

What do we need to recover from? What do we need to repent of? Paul says to the church at Rome. We studied much of that book recently. I'll take you back to chapter seven. Where in verses 15 to 17 he said I don't understand myself at all. For I really want to do what is right but I can't. I do what I don't want to do. I do what I hate. I know perfectly well what I'm doing is wrong but I can't help myself. It is sin. Sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things. I don't understand myself at all for I really want to do what is right but I can't. Romans 7:15 through 17. my friends we come this morning to the beginning of what will be a six week discussion a six week study that we've entitled, "the road to recovery". I've already the used the word repentance in just these first couple of minutes. You really can sinuously use the two words. The idea of moving away from the opposite direction of sin and the patterns of sin that's so easily entangle us. These next six weeks are going to be about this road. This journey this movement away from sin toward that which is true and right and good. The road to recovery today's message entitled, "The First Step to Freedom." Recently I read this a couple weeks ago. A father was trying to take a nap on a Sunday afternoon. Raise your hand if you enjoy a Sunday afternoon nap. Absolutely! What is it about a Sunday afternoon nap? It's just a beautiful thing. Dad was trying to enjoy a Sunday afternoon nap but his little boy kept bugging saying daddy I'm bored. So this dad being the resourceful kind of guy that he was made up a game. He found a picture of a globe in the newspaper a picture of the world. And he ripped it up in about 50 pieces. And said son this is a puzzle. I want you to put it all back together. He lay down to finish his nap thinking he would get at least another hour or two. But in about 15 minutes the little boy comes and whacks him on the forehead says daddy I'm done. The guy can not believe what he is hearing. He says you're kidding me. The dad knew his didn't know all the positions of the nations and the continents and things like that. And he said how did you do it? And he was done. It was perfect. He said how did you do that. The little boy said daddy it was easy. There was a picture of a person on the back page that newspaper you ripped up. And when that person got put together the world looked just right. We're beginning a new series today. We're calling it the road to recovery. And it's going to work God's word the truth of God and the spirit of God my friends is going to work on your person. It really is amazing how much better the world looks when your person is put together not the way you think it should be put together not the way culture thinks it should be put together. It's amazing how much better it is when you and I are put together the way God designed you and I to be put together. We're gonna talk about in this series how to handle how to overcome the hurts in your life. You understand that you've been hurt? Right? You understand that in a fallen world see this doesn't make you unique. See a lot of heads all of a sudden dropping down. He's not looking at me. He's not talking to me. No, put your heads I'm talking to you. In this fallen world filled with fallen people. Some of whom did their best to raise you and me. And some of whom didn't. And filled with mistakes and short comings and challenges in a fallen filled with fallen people I guarantee you along the way you and I have been hurt. In this discussion we're going to talk about overcoming in a God honoring way the hurts in your life the habits that stem from those hurts. You and I have been hurt. It's just a fact. There's no arguing it. And in the midst of

being hurt we develop habits. We develop sinful patterns and habits that move us away from, from what's right. And so many times those habits are tied to the experiences that we've endured. We're gonna talk about overcoming the hurts in your life. The habits that stem from those hurts and the resulting hang-ups and pain that it all can lead to. The verse that we've chosen for our theme verse in our series, "the road to recovery" is Isaiah 57:18. You'll see this on the screen here this morning. God speaking. What an amazing promise this is. What great truth this is for you and I in the midst of this fallen world impacted as we've been by the fallen nature of mankind. God says this. He says I have seen how they've acted but I will heal them. I will lead them. And help them. I will comfort those who mourn. I offer peace to all near and far. This is a great promise of God. Notice there are five parts to recovery that God wants to do in your life and mine. Five parts to restoration process the repenting that you and I can experience. God says first of all if you've been hurt. And you have and I have been God says I want to what? I want to heal you. If you're confused God says I want to lead you through that confusion. If you've felt you were helpless to change anything. He says I want to help you. God, the god a universe is saying and promising to you this morning that he wants to help you change that. If you've felt it. No one understands your problems. And no one sympathizes with your struggle. God says to you I want to, I God want to comfort you. If you feel anxious and worried and afraid God says I want to offer you peace. The fact is my friends we live in an imperfect world. We're hurt by other people. We hurt ourselves. And we hurt others. The bible says in Romans 3:23 that how many have sinned? That all, that all have sinned. That means none of us in the room this morning none of you listening on line none of you watching by way of the broadcast this morning are perfect. We have all blown it miserably. We've all made mistakes. And we still struggle with that sinfulness. We all hurt. And we all hurt others. This series my friends is for every single person listening. Everyone in this room needs repentance. What do you need to recover from? I've got a note sheet there for you. I hope you'll follow along as we go. What is it that we need to repent of? What is it that we need God's help in recovering from? The good news is this. Regardless of the sin pattern that you need recovery from whether it's emotional or financial or relational or spiritual sexual whatever else it might be. The good news is that the steps away from that sinful pattern are always the same. The principles for recovery the principles for repentance away from sin are always found in God's what? In god's word it's the original recovery manual if you will. And the basis the foundation of any recovery effort that's going to ever have any lasting fruitful effect will always be the word of god. Now for the sake of our discussion in the weeks to come we've summarized the principles of recovery around the word recovery. You see it there. R E C O V E R Y recovery, we'll take a letter or two each week and look at eight summarized steps on the road to repentance on the road to recovery. The first step if you see it there in your notes. You can fill this in. the first step this morning on this road to recovery is the R. and the R in recovery stands for realize. Realize you and mean have to do this. We have to realize that I'm not god. Now that may just sound inane to you. It may just sound completely inept. I mean you might be sitting there thinking well why in the world did you think I struggled with that? Of course I'm not god. Well listen. Bear with me. Let's think this

through a bit. Let's realize I'm not God. Let's admit that I'm powerless to control my tendency toward sin. Is that making sense? To realize that I'm not god. To admit that I'm powerless in and of myself to control my tendency towards sin. And that my life left to just me and my own management and my own leadership and my own direction my life left to just me is completely unmanageable. You ever stay up late when you know you need to sleep. Do you ever eat or drink more than you should? Do you feel like you ought to exercise but you don't? do you ever know the right thing to do at work? Do you ever know sense in your heart the right thing to do in that relationship at home? Do you ever sense that that right thing to do with your boyfriend or girlfriend? And then you don't do it? You do what's wrong. Do you ever do something's wrong but do it anyway? Have you ever known you should be unselfish but you're selfish instead? Have you ever tried to control somebody or something and found it was what? It was uncontrollable. We're all every single one of us in this room everyone is need of recovery from our tendencies toward sin. What's the cause? Follow along on your note sheet. What's the cause of my problem? The cause my friends of your problems the cause of my problems the cause when it comes to these tendencies toward sin is our sin nature. The bible has word for this tendency. It's called my sinful nature. You might want to write that down. My sin nature gets me in all kinds of problems. And when I say my sin nature gets I guess right here for a moment I'm just talking about, I'm just talking about be. I sent you an email this week. I don't know how many of you are on my email list. If you're not you can get on that list by just going to our website there and clicking on the email list sign up thing. But I sent you email this week. I just felt like as we started this series it was important for me talk to you about my own addiction. And about my own sinful patterns and addiction and sinful patterns that I continue to beg God for help with each and every day of my life. And I won't get into all of that this morning. If you want to read that you can go to my blog this week. I think it will be posted there on my blog. Maybe even today and you can read through that note that I sent out. But I want you to understand something. We're in this together. My sin nature gets me in all kinds of problems. I do things that aren't good for me. I do them even when they are self destructive. And I don't do things that are constructive that are good for me. I respond the wrong way when I'm hurt. And it just increases the hurt rather than lessening it. I react the wrong way to people. I treat them in wrong ways. And I know it's not going to work. And then sure enough it backfires. And things just get uglier. I try to fix problems. And often when I fix them they end up worse than they were when I began trying to fix them. And I'm reminded each and every time right smack dab in the midst of that ugliness and darkness and frustration of what it says in Proverbs 14 there is a way that seems right to man but it ends in death. It's important that you and I understand as we set out on this journey together that every one of us will always have this side of heaven. Those of you in the room that know the Lord those of you in room who have fully surrendered your heart and life to Christ even us those of us who know him we will until that day we're with him we will struggle and fight against this thing called our sin nature. Paul understood it very well. He said in Romans seven as I read to you earlier. I don't understand myself at all. For I really want to do what is right but I can't I do what I don't want to do. I do what I

hate. Does this sound vaguely familiar to anybody in the room this morning besides me? Could I get a little louder yes or a more--thank you. I feel a little vulnerable out here on the limb. Just want to make sure somebody's out here with me. Thank you.

The first step to recovery the first step to repentance my friends is that you must understand the cause of our problem. The cause of my problem the cause of your problem is that you listen you want to be God. We do. We say I don't want anybody telling me what's right and what's wrong. I want to call my own shots. I want make my own rules. I want to put myself at the center of my world. I want to be my own boss. Live my own way. If it feels good I'm gonna do it. If it looks good I'm gonna buy it. If it makes me happy I'll get more. I don't want anybody telling me what to do with my life. And that my friends is called playing god. And what it says about you and what it says about me is that we want control. This independence from God this this unwillingness to trust him and this demand that we will take care of it what ever it is is at the very foundation of this sin problem. It's called playing god. This is man's this is not please hear me. This is not man's newest problem. This is man's oldest problem. This started way back where am where am I turning. To the book of what? You can go back. You can go back to Genesis 3. You should read. You really should. Read it again today. Having listened and having thought through this stuff with us go back and read through genesis three. It's the oldest problem alive. Adam and Eve had it. God put them remember we'll summarize here. Remember God put them in the garden. God put Adam and Even in absolute utter paradise. And they tried to control it. You remember what happened as the serpent and tempted Eve? God said you can do anything you want in this entire paradise except one thing. God said the one thing you can't do is don't eat from this certain tree. What did they do? They bee lined in essence to the tree. And there the enemy makes his pitch. There the enemy says you will be like God. There the enemy says you're eyes will be opened. You will be in control. And there it is that Eve and Adam eat. It's been the problem from the very beginning. I wanna be God. I wanna call the shots. I wanna run my own life. I will function independently from God. You can fill this in. how do we play God? By denying our humanity and trying to control everything. And you can even add everyone for selfish reasons. So how do we play God? Write these down.

How do we play God? Number one we try to control this has been going from the beginning. We try to control our image. My goodness do I do this. And I won't speak for you. But I bet I could speak for a lot of you. We try to control our image. You wanna control. You wanna control what other people think of you. You don't want other people to really know what you're like. That's why it was hard for me to press send on that email I sent you this week. We don't want other people to really know what we struggle with. We play games. We wear masks. We lie. We pretend. We fake it. We want people to see certain sides of us. And yet we hide other sides of us. And we deny our weaknesses. And we deny our feelings. I'm not angry. I'm not upset. I'm not worried. I'm not afraid. I'm not insecure. I'm not wounded. I'm not abusive. We don't want people to see the real us. Why? Why was it so hard to press send this week when I sent that to all of you? Why do

you work so hard to keep me from seeing the real you? Why do I work so hard to hide that from people in my life? You know why? Because if I tell you who I really am and you don't like it which if I tell you who I really am you probably won't. And if you don't like then you'll leave. And I don't want you to leave. If you read my email you understand why. Cause if you leave I'm all alone. Just stuck with me and I'm all I've got. And that's no good. So I don't tell you who I really am. And I would never share with you all things I truly struggle with because I want you to like me. We try to control our image. We try to control other people. Write that down. Number two we try to control other people. Parents try to control kids. How's that one going? Parents try to control kids and that doesn't work. Kids just end up getting resentful. Kids try to control parents. Hey gang that doesn't work. You just end up living in futility. And with this lack of wisdom that god designed you to get from those two who you've tried to push away. Wives try to control husbands. Doesn't work so well. He just gets fed up and tired and goes else where. Husbands try to control wives. Doesn't work so well. She either fights back and tries to control you. Or she just gives up and goes away either literally or emotionally. People try to control other people. We manipulate each other. We use guilt to control. We use fear. We use praise. Some of you use the silent. Some use anger and rage. We try to control so we can get from them what we want. Because in our sinfulness from the very beginning in the garden we've been trying to play who? God. Number three we try to control our problems. We try to control our image other people and our issues. We're good at this. We use phrases like I can handle it. It's really not a problem we say. I'm okay. Really I'm fine. I don't need any help. And certainly don't need counseling. We try to control our problems. I can quit anytime. I work it out on my own. And the more you and I try to fix our problems ourselves the worse the problems get. Fourthly write this down. We try to control our pain. Remember we talked about the beginning all of us have been what? All of us have hurt. Have you ever thought about how much time you spend running from your pain? Trying to avoid it. Trying to deny it. Trying to escape it. Trying to reduce it. Trying to postpone it. People try to postpone pain in a number of different ways. Sometimes we try postpone pain by taking our mind off the pain and eating. Sometimes we postpone by not eating. Sometimes we try to postpone our pain or take the edge off our pain by getting drunk or smoking or by taking drugs or by getting in and out of relationships. I hear it all the time. This next relationship will be the one I know. They say. He is. He is I'm convinced he is what I really need to feel really whole and significant. And you get in that relationship and oops! It didn't work. He wasn't it. She didn't meet all your needs. And it's in and out in and out one relationship after another. Or you develop some kind of compulsive habit. You've got this pain over here so you just become obsessively compulsive in all kinds of ways doing all kinds of things to keep yourself busy and distracted from the fact that things aren't right down deep in your soul. You become abusive. You get angry with other people. Critical judgmental to hide you own inadequacies and pain. Pain comes my friends when we realize in our quiet moments that we're not God. And we can't control everything. And that is absolutely scary. And that's the first step to recovery. Stop playing god. Cause you know what the fact of the matter is you can not control your image. You can not control other people. You can not

control your problems. And you can not control your pain. The good news today is that somebody else can. And we'll get to that in just a moment.

Roman numeral 2 what are the consequences of this activity? When you and I give ourselves to this kind of endeavor what happens? I mean we've just clearly established it's not gonna go to well. It doesn't go very well. And when we try to make it go well things get really sideways. Four problems that always happen always when we try to play God. Number one fear this is again right from the text. This is right from the genesis account. It's a very biblical concept. Fear takes place. When I try to control everything I get fearful. What do I mean? Well Adam said in Genesis 3 remember Adam and Eve sin. They eat the fruit they weren't suppose to eat. God comes walking in the garden. The text implies doing what he had done often in the past. Coming to walk with them in the garden but this time they're not walking with him. This time they're what? They're hiding from him. God finds Adam and Eve. He says what is up? What happened? What went down? Adam basically says I was afraid. God says why are you hiding from me? He says I was afraid. Because I was naked and so I hid. Naked, exposed all the fault all the failure right there. See we're afraid somebody's gonna find out who we really are. That we're fake that we're phony that we really don't have it all together that we're not perfect that we're actually a mess so nobody gets close to me because if they do they'll find out I'm empty. And so we fake it and consequently fill our lives with fear. Afraid that somebody's going to reject us afraid that somebody's not gonna love us or not like us when they see what we're really truly like. We get filled with fear. Just like Adam when we try to play god.

Number two write this down. We get filled up with frustration. It's frustrating somebody once said trying to be the general manager of the universe. I was reading a story about Chuckie Cheese this last week. And it reminded me I use to like taking my kids to Chuckie Cheese. Key word there would be I used to. I don't know if we've got Chuckie Cheese people in the room. I mean let's all be honest. It's fun for the first couple years. But when you get about 3, 4, 5 years into this thing it can be an absolute drain. But I remember when it was fun. Going to Chuckie Cheese and there was this game that I always liked to play. Raise your hand if you remember where you put the tokens you grab that mallet and those things pop up and you just whack it. Kind of a therapeutically thing there at Chuckie Cheese in my opinion cause you can get so wound up and keyed and frustrated. The moment you hit one down another pops up. It's frustrating because every time you slam one done another pops up. Then you slam that one down and another pops up. And you get that one and this one pops up. And you know what that's life. I mean its life beyond Chuckie Cheese. It's just everyday life in an effort to play god. We whack down one compulsion and another one pops up. We whack down one sin and another challenge another temptation pops up. We whack down one relational conflict and another relationship goes south. It's so frustrating cause you can't get them all knocked down at the same time. You walk around pretending you're god like your powerful and you can handle it. But the fact of the matter is you can't. The frustration is overwhelming

and we might as well just walk around to the back the dumb machine and unplug it. It's the only way we're ever gonna through that one.

Paul realized this in Romans 7:21 and 23. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right in inevitably do what is wrong. Something else Paul says is deep within me. That war with my mind that wins that wins the fight and makes me a slave to sin frustration. David understood it in the Psalm where he said my dishonesty makes me miserable and filled my days with frustration. Fatigue write that one down. Fatigue we get filled with fatigue. It's tiring playing god. It's hard. It wears you out trying to control everything and everyone and every circumstance in your life. David in Psalm 32:4 and 5 I think said my strength. Listen to this. My strength he said evaporated like water on a sunny day until I finally admitted all my sins to you oh God. And stopped trying to hide them. Most people try to hide their pain and run from the pain by keeping busy because we think I don't like the way the pain feels. I don't like what I think when I slow down. I don't like the sounds or the thoughts that run through my mind when I lay my head back on my pillow at night. So I just keep busy. You run from pain by constantly being on the go. Working yourself to the bone at and away from work. You get into some hobby or some sport. And it becomes a compulsion. And you're on the golf course all the time or scrap booking too much or hunting too much or shopping too much. You can even get compulsively involved in spiritual activity. Did you realize this? Church activity can hide your pain. You're hoping that you'll be so tired that when you lay your head down on the pillow that you'll go to sleep and you won't have to hear racing through your heart and mind the painful realities of your life. If you're in a constant state of fatigue always worn out ask yourself what pain am I running from. What problem what sin do I not want to face up to that motivates and drives me to work and work and go and go and deny and deny so that I'm in this constant state of fatigue.

Number four failure that's right. When you try to play God that is a job description my friends that you are grunted to fail at. It will not go well. Proverbs 28:13 you see it there. You'll never succeed if you try to hide your sins if you try to hide your addictions if you try hide your sinful patterns if you try hide these things it will never work. Confess them. The writer of Proverbs said. Confess them, give them up. And God will show mercy to you. You need to be honest and open about your weakness your faults and your failures. My friends at Blackhawk these days we have growing desire to be a I think the best word that keeps coming to mind. We have a growing desire here at Blackhawk these days to be a gracious people. To be a gracious place an authentic place where, where people all people red, yellow, black, and white, rich, poor, educated, un-educated doesn't matter where you live what your past is what your family nothing just a place where all people can talk about the real problems and the real hurts and the real hang ups and the real habits and not be as a result of that kind of openness not be blown away by the judgment of others but instead realize that we are family of fellow strugglers disciples followers of Christ who are in process if you will. And to help all of us anyone in the room this morning anybody listening on line anybody watching on the broadcast to help all of us

further engage and encourage us in this journey toward repentance and recovery. I'm so grateful for our celebrate recovery team. A team of people who have faithfully been preparing not only as they've helped me with this series but beginning on May 8<sup>th</sup> and then from then on on Friday nights here at Blackhawk there will be a celebrate recovery gathering. They have celebrate recovery gatherings at Fellowship Missionary at the Chapel at Pathway. There is a collaborative effort these days among churches to provide a place for those who are serious and honest and sincere in their efforts to move away from sin. To come and be a part of a gathering and then also on those nights be a part of smaller groups and settings where accountability and prayer and encouragement and honest speaking the truth and love type things can go on. And I'm so thrilled that we're gonna be able to do this beginning May 8<sup>th</sup>. And I went to a celebrate recovery. Actually I've been to a couple now gatherings. I went one night about a year and a half ago and it was at that event over at Fellowship and I met a gal who's told me a little bit of her story. She ended up writing me later. And I wanted to read this to you. She said this about her journey.

Pastor Byrd it was an honor to meet you the other night. I've watched the bible hour for six years and honestly say that at times your broadcast you'll love this your broadcast your willingness to teach the truth and love and your son's ability to lead worship (laughing). I just love it. They think he's my son. And I wouldn't mind him. I mean Dave and Lori have done great. I claim no responsibility for that. But it's just funny. I should probably write her back. To this day she thinks he's my son. But anyway, your son's ability to lead worship are the only things that have kept me going. I mentioned to you the other night when we met that god has used celebrate recovery to completely transform my life. A life that was broken and hopeless and seemingly beyond repair. I had been married for about two years when it became clear that I was addicted to unruly rage and anger. I was over critical and mean spirited and negative toward my husband in most encounters. And even though I knew it was wrong and in time diminish his love me I continued in my sin. And refused to seek the help I desperately needed to soften a hard and hurtful heart. The tragedy of my addiction Pastor Byrd is that. The tragedy of my addiction Pastor Byrd and the sin that I committed was that it led to more. That's right. My husband in time shut himself off completely from my regular outbursts and my controlling negativity and became lost in his own sinful commitment to work pornography and eventually another woman. At the eight year mark of our marriage we were completely enslaved to our sin. And while at times we both made efforts toward recovery nothing ever really changed and the destructive cycle simply continued. Two years ago a persistent friend of mine invited me to a celebrate recovery gathering on a Thursday night. And it was there that I realize for the very first time where my anger and controlling patterns came. And most importantly what the cure was to these addictions that had destroyed my heart and marriage. I eventually began to attend the Sunday morning gathering at my friend's church. And began to experience the life changing transformation I've often heard you refer to as the word of God the spirit of God and the people of God coming together. My husband has actually started to attend celebrate

recovery with me. And while we're no where near healthy or restored I'm hopeful for the first time in years that the healing power of the gospel can be ours. And that freedom from sin's addictive powers will one day be realized. Amen?

Well how do you react to that kind of a story? How do? How do you process that as you as you hear that? Here would be two ways that you might be tempted to react. These would be two way I would hope you wouldn't though. One way that we react to a story like that ... bless her heart I'm thankful that she's doing better and thankful that that's all that worked out. But my problems not that bad. Many of you are sitting in this room right now saying my problems not that bad. It's called denial. How bad does it have to get before you admit you need the healing power of the gospel? How bad does that hurt that relationship that pain that consequence that problem that memory have to get before you admit that you desperately need help and healing? I read this week that unfortunately it is human behavior that we rarely change until our pain becomes greater than the fear of change. It is the fear of change that often times leads us over here stuck in this painful dishonoring to god place. We don't change when we see the light. No we change when we feel the heat. And the marriage starts falling apart or the kids start going off the wrong way or you get that phone call in the middle of the night and this one guy I was reading said save yourself. Save yourself some pain. Start now today on your road to repentance and recovery. One man said it this way. It happened to me. Things began to get healthy and god honoring. He said it happened to me.

A pain finally ate through the wall of my denial. God whispers to us in our pleasures. I love this. God whispers to us in our pleasures. God shouts to us in our what? Pain is gods; pain is god's megaphone to pursue him. To ask for help. To face the issue that you've been ignoring ten, twenty, maybe thirty years. Second reaction to a story like that. That I wouldn't want you to have is that's fine for her but I can solve my own problem. It's called denial too. Unless you've had a perfect life there's some things you need to let Christ and the word of God and the spirit of God deal with. You say well I don't need Christ I can....

Well the fact is that if you could handle it you would have. But you haven't have you? If you could have handled that problem it wouldn't be a problem. You wouldn't still have it today. It still wouldn't be eating away at you and effecting the every day of your life like it is. Ran I think it's interesting they ran in and hid behind the bush. God had made them and God had made the bush. And they're hiding from God behind the bush. Just think about how, how silly that is.

Well what's the cure. Roman numeral three the cure. The first step on the road to recovery is to admit my powerlessness. The bible says that in admitting my weakness I find strength. Now I understand this isn't a popular American cultural self-sufficient. I understand that we all got taught to raise ourselves up.