

**[Slide 1: Series cover slide]**

Good morning, New City.

We're in a series called "Life Change from the Heart".

When we kicked off this series

13 weeks ago;

Kevin explained that life change comes from the heart

And that it begins

as we begin to live by the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:16-17, 22-23** say

**[Slide 2: Galatians 5:16-17, 22-23]**

*<sup>16</sup> So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. **[you're free to change]** <sup>17</sup> For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control.—Galatians 5: 16-17, 22-23 (NIV 1984)*

**[Slide 3: John 15:5]**

So the deeper we grow within the Spirit (i.e. the deeper we grow in Jesus, The Vine), the greater is our experience of the Spirit's fruit. This is God's desire. In John 15:5, 8 Jesus says

*<sup>5</sup> I am the Vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."—John 15:5 (NIV 84)*

The idea is that  
the more our hearts experience fulfillment in the Vine,  
the less we need to pursue it anywhere else,  
because a deep experience  
of things like love, joy, peace, and faithfulness  
are what we're really after, anyway  
as we pursue those other things.

**So as this need is being met in our hearts,**

through a fulfillment that is by the Spirit  
we become free to change—to no longer  
need to gratify what our flesh desires

In this way,

life change really begins from the heart,  
from the heart's true fulfillment.

The question then becomes

**What does it mean to “live by the Spirit”, to “remain in the Vine”?**

**To help us explore this,**

we said that for this series,  
we'd be using the 12 step framework  
written by Bill W and Dr. Bob,

**the two cofounders of Alcoholics Anonymous.**

And in doing so,

we'd be focusing on the gospel foundation  
which inspired them.

**By focusing on this gospel inspiration,**

**we eliminate the idea**

**that this is a series about addiction.**

The framework then  
simply serves

**to guide the sequence of our focus,**

as we walk through the gospel.

In addition to this,

it gives us a practical way to work out  
each piece of the gospel  
that we focus on  
along the way.

**However, we can't dismiss the powerful reality**

that when one devotes herself to the gospel  
in a way which takes advantage of this framework  
the experience of the spirit becomes so powerful  
it can free her from the clutches of death and insanity,  
the very byproducts of addiction.

**As we began looking at this frame work**

we first recognized  
that like the Apostle Paul,  
every single one of us is equally powerless to sin  
when we are apart from the Spirit

**Following this,**

**we began to take a deep dive**

into what it really means to live by the Spirit.

And we said that it boiled down

to this ongoing journey

of the heart's devotion

1<sup>st</sup> for the greatest commandment,

to love the Lord with all one's heart, mind and strength

and then for the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment

which is to love one's neighbor as herself.

We said this must be true,

because in Matthew 22:36-40

Jesus says all the Law and prophets

hang upon these two commands.

**So beginning with the first and greatest commandment,  
we likened this portion of the journey**

to cleaning the inside of a cup,

a process in which we

begin to learn

what it means to let God

clean our hearts of

any self-indulgence we present to Him;

to allow Him to create as much space as possible

to fill with His Grace.

**This process,  
was the focus of steps 4-7.**

We talked about this cup cleaning process

for six weeks.

Then, last week

**we shifted our focus  
from the greatest commandment to the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment**

to do so, we took a deep look at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

in which He explains what it means to approach

obedience from the heart—in the context of having

already addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> and greatest commandment.

To do so, He begins by first demonstrating the impossibility  
of pursuing righteousness through the law.

To demonstrate this,

He uses the law against murder as an example

**[Slide 4: Law against Murder]**

*<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.—  
Matthew 5:17-20*

**Jesus follows this reality**

**about the impossibility of righteousness through obedience**

**With the right way to approach obedience**

and He does this in the context

of having already addressed

the greatest commandment

of having already cleaned the inside of the cup

of having already positioned the heart for the Lord

**[Slide 5: Leave Your Gift at the Altar]**

*<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

—**Matthew 5:23-24** (NIV 2011)

To address the greatest commandment first,

Jesus sets the scene for what He says

at the altar

The place where one goes to offer their devotion to the Lord

So when we are at the altar,

after we have completed steps 4 through 7,

after we have addressed the inside of the cup,

we are now ready to move on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment,

because that's all that remains.

Remember,

all the law and prophets

hang on the 2 greatest commandments

so if we've already addressed the greatest commandment

all that remains is the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment

when we're talking about obeying the Law

And what type of action demonstrates

the heart's devotion to loving your neighbor as yourself?

It's the pursuit of reconciliation

with those you have wronged.

This of course

is the very focus of steps 8 and 9,

which read

**[Slide 6: Steps 8 & 9]**

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

So just what is reconciliation?

And what does it look like?

Just to be sure that we're all talking about the same thing,  
let's see what our good friend  
Mr. Dictionary  
has to say about being reconciled

**[Slide 7: Definitions of Reconcile]**

**Reconcile** *v.tr.*

1. To reestablish a close relationship between.
2. To settle or resolve.

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**Reconcile** *vb (tr)*

1. to become friendly with (someone) after estrangement or to re-establish friendly relations between (two or more people)
2. to make (two apparently conflicting things) compatible or consistent with each other

Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003

Given these definitions,

I feel it's fair to say

that to pursue reconciliation with someone

is to pursue harmony within that relationship

So what's the right way to go about doing this?

If I were someone devoted to the Law  
and I was in attendance at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount  
my mind might immediately take me to the Torah,  
to the book of Numbers  
where Numbers 5:5-7 says

**[Slide 8: Numbers 5:5-7]**

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>6</sup> "Say to the Israelites: 'When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty <sup>7</sup> and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged.—Numbers 5:5-7 (NIV 1984)*

This sounds very mathematical, right?

This can't be what Jesus was referring to  
when he said we should pursue reconciliation  
with those we have wronged.

Remember, He just finished preaching that  
obedience to the Law should be approached  
from the heart, not through the letter of the Law.

But how could anybody possibly know what it means  
to pursue reconciliation,  
if it's not by the Law?

**In the case of pursuing the greatest commandment,  
of pursuing Lordship**

Jesus presented the right way to pursue it  
in contrast to the wrong way  
in contrast to the way which is spiritually blind  
or hypocritical  
He said to approach it  
by cleaning the inside of the cup.

In this case, however,  
He doesn't offer any suggestions.  
So what  
or who  
do we model our approach to reconciliation after?  
Well, given that earlier in His Sermon on the Mount  
He said that He has come to fulfill the Law,  
and given that in doing so  
He reconciled humanity to God,  
I think it's fair to say  
that we should model our approach to reconciliation  
after Him

consider Romans 5:6-11

**[Slide 9: Romans 5:6-11]**

*<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*<sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.—Romans 5:6-11 (NIV 2011)*

The idea that we should model our pursuit of reconciliation  
after Him

becomes even clearer  
when we consider the gospel of John,  
chapter 13 verses 1-17

**[Slide 10: John 13:1]**

*<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

[Imagine the gravity of this moment, the suffering that was to come had now occupied  
Jesus awareness]

**[Slide 11: John 13:2-3]**

*<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.<sup>3</sup>  
Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;*

[The dominos were all in place,  
and the first had already been tipped over  
to start the sequence,  
can you imagine watching that string of dominos fall—  
knowing that the last domino is a crucifixion you don't deserve.  
So what does Jesus do in that moment?]

**[Slide 12: John 13:4-7]**

<sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

[So this act of washing His disciples' feet  
is symbolic of something  
they will understand later,  
after some future event comes to pass]

**[Slide 13: John 13:8]**

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

[so whatever is symbolized  
by the washing of their feet,  
must be very important,  
because without it, we have no part with Jesus]

**[Slide 14: John 13:9]**

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

[And the disciples responded, "Dude!?!? Peter!?!? Seriously?!?! Just the feet, alright? ]

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

**[Slide 15: John 13:12-17]**

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You

*call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.—John 13:1-17 (NIV 2011)*

So Jesus washes His disciples' feet  
as a symbolic representation of what was to come.  
Given that He did this  
in His awareness of His impending crucifixion,  
I think it's fair to suggest  
that washing His disciples feet  
symbolized His death on the cross for humanity.  
It symbolized the sacrifice He took upon Himself  
for the sake of reconciling humanity to the Father.  
But Jesus  
doesn't just wash their feet  
so they could have something to remember.  
He washes their feet,  
so they can remember  
that they are to wash one another's feet,  
that they are to pursue reconciliation with one another  
in the same way that He did.

**So if we're going to model our pursuit of reconciliation after Jesus,  
what should it look like?**

Well, let's consider the path Jesus took to reconciliation  
after washing His disciples' feet

John 19 says

**[Slide 16: John 19:1-3]**

*<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe <sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face....*

[Jesus' willingness to pursue reconciliation

came at the expense

of being beaten, mocked, and ridiculed with a crown of thorns]

**[Slide 17: John 19:6]**

*<sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"*

[In spite of His own people

calling for His torturous death,

He marched on toward His crucifixion,

so that even His very accusers

might be reconciled to His Father]

**[Slide 18: John 19:16b-18]**

*<sup>16b</sup> So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him....*

This act of crucifixion is gruesome.

Nails were driven through His flesh,

so that He could be affixed to a wooden cross.

Can you imagine the horror  
of someone putting a nail  
to some part of your arm,  
taking aim,  
and then driving it in with a hammer?

Can you **imagine gravity** pulling  
the weight of your body  
against those nails?

Can you imagine being hung in this way  
until death finally came in the form of asphyxiation?

Jesus didn't just accept this,  
He pursued it  
so that our relationship with God  
might be brought to harmony  
that we might be reconciled,  
through our faith in what only He could do.

**So that's the type of willingness  
we are to have when we pursue reconciliation.**

That's the degree of humility we are to demonstrate  
when we approach those we have wronged.

Notice how Jesus didn't curse at His accusers,  
even though He knew He did nothing to deserve this.

He only focused on their need to be reconciled.

This is what our hearts should look like  
when we pursue reconciliation.

Even if **harm was committed** against us,  
we're not to dwell on it.  
In fact, don't bring it up.  
Instead, crucify your pride,  
even at the expense of being ridiculed by others,

**So Jesus models  
what the pursuit of reconciliation should look like.**

He demonstrates  
that it should be pursued sacrificially,  
at our own expense,  
not at the expense of others.  
He demonstrates that it should be pursued with total humility,  
at the expense of our pride.

He demonstrates that it should be pursued with Mercy,  
that even if

**the other person has done wrong,  
and we are in the right,**

we should march on.

He demonstrated,  
that this is what love looks like.

**And this is how we should love one another.**

**[Slide 19: 1 John 3:16 & John 13:34]**

*<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.—1 John 3:16 (NIV 2011)*

*<sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."—John 13:34-35 (NIV 2011)*

So what does all of this look like  
in terms of our step work - in steps 8 and 9?

Step 8 is all about preparing our hearts  
to be full of humility,  
as we consider the harm we caused others

**that preparation is largely about**

focusing only on the harm  
experienced by the other person,  
about giving them the benefit of the doubt  
that they were innocent,  
even if they weren't.

It was about starting to crucify my pride  
for the sake of reconciliation,  
because it's reconciliation that matters most.

**First, I needed to make a list of all the people I had harmed,  
and what I did**

**that had caused them harm**

this was pretty easy,  
because I wrote about most of these situations  
in my 4<sup>th</sup> step examination,  
and I talked about them with my sponsor  
as I read them,  
during my 5<sup>th</sup> step confession.

**After creating this list,  
my sponsor reviewed it**

to make sure  
that I wasn't listing  
things that didn't really need to be listed,  
to make sure that the harm I listed  
**truly was harm, and not some trivial disagreement**

**My sponsor made sure  
I wouldn't be setting up a bunch of meetings  
for the sake of making myself seem pious.**

That meant he had to remove from the list  
all of the ladies  
who had been  
absolutely, positively, devastated  
by their loss when we broke up.

**One of the general rules of making amends**  
is that we avoid those which involve former romantic interests,  
except under special circumstances.  
These types of amends are addressed in a different way.

So after weeding out all of the stuff  
which didn't belong on my list,  
**now the list was too short.**

My sponsor questioned  
why **none of my immediate family** was listed.

I explained to him  
that the majority of the havoc I wreaked,  
came after I had left my parents house.  
It all happened  
thousands of miles away from them.  
Apart from a handful of instances,  
no more than 6 or 7,  
there was no way they could have known  
what was going on with me.

**My sponsor insisted they knew**

He also insisted, that my sisters were also hurt  
C'mon now.

My sisters too?

My sponsor suggested  
that at the very least,  
their lives must have been harmed  
because I brought harm to their parents.

**So after we finalized the list,**

**I had to revisit the harm that I caused each person.**

**I had to write about it  
according to a specific format**

**[Slide 20: Three Column Writing Format-1]**

which is projected on the screen behind me.

The page is divided into 3 columns.

Within the first column,  
you simply list the name of the person you harmed.

Within the next column  
you are to list the specific actions  
you took

which resulted in the harm.

Using my parents as an example,

**within this top portion**

I was to list the specific actions I took

which might lead them to believe

their son had a problem with drugs or alcohol.

So I listed the handful of items that I could recall

no more than 8 or 9.

For the section beneath this,

**[Slide 21: Three Column Writing Format-2]**

I was to list the **types of harm** that these actions might have caused.

Regarding my parents,

my sponsor challenged me

to be as harsh as possible on myself.

He made sure that I included things like

**causing them to fear**

that they may suffer the loss of a child

to alcoholism

**or causing them to fear**

that in spite of doing the best they could

to raise a child,

that child not only rejected their love

but he responded with hatred;

**or causing them to think**

that the child they slaved for  
so that he could have the college education  
that they were never afforded,  
took what they slaved for  
and wasted it,  
as if their suffering didn't matter.

**In filling out this portion**

I was to assume the worst consequences for my actions,  
within reason.

And as I did this,

I wasn't allowed to consider  
anything

**that they might have done** wrongfully.

I wasn't allowed to focus on any context  
which might justify my actions.

To do so would eliminate humility.

Next, in the top section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> column,

**[Slide 22: Three Column Writing Format-3]**

I was to assume that they were innocent,

and consider **what types of things**

**they might think of a person**

who did what I had just listed in the column to the left.

Again, I was to consider the worst that they might think

What types of names would they call such a person?

And finally,

beneath this,

**[Slide 23: Three Column Writing Format-4]**

I was to try my best to describe

**what it would feel like**

if I were an innocent bystander

and this were done to me.

For this one,

my sponsor essentially had

me do my best to define in my own terms

the essence of feelings

like rage, torment, devastation.

How painful would it be

to fear that your own

child could be killed?

I had to do this for every person on the list.

Once I had done this

Once I had done my best to put myself in their shoes

**I was to write a script for each person**

And there was a format to the script.

**What mattered most,**

**is that I focused only on the key points of this script:**

**[Slide 24: The script]**

**1<sup>st</sup>** I had to explain that I was working a program of recovery

because I was an alcoholic

if it was appropriate,

I could share with them

the type of work that this entailed

**2<sup>nd</sup>** I was to explain that part of this program

requires me to consider the harm I have caused others

**3<sup>rd</sup>** I needed to explain that if I didn't go through with this

it could jeopardize my recovery

**4<sup>th</sup>** I needed to acknowledge the harm that I caused each person  
And I needed to do so  
in a way which wouldn't open an old wound  
or create a new one.

In doing so, I was to say nothing  
about any harm that the other person might have caused.  
I was to exclude any form of justification for what I did.  
There was to be no explaining.

**5<sup>th</sup>** Instead, I was to acknowledge the fact  
that I could never truly understand the reality of the harm I caused.

**6<sup>th</sup>** I was to acknowledge that I didn't deserve to be forgiven  
and understood if I was not

**7<sup>th</sup>** I was to ask for forgiveness, and

**8<sup>th</sup>** I was to conclude with silence,  
allowing them to respond  
or not respond,

to forgive or not to forgive.

If it felt awkward,

I was to let the awkwardness persist,  
until the other person was ready to speak.

This was the script I was to follow for every amend

So you might be wondering to yourself  
what the heck was all that writing about  
in the three columns.

That writing

was all about preparing my heart for the amends.

The scripts are all about preparing my mind for the amends.

**After writing each script,  
my sponsor reviewed them,**

**so that I could begin rehearsing them**

The expectation wasn't  
that I would be taking the scripts with me,  
and it wasn't expected that I would recite them  
word for word

Instead, it was expected  
that I would simply do my best  
to be prepared  
to cover each of these points.

**After getting all of the scripts taken care of,  
I next needed to set up meetings**

with the respective people.

In setting up these appointments,  
I needed to communicate that I had something important to discuss,  
and that we needed to be able to meet in private,  
or in a place where there wouldn't be any distractions.

After this, all that remained was to make the amends themselves

**the act of pursuing those amends  
is the work of the 9<sup>th</sup> step.**

I can't possibly explain to you  
how helpful it was to go through all of this  
with someone who himself had been led through this.

There are a lot of questions to be asked,  
and having the benefit of a sponsor is huge.

**When the time came for me  
to make amends with my parents**

I bought a plane ticket home specifically for this reason  
I met with my mom, first.

When I envisioned our meeting happening,  
I envisioned it happening in some type of special place,  
which would be forever etched in my memory.

Instead, my mom suggested we meet in the garage,  
in her car with the garage door open.

And so I began.

After doing my best to say my portion, as prepared,  
I concluded with the silence my sponsor had suggested.

**Leading up to that point,**

I had spent two years demonstrating by my actions,  
as I worked the prior steps,  
that I was a different person.

I demonstrated without the need for words  
that this wasn't an empty plea for forgiveness;  
that it wasn't coming from the usual place of reactive shame.

**So there we sat in her car**

for what seemed like an eternity of silence  
and then she finally spoke.

With tears in her eyes  
she said she forgave me;  
but that she had just one question  
for which she wanted a truthful answer.

**“Of course,” I said.**

She looked me in the eyes and asked,  
“*Mijo*, what really happened to the car?”

With great confusion I asked,  
“What do you mean? What car?”

“You know.

The car you said was stolen that night

when you were in high school.

What really happened to it?”

I couldn't believe it.

This was her big question.

Seriously?

I poured out my heart and soul,

and of all the things to ask,

this was it?

So doing my best

not to sound like the brat I was when the incident took place,

I replied,

“Mom, believe it or not; the car was really stolen that night.”

“Okay.” She responded.

**And she opened the car door and left.**

That was it. No magic moments,

just a weird question, and an abrupt ending.

**Later than night, I went to meet with my oldest sister**

As I drove over to her house

I remembered the argument I had with my sponsor

about not needing to go through with this one.

She was eleven years older than me,

she moved to another city for college

when I was seven years old,

And I moved to Detroit before she ever moved back.

All of my shenanigans took place thousands of miles away from her.

She didn't even really know me.

How on earth could there possibly be a need for reconciliation?

**Nonetheless, I proceeded.**

We met in her house and I said what I had prepared.

After reaching the moment of silence with her,  
I remember expecting her to see just how noble I was,  
for extending my gracious amends,  
even to her.

But then she began to speak.

With tears in her eyes,  
she expressed how angry and hurt the entire family was,  
all because of my total self-indulgence.

She expressed how even though my parents took the brunt of it;  
through them  
it took a toll on the entire family.

She expressed how much she  
and my other sister  
hated me through all of it.

I was shocked.

I was humbled.

**I listened to my sponsor and sat in silence.**

So those are a couple of the amends that I went through

They don't always turn out so well

Oftentimes,

the amends process is merely the beginning  
of the pursuit of reconciliation.

**Before going through the amends**

I thought I had gotten everything there was to get  
from the step work

the work of the cup cleaning process was so tremendous,

I thought the rest of the steps were just a formality

But the amends process was equally transforming.

So to date, we've talked about the first nine steps.

We've talked about what it means  
to pursue a journey of the heart's devotion  
to the two greatest commandment.

**These first nine steps are the heart of the framework**

The remaining 3 steps actually get started  
well before reaching the 9<sup>th</sup> step,  
and they continue without end.

We'll be talking about these steps after the New Year.

**I kind of like**

**that we are pausing our series**

**at this very point.**

At the point which focuses  
on the very reason that Christ came to be with us  
to reconcile us to His Father  
to be the example after which  
we model our pursuit of reconciliation.

I love that the next sermon you will be hearing  
will come on the very day  
that we focus on the joy of His birth,  
on the joy of His Grace,  
on the joy of His Mercy.

My family and I  
won't get to be here for that  
we'll be flying back to Texas  
to be with our parents.

Have a Merry Christmas everybody

May God fill your homes with His presence.