, God made humans in his own image. We can't be sure exactly what it means, but I picture God as implanting little fragments of his own nature into ours.
- B. One of the most important bits of God's nature is the quality called Sovereignty.
- C. Sovereignty means that God rules. He is the caring and powerful ruler of our lives and our world. In his sovereignty, God holds the whole universe in the palm of his hand. He rules. He reigns. He governs. God wants what he wants, and shepherds the cosmos to ensure it comes to pass.
- D. God's will reigns supreme. This is the sovereignty of God. He works all things "according to the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11).
- E. That's God's nature.
- F. When he whipped up the recipe to make us humans in his own nature, he dropped some bits of his own sovereignty into us.
- G. In the Bible, this is called Dominion. God gave Adam and Eve dominion. He told them to rule the earth and all its life. It was as if God handed dominion to Adam and Eve. God was the ultimate sovereign, and humans were made to be mini-sovereigns.
  - 1. *Dominion: to accept the power and responsibility to rule your life under the Lordship of Christ.*
- H. This mini-sovereignty is part of our make up.
- I. We have a mind, will, and emotions. With the mind we think, with the emotions we feel, and with the will, we want and we choose. This is the main way you show your sovereignty. You want and you choose. You make plans. You chart your course. You set your heading. You go through life.
- J. Call it free will. Call it dominion. Call it the power of choosing.
- K. God made you royalty.
- L. The Fall and Sin took your royalty away and made you a slave.
- M. Jesus won it all back for you when he died on the Cross, and he gave it all back to you when he saved you.

## III. You Reign In Life

- A. I want to prove this from the Bible because so many people deny this thing called free will — mini-bits of divine sovereignty dripped into our being.
  - 1. *...Those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17, NKJV).*
- B. This verse is definitional of a Christian.
  - 1. If you have Christ, you have received an abundance of grace.
    - a) This means you have a wealthy inheritance! A spiritual portfolio of divine assets with your name on them. The day you received Jesus, you received an abundance of grace.
  - 2. If you have Christ, you also received the gift of righteousness.
    - a) This means you no longer stand before God based on your own performance. It's Christ's performance that counts for you. You are perfect in God's sight — name one person on earth that would call you perfect. But God does.
  - 3. And because of this grace and this righteousness, you reign in life through Christ. You reign. You rule. You have dominion. You are the sovereign.
- C. God gave you this dominion and he wants you to exercise it. He is pleased when you take control of your life and responsibility for your life.
- D. You are spiritual royalty. You are destined to win. You are an heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus. You are a nation of kings, queens, and priests with God. You have privileges. You have powers. You have potentialities. You have rights. You have desires, wants, and agendas that come from heaven above, and your Maker and Lord wants you to get in touch with them. You are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus — His throne is your throne and his dominion is your dominion.
- E. Here is God's message to you today:
  - 1. *The only way to truly thrive is to take one hundred percent responsibility for the quality of your life.*
- F. It's your life. Own it. Go live it. Rise up to your royal stature and go seize that promised Land where you live in the overflow of maximum grace from God.
- G. Don't make excuses when you surrender your authority to any other power.
  - 1. *The lazy person is full of excuses, saying, "I can't go outside because there might be a lion on the road! Yes, I'm sure there's a lion out there!" (Proverbs 26:13, NLT)*
    - a) When I was a kid — 8 or 9 years old — I was chess geek. I played chess with my friends. I bought a big, fat book from Bobby Fischer, the reigning champ, and I practiced his games on a chess board. I had a really cool chess set. I played it a lot.
    - b) There's one rule in chess that you might have heard of. When the game is lost, and you want to quit, how do you signal that you forfeit?
    - c) You tip over your king.
    - d) This is called capitulation.
    - e) To capitulate is to surrender.
      - (1) *Capitulation: to accept defeat in one or more areas of life as your new normal.*
- H. Capitulation means to get off the throne, drop the scepter, and surrender to other forces.

- I. When you ask yourself the question, who's really running my life, here's what your answer should be: I am, under the Lordship of Christ.
  - J. But for so many people, that's not the answer.
    - 1. My debt is running my life. My ex- is running my life. My hormones. My temptations. My past failures. My emotional disturbances. Victimization. Disabilities. Circumstances. Anything.
  - K. I am here to tell you today that if you have capitulated, you can stand that king back up, stand that queen back up, and get back in the game of running your life under the mighty Lordship of a Savior who wants nothing but your best.
  - L. I want to look at four ways that people capitulate and not even realize it.
- IV. *Four Ways to Capitulate*
- A. *When You Define Yourself as a VICTIM*
    - 1. The simple truth is that in some measure you have been a victim of evil and pain in this fallen world.
    - 2. You have been a victim of other people's craziness, of other people's sinfulness, violence, and deceit.
    - 3. You bear the wounds of the giant Pain Machine called Earth. You have scars. Incapacities. Extra difficulties that other people don't have to deal with.
    - 4. You have been victimized. That's a fact.
    - 5. But that fact doesn't have to define you.
    - 6. It doesn't have to be the core of who you are. You have to get to a place where you can look in the mirror and see something beautiful. Where you see beyond the trauma, beyond the loss, beyond the injury, beyond the bad genetic hand you were dealt — where you can see the beauty and potential of a royal sovereign in the halls of heaven's throne room.
    - 7. When you accept the mantle of victimhood, you capitulate to your past.
    - 8. You set pain at the core of your existence.
    - 9. From that core radiates an army of little emotional gremlins that suck the joy right out of your life. Bitterness. Despair. Anger.
      - a) You settle for surviving, and give up on thriving.
    - 10. Because on the throne of your life sits a little machine that keeps looping your victimization over and over and over again.
    - 11. It says, I own you. I define you. I am you.
    - 12. It doesn't have to stay this way. You can knock that little machine off. You can refuse it. You can refuse to give your victimizer one more day's satisfaction. You can take your rightful throne, and rule your life.
    - 13. It wasn't your fault. You are not responsible for what other people do to you, or for what life throws at you.
    - 14. But the older you get, the more responsible you are for how you handle it. If God says you can reign in life, then you can.
      - a) *Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls. (Proverbs 25:28, NKJV)*
    - 15. You can rebuild the walls. You can rule your own spirit. You can kick the usurpers out. But only you can do it, and you have to take responsibility.
      - a) The only way to thrive is to take one hundred percent responsibility to stay alive constantly.
  - B. *When you SHIFT BLAME.*
    - 1. Every time you blame somebody else for the sorry condition of your life, you are capitulating.
    - 2. Every single time.
    - 3. Moms and Dads, every time you join your kid in blaming somebody else for the sorry condition of your life, you are teaching them capitulation as a way of life.
    - 4. What other people do or don't do might be a REASON for your difficulty.
      - a) *Never let the REASON for your difficulty become an EXCUSE for your helplessness.*
    - 5. You might say, but Bill, it's not all my fault. Yeah, I made some dumb choices, but it's not all my fault. It's my ex-'s fault too. It's the government's fault too. It's the teacher's fault too. It's the other driver's fault too. It's my parents' fault too.
    - 6. It's only half my fault.
    - 7. Okay.
      - a) *Own one hundred percent of your fifty percent.*
    - 8. The devil didn't make you do it. Your hormones didn't make you do it. Your genetics didn't make you do it. The lion in the road didn't make you do it.
    - 9. You made you do it.
    - 10. Jesus Christ did not shed his blood to redeem you from the darkness of sin and depravity so you could spend your days shifting blame for the lousy condition of your life.
    - 11. He gave you a scepter and throne, and it's on you if you don't use them.
    - 12. Aren't you glad you came to church?
    - 13. But there's a deeper point here:
      - a) *Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God... (Hebrews 12:15, NKJV).*
    - 14. When you constantly blame other people (or forces) for your miseries, you are automatically clogging the pipeline of grace that God has flowing to you.
      - a) *Grace flows to the place of dominion, and if you're not in that place, you're not feeling that grace.*
    - 15. You fall short of what could be yours with every excuse, and every time you point the finger of blame.
    - 16. I'm not trying to beat you up.
    - 17. I'm trying to shake you up so you can come back to your senses and the full experience of Grace.
      - a) There's a third way that people capitulate and hardly even realize it.
        - (1) When you define yourself as a victim.
        - (2) When you shift blame.
  - C. *When you Tolerate SIN.*

1. Sin isn't just a little thing you do — I'll lie, I'll cheat, I'll steal, I'll fornicate, I'll do porn, I'll gossip, I'll be unkind, I'll misrepresent the situation, and put the other person in a bad light. I'll break God's laws. I pretend sin isn't sin.
2. Sin is not just a little thing you do.
3. Sin is a master and it makes you its slave.
  - a) *Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you [master you], but you must master it.* (Genesis 4:7, NIV)
4. Some people are chain smokers. They use a match on the first cigarette and then light up the next one with the first one, and go through a whole pack that way.
5. All people are chain sinners. The first one leads to the next one and the next one after that, and soon you have a big pile of consequences you never intended when you lit up the first sin.
6. Why?
7. Because sin is by nature a master, and when you capitulate, it gloms onto the throne and gets harder and harder to depose.
8. When you tolerate sin, you violate your own nature. You contradict your own identity. Your actions don't line up with your truest self. There's a mismatch and that hurts. That makes you crazy. That creates fractures in your soul that your soul can't bear.
9. Sin hurts.
10. There is no thriving outside of God's will.
11. Tolerating sin in your life sets you squarely outside God's will. It's outside God's sovereignty, and therefore outside your sovereignty, and therefore has become your Gollum-like master holding on to the precious throne of your heart.
12. Good luck with that.
13. Here's the fourth way you might capitulate and not even know it.

**D. When you Accept DEPENDENCY.**

1. There is a big pine tree on my property that's a hundred feet tall. Most of the needles are off, so it's a scraggly looking thing. A woodpecker kept visiting that tree all winter. I could hear it knocking. It came so often, I stopped noticing.
2. One day, I saw him fly to the tree, and decided to watch. He hopped over to a perfectly round hole, and went inside. Immediately, this chatter of baby woodpeckers rose up.
3. Papa woodpecker was feeding his babies. A minute later he crawled out of his hole and flew away south.
4. The babies screamed bloody murder, and finally quieted down.
5. A minute after that, Mama woodpecker flew to the tree, hopped over to the perfectly round hole, and climbed inside. The babies got excited again, as Mama woodpecker fed them.
6. Then she climbed out of the hole and flew away north.
7. A little while later, the father came back. Then the mother. Then the father.
8. It was endless.
9. Sounds like parenthood, right?
10. There will come a day when those fledgling woodpeckers get shoved out of the nest and learn to fly on their own.
11. I hope and I pray that has already happened to you.
  - a) *If you expect to live off the sweat of another person's brow, you have surrendered your sovereignty.*
12. You have capitulated.
13. You have fallen short of grace.
14. There are exceptions of course — when you're sick or going through unusually hard times. Everybody needs help at times.
15. But dependency should not be your normal. Not on your family. Not on your government. Not on your kids. Not on your parents. Not on medically unnecessary drugs. Not on any thing or any one else to make you feel good about yourself besides God.
16. Learn to fly.
17. Exercise your dominion.
18. Dependency traps you in immaturity. It limits your freedoms. It enslaves you to whoever is taking care of you. You don't call the shots, they do — unless they're as dysfunctional as you are!
19. It is not healthy to stay in the nest forever — it's a failure to launch. A failure to thrive.
20. It's a capitulation to your own fears. It's an enthronement of your inadequacies. Anybody who would gladly pay your way through life does not love you. They love themselves and are addicted to your neediness.
21. God loves you both, and wants you out of the nest.
22. Fly away, take charge of your life, and thrive.
23. It's your life. Nobody else can live it for you. Take one hundred percent responsibility for the quality of your life.
24. So what do I do if I've messed up?
25. How do I regain control?
26. Let's outline a quick Action Plan to regain your dominion.

**V. Action Plan**

**A. Step One: Name the Outliers.**

1. Here is the realm of your dominion — the walls of your fortress.
2. What areas of life have fallen outside your control?
3. Name them. Identify them. Confess them. Get real. No excuses. No blame. Own one hundred percent. Even if someone else is at fault, own one hundred percent of your fifty percent.
4. Where have you lost control? Where is another force owning you? Dominating you? Running your life?
5. Name the outliers. Run through a checklist:
  - a) Health. Money. Relationships. Marriage. Dating. School. Grades. Homework. Housework. Career. Business.
    - (1) If it's part of your life, and you don't like what's happening, it's outside the walls, and you need to name it.

**B. Step Two: Reclaim Ownership.**

1. Reclaim ownership of every part of your life.
2. You can do this in prayer. You can do this in journaling. You can do this in counseling and therapy. You can do this with a loved one or friend.
3. Take responsibility.
4. Take blame.
5. Repent of all your lame excuses.
6. Name the messed up places in your life, and own them all. Every single bit. It's my fault. I blew it. I messed up. I'm better than this. I can rise above. I'm taking back my life.
7. Tell God and the devil and everybody listening that you are fully responsible for every single piece of your life's puzzle. No spirit has power but the Holy Spirit. And nobody has rights but you.
8. All it takes is faith to declare it.

**C. Step Three: Depose Your Easily Ensnaring Sins.**

1. This is from a Bible verse:
  - a) *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us. (Hebrews 12:1, NKJV)*
2. There are some sins that tempt me, but not you. There are some sins that tempt you but not me. We're different.
3. You have to know what sins ensnare you. Then, you have to undo them.
4. Here's an easy one to spot, and I know this might be uncomfortable, but it's meant with love.
  - a) If you're living together, either break up this week, or get married this week. Sin has ensnared you. If it's love, then make it true love and get married. We will help you. If you want a big wedding, great. Do that three months from now. But get married this week. That's love.
    - (1) Depose (kick off the throne) your easily ensnaring sins.
  - b) If you're caught in addiction — chemical, porn, alcohol — get into Celebrate Recovery and get clean and sober. It was so awesome last week to see the baptisms of men and women who are celebrating a year or whatever of sobriety.
  - c) If you are a bully, if you are a mean girl, if you are snooty and arrogant, if you are a self-righteous church person, the sins you do become your undoing.
5. Pay back your debts. Make amends. Right your wrongs, wherever you can. Pay your child support. Quit bad-mouthing your ex. If your boss isn't happy, step up your game and quit whining about it. If you're royal child of God, and you're not a great employee, there's something wrong inside your soul. Own it.
6. Let other people be responsible for other people, and you take responsibility for yourself. If they did something stupid, the most loving thing you can do is stand by until they own it. Don't rush in to fix it. That's not love. If you have a voice in their life, gently speak the truth. If you don't have a voice in their life, shut up, pray hard, and stand back.
  - (1) Kick off the throne your easily ensnaring sins.
- b) If God calls it a sin, and you embrace it, you are heaping fire into your lap, and you're going to get burned.
- c) Make a change.
- d) It only takes faith to choose it.

**D. Step Four: Get on the Path of Growth**

1. This is what I talked about in Part One of the Art of Thriving.
2. Thriving isn't like flipping a switch.
3. It's more like tending a garden.
4. You plant a seed, and nurture its growth.
5. Immature people make excuses. Immature people like dependency. Immature people lack the resources to soar above the victimizations and traumas of life (long term).
  - a) *Owning Your Dominion*
    - (1) *Only faith can declare your dominion.*
    - (2) *Only faith can choose your dominion.*
    - (3) *But only maturity can enforce your dominion.*
6. There are no short cuts. No magic prayers. No trick Bible verses. No glory clouds. No steps or techniques or sacrifices that can ever make up for a shallow knowledge of God and his Word.
7. If you don't fix the immaturity problem, every other problem will keep coming back, only doubled in strength and turned toxic.
8. God Saves you. God Blesses you. God Grows You. God Uses you. Get on the Grace Pathway, grow, change, and increase till Christ is formed in you, and you have restored your dominion, because that is how and when you will master the Art of Thriving.