

## Series Intro

If this is one of your first weeks at LifeLine you picked a great week to attend as we're starting a brand new series titled "Gravity". Gravity is all about the laws and principles that are operating in the world that we just can't change. For instance, if you took your refrigerator on top of your roof, brought it to the edge, and pushed it off, the law of gravity would cause it to come crashing to the ground every time. It wouldn't matter if you really *wanted* it to stay there floating in the sky. It wouldn't change anything if you closed your eyes before you pushed it, thinking that not watching would change something. And you couldn't know enough about gravity to somehow beat the rule. Pushing your fridge off your roof will leave your beloved kitchen appliance in a heap of rubble on the ground 100 percent of the time.

Like the law of gravity, there's certain rules, laws, and principles that govern the way life works. There's certain actions that if we do them, the outcome will be the same, no matter how much we might *want* something different to happen. This series then is all about these principles of life that simply exist.

As a follower of Jesus, I believe these principles represent the way God has wired the world and wired us as people made in His image. If you're not on board with the whole Jesus thing however, I have good news. You can try these things out without believing in God or in Jesus. You can test these principles, see how they work or don't work in your life, and come to your own conclusions on how the universe is wired.

**As we dive in, I have a confession to make. I'm a big sci-fi nerd.** Ender's Game, Aliens, Star Wars, Dune, Divergent, 1984... the list goes on, I love it. Whether it's the book or the movie, count me in. Just for fun, everyone take a second and think of your favorite sci-fi movie or book. Got it? Alright, yell it on three. 1... 2.... 3.

Now I know some of you are like my wife are not totally convinced that sci-fi is the best genre ever. You feel like everyone who yelled something out is above you on the nerd scale. If so, we can still be friends. You're just missing out.

But back to sci-fi - one of my favorite characters in these movies is.... the robot. Because let's be honest, the robot is an essential ingredient of any good sci-fi movie, right? I mean think about it:

Starwars has R2-D2  
The Matrix has The Sentinels  
Transformers has Optimus Prime  
Wall-E has... Wall-E  
Without the robot the film falls apart

**Now if you've noticed, robots also have something in common with each other. That is they were all built for a specific task. They were all built to do something.**

R2-D2 was built to help repair spaceships and project holograms  
The Sentinels were built to kill off the remaining humans  
Wall-E was built to clean up a planet filled with litter  
Optimus Prime was built to be awesome

**Robots spend all of their time doing the same thing - they have a specific task. And it's not all that difficult for people to become like robots.** In fact, if we look back in history, we see a whole people group who essentially became robots. No, they weren't cyborgs, even though cyborgs are cool. Instead they were slaves.

The people group, as some of you might have guessed, were the Israelites. They were slaves in the country of Egypt under Pharaoh, the leader of the Egyptians. And we read about their task here.

*They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. (Exodus 1:14 NIV)*

These Israelites were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. Generations of people just made bricks. Generations of people just worked in the fields. It's possible these people almost forgot they were human - they were brick making robots.

Many of you know what happens to these people. God sends Moses to Pharaoh to demand that the people be let go. Pharaoh eventually agrees and the people flee the country out into the desert on their way to the promised land - the land of Canaan, modern day Israel.

Now I have a hunch. I think that when these people reach the promised land and settle in, they will revert back to the same behaviors they had in Egypt. The brick makers would go out and make bricks, the field workers would go out and tend the fields, and they'd do this day after day after day. And ironically, even though they escaped slavery, they would still be slaves. Slaves to money, slaves to progress, and slaves to themselves.

**What's interesting is that you and I can start acting like robots if we aren't careful.** We can become obsessed with doing one thing really well and we start to believe that's the only thing we were built for.

(Athlete): Kevin is a junior who has basically played football since he was 3. He eats, sleeps, and breathes the game. Every waking moment he's thinking about it. During the off season he's constantly lifting weights, researching plays, and watching games. He eats, sleeps, and breathes the game. When he plays well and gets attention, he's on top of the world. When he plays poorly, he falls into a depression. He's a slave to the game. He's making bricks.

(Academic): Or meet Katie. Katie is a brilliant sophomore who spends nearly all of her time studying or reading. While she's careful not to brag, grades mean a ton to her and when she falls below her usual As, she's heartbroken. She obsesses over her grades, her grade point average, and how well she is doing in comparison to her classmates. She's a slave to her grades. She's making bricks.

(Comedian): Jack is one of the funniest freshman at his school. Stories and jokes come easily to him and he often finds himself in the center of his group of friends with them laughing at his humor. But over time Jack has shifted from *wanting* to be funny to *having* to be funny. People expect him to make them laugh. And he starts feeling the pressure of the limelight; of needing to be the funny one. And quickly Jack finds that he's a slave to his jokes. He's making bricks.

**Some of you might be asking - what's the problem with this?** I love sports, I'm okay if it takes all of my time. Or I love school, or I love being the center of attention. Why is this bad? And let's be honest, those things aren't bad. Football, good grades, and humor are all great things, but when we become slaves to them - when we start acting more like robots who have to perform those tasks, something very dangerous creeps in. The fear of being replaced.

Think of the robots for a minute. Their entire existence is summed up in the one thing that they are suppose to do and if they stopped doing that thing, they'd get replaced. If R2 stopped being able to repair ships and project holograms, he'd just be a trash-can-shaped scrap metal. If Wall-E couldn't clean up earth, he'd just be a weird square box with binoculars on top of it. Without something to do, these robots become meaningless piles of rubble.

And while most of us don't have human-sized robots rolling around the house, we have different types of robots. When a fridge stops keeping things cold, we replace it. When a microwave stops heating things, we toss it. And when things are no longer useful, we get new ones.

**When we act like robots, we fear being replaced.**

(Athlete) Kevin was the star of his team, until he started his senior year. There were a couple of other guys who had been training over the summer and when fall came, Kevin found himself ranked fourth or fifth rather than at the top of his class. He found himself in a daze, feeling like he had become like the outdated iPhone and was no longer useful. He thought to himself - "they can't do that, they can't be better than I am - I'm the football player - I'm the start of the team - they're stealing my bricks".

(Academic) Katie was the top of her class until the first exams wrapped up. She realized she hadn't studied enough of what the test was on and her grade fell by a couple of percentage points, allowing a couple of other students to do better than her. She still had a good grade but was furious. She found herself thinking "I'm the smart one - I'm the one at the top of the class - don't you know who I am? You're stealing my bricks".

(Comedian) A new guy joined Jack's group of friends; he had been loosely connected to the group in the past but over the last couple of weeks had been around much more and the rest of the group really liked him. Jack had a problem though. This new guy was funny. And not just a little funny, he was really funny. Jack started feeling like more people were listening and laughing at the new guys

stories and jokes than his. And a seed of bitterness started growing in Jack's heart. Jack thought to himself "you can't do that - I'm the funny one, not you. You're stealing my bricks."

**If you've ever experienced this it's terrifying.** I got married at the end of 2008 and moved to Ann Arbor where my wife was finishing up school. Up until that point I had worked at church. I was a church worker. That's how I saw myself. When I moved out there, I jumped into a couple of counseling agencies for an internship through school. It was awful. I realized that being a professional counselor who sits in a room and sees people each hour was not for me. Worse yet, I felt like I barely knew who I was anymore. I was a church person working outside a church. There was no candy being thrown. No one was dressed up in costumes. There wasn't even a stage. I felt like a fish out of water and was starting to wonder who I was. Because I had no bricks, I began having no identity.

**God knows how fragile we are, and how easily our lives can fall apart when we lose the ability to do what we do.** He knows that we're prone to putting ourselves in slavery by becoming obsessed with the tasks we have in front of us and that when they are taken away, like me in Ann Arbor, we freak out. I think that's part of the reason he didn't let the Israelites march straight to the promised land. He had some training to put them through so that they weren't just free from Egypt's slavery but that they were free from their own slavery.

Part of that included a mountain. He brought the people to Mt Siani where he gave them 10 laws, what we know today as the 10 commandments. And one of the commandments has to do with rest. Moses reminds them of this command right before they actually enter the promised land when he says:

*"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)*

**God invites these brick-making sun-baked people to rest.** He says work 6 days, that's fine, but once a week remember that you are more than robots. You are people loved and rescued by God. You have value even if you aren't working. Even if you're not the fastest, smartest, funniest, prettiest; even if you haven't put in the most hours or have the most demanding job. You are loved.

**So what does it mean to rest?** How can we remind ourselves that we are more than what we do? I think rest can take many different forms depending on who you are. For one person reading is restful, for another, video games, and for a third, shooting hoops. For my wife Kerrie and I, every Saturday - because I work all day Sunday - we wake up and do our very best to have nothing on the to-do

list. We simply enjoy God's creation. It's not a day for us to create, accomplish, or get things checked off our list. It's an intentional day where we often just relax, watch a movie, play with our daughter, and remember that we are still valuable even if we're not getting something done.

**As you examine your own lives, what are your bricks?** What are the things that you're tempted to define yourself by outside of being a child of God. Your athletic ability? Your grades? Your humor? Your appearance?

**God wanted something bigger for the Israelites than to be brick makers.** And God wants something bigger for you than to be athletes, nerds, workers, and beauty queens. God wants to free you from the slavery of being tied to what you do. And rest is the key that unlocks those chains. God wants to remind you that you more than what you do. You are His child. You are not a robot.