

The Sexually Captive

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark Church. It's good to see you guys today. My name is Eric, and I work here at Watermark Church. You know, I woke up this morning, and I turned to my wife, and I said, what should I wear today? And she picked this shirt from my closet, and I said, do you think that will be distracting to people? And she said, no, it's fine. And then I showed up here, and I think every single person I've talked to so far this morning has opened the conversation with. So what's up with your shirt? So hopefully that will not be a distraction to you while I'm talking. We've been going this year through, we've been following this path in our sermons, and I heard a couple people this week who said that they didn't quite understand what we've been, what the logic is to how we've been progressing.

So I figured we'd start out today just recapping where we've been, where we are, and where we're going, and then we'll jump into today's passage. So we started out this year looking at the book of Deuteronomy, and we said that God's Word shapes God's people into a people who love Him and love others. And that was what God was aiming for when He gave His people His Word.

But then if you look through the rest of the Old Testament, God's people just failed again and again and again and again at doing that. And so rather than being this distinctive people who love God and love others, they tried to blend in again and again and again with the other nations around them. After a long time, Jesus comes, and Jesus is the true Israelite, the true one who loves God and loves others perfectly. He embodies what it means to obey these commands of God, and we can see an example in His life of what our lives are supposed to look like if we are these people who love God and love others because our lives have been shaped by His Word. And then where we're going to go is that we're going to see, starting around Easter, that Jesus not only gives us an example of what this lifestyle looks like, but He also empowers us to live out this lifestyle.

Because what the Bible says is that our sin, our rebellion against God, is what separates us from Him and keeps us from loving Him and loving others as we're supposed to. And when Jesus dies for us, He takes our sin onto Himself so we can be forgiven and have a restored relationship with God and with others. And we're going to look at the book of Acts and see in the early church, how did the community of Jesus' followers live out this transformed lifestyle? So we looked at how it's supposed to look, but it didn't quite get to where it was supposed to, the one who perfectly lived it out, and then how He empowers us to live it out moving forward. And that's sort of where we've been, where we are, where we're going. And today we're in the middle of a series on, we're calling it Sinners Jesus Met, looking at different people that Jesus interacted with throughout His life. And today we're looking at His encounter with the sexually captive, the woman at the well. And what we're going to see is that in her life of addiction and her culture of shame, Jesus brings a radical, life-changing acceptance to her.

So before we jump into the passage, let's pray that God would speak to us today. Father, we thank You that Your Word is living and active and powerful and that it impacts us.

[3 : 32] We pray that as we look at it today, that we would not leave here the same as we are right now, but that we would be challenged, that we would be transformed, that Your Word would do surgery on our hearts, and that we would love You more and love others more because of it. And in Jesus' name, amen. So today our sermon is going to be a little bit different than what we normally do. Normally we have like, here's point one, two, three. Today we're not going to quite do that. We're going to spend most of our time looking at the story and sort of breaking it apart and seeing what's really going on here.

And then at the very end, we'll have maybe one point and one next step. Sound good? Everyone with me? So what's been happening so far is Jesus and His disciples are doing ministry in this area called Judea, which is southern Israel. And the religious leaders here, Jesus and His followers are doing, are reaching lots of people, are doing great things, and they are not happy about it. They want to come in and start causing trouble. And Jesus and His disciples catch wind of this and say, rather than deal with this trouble, let's move on somewhere else so that we can keep doing what we're doing.

And they decide to go to an area called Galilee, which is in northern Israel. It's sort of like, you know, you go from Hong Kong Island up to the New Territories. You have to pass through that area in the middle. For us, it's Kowloon. For them, it was this place called Samaria. But unlike us, the people who lived in that middle area were despised and hated by the people on the north and south. I live in Kowloon, so hopefully you don't despise and hate me. And also unlike us, they didn't have MTR or cars so that they could just whoosh right through without interacting with anyone from that area. They passed through on foot, which means that it was quite likely you were going to bump into some of these Samaritans along the way, which was not ideal. The reason that Jews hated the Samaritans is because God had long ago given the Jews this command that I want you to worship me, not other gods. And I know that if you marry people from foreign nations around you, that with them you will start worshipping their gods. And I don't want that because I love you and I care about you. And I know that true life comes from a relationship with me. And I want you to be able to focus on that relationship free of the distractions that foreign gods will bring in.

And so the Jews had followed this, had married only other Jews, but the Samaritans had intermarried and become this mixed half-breed where they were part Jew but part not.

And so for the Jewish people in Jesus' day, the way that the world would have worked is basically, if you were a Jew, you're like up here. You're great. You're fantastic. If you're a Gentile, like a general non-Jew, you're maybe like here. You're pretty bad off, but I mean, you didn't really have too much say in it. So you're not the worst there could be. The worst way down here is the Samaritans because they started off as God's people, but then disobeyed and became this mixed up half-breed that's not really us, but not not us either. And so we just despise them.

[6 : 43] We avoid them. It was so bad that if there was a dish with food on it and a Samaritan took a piece of food off that dish, no good Jew would eat anything else that touched that dish because they just hated each other and wanted to avoid each other and despise each other. And this is the area where Jesus and his followers are traveling through as we start this story. Jesus and his disciples have been walking, walking, walking. It is hot. It is dry. They're coming near this town called Sikar.

And as they get outside the village, there's a well, probably about a kilometer outside the village. And Jesus sits down at the well to take a break while his disciples run into the village to get food because they are all hungry. And as Jesus is sitting there, it's the middle of the day, probably about noon. It's hot. It's dry. The disciples head off. And as he waits there for them to come back, a woman from the city comes out to the well to get water. Now this would have been a really weird thing to see. Not the fact that someone was coming to the well to get water. I mean, if you wanted water in your house back then, you had to go to the well to get water. They didn't have a sink that they could just turn on to get water. You had to carry a big jar with you. You'd dunk it down into the well. This well was very deep, so you'd use a rope to lower it, scoop up the water, pull it back up, and then carry it back into the town with you. That was fairly normal. But there were two things about this situation that were not normal. First off, no one goes to the well in the middle of the day. This is hard work. This is heavy labor. You want to do it in the cool of the day so that it's not quite so exhausting. So they'd either do it right in the morning as the sun was coming up or in the evening after it's cooled down from the heat of the day so it's a little bit easier.

The fact that she's coming in the middle of the day is weird. Also, you don't go collect water alone. Just like women's trips to the bathroom today, this is something that you did in groups.

And going in groups gave you someone to talk to as you walked along the road. Going in groups meant that you had safety if someone came and approached you on your way to the well. You didn't go to the well alone. So the fact that this woman is coming to the well in the middle of the day at a time when no one else will be there by herself says something is wrong with this picture. Something is different about this woman than about the normal woman that you would see there. And what we see is that she's trying to avoid other people. We're going to see later on in the story this is because of shame from her sexual past. And I can sort of picture her as she comes to the well. It's hot. She's despising the heat, despising the shame in her life that's causing her to have to go out in this heat to get her water. And as she gets closer to the well, she sees something that's not supposed to be there. At first, it's just a blur on the horizon, but she keeps going and gets closer and realizes it's a man. Now, as a woman, this is exactly the type of situation that would make you want to travel in groups. Because here's this woman who probably can't really defend herself. And this man who's presumably fairly strong from years of doing carpentry work.

This is a scary situation, right? If he wants to attack her, she is not able to defend herself. So she has walked all this way about a kilometer from the city carrying her water jug. It's not worth it to go back now. She gets to the well and I'm assuming she's just hoping that she can get her water. He will avoid her. He'll leave her alone and she can go back to the city undisturbed. And as she starts lowering her water jar into the well, this man says to her, give me a drink. Which, if you understand what he's been going through, kind of makes sense. He's been walking out in the desert all day long, like, you're thirsty, you want a drink. But the woman recognizes that something weird is happening with him as well. First off, no good Jew would talk to a Samaritan. You don't ask a Samaritan for a favor. That doesn't happen. Second, in this culture, no man would talk to a woman, especially in public.

[11 : 16] In fact, some of the rabbis taught that by talking to a woman, you put yourself in danger of going to hell because you were distracting yourself from the study of God's word. And so a man in this culture would not talk to a woman, especially a random stranger in public. It was frowned upon. It was not acceptable. And the third thing that's weird, like I said before, Jews did not eat or drink from dishes that had been used by Samaritans. And the only way that this woman was going to be able to give this man a drink is by letting him drink from her water jar, which means that he can't be a very good Jew if he doesn't even follow that part of the Jewish code. So there's three things really weird about Jesus' question, and it startles the woman. And so she's so startled, she just says, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? She's startled, she's confused, she doesn't quite get what's going on here. And Jesus, unfazed by the question, tells her that if she really knew who she was talking to, she would have asked him, and he would have given her living water.

Now, I'm assuming that if you were her in this conversation, that you, like me, would have gotten super confused at this point in the conversation, just like she did. What the heck is living water? Where do you get it? Like, you don't even have a jar to get this normal water, how are you going to get something better than this normal water for me? And, like, the guy who dug this well for us, his name was Jacob, it got changed to Israel, which, oh, by the way, is the name of our nation.

If the founder of our nation can't give us something better than this, how do you think you're going to give me something better than this? You think you're, like, better and more impressive than him? Now, what we all know, but she didn't, is the answer is yes, Jesus is better and more impressive than Jacob. But she's confused. She's met this stranger who's making some pretty big claims.

She doesn't quite understand what he's saying or why he's saying it. And so Jesus clarifies to her, the water that I'm giving you is a different type of water than the one that comes from this well.

It doesn't come from a well, but it springs up from inside you, and it leads to eternal life so that you never have to be thirsty again. It's a big claim. And the woman responds with, sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come to this well anymore.

[13 : 59] Now, on the one hand, that's probably a good response. Sir, give me this water so that I won't be thirsty again. She's accepting this offer that he's made to her. But then, look at her motivation for accepting it. She says, give it to me so that I will never have to come to this well again.

Now, why did she want to avoid the well? Well, first off, it's hard work carrying this heavy load out in the heat. Anyone would want a chance to get out of that. But second, remember, the well was a social place. And this is a woman who wants to avoid social situations. The well is where all the women from the town go out to chat with each other, maybe gossip with each other. And she is more often than not the subject of that gossip. And so if she can have this freedom to not have to come to the place where everyone's talking about her anymore, she sees that as liberating. She says, I now have a chance to hide for the rest of my life from the shame that I feel, to never have to face these people who despise me ever again. Give me this living water so that I can hide from my shame so that I can be safe and comfortable. And I don't know about you, but I often in my life, when I am ashamed of something, feel like, just like this woman, that freedom comes from hiding from my shame, from keeping others from seeing what's truly wrong with me, and hoping that it goes away before they realize it. And Jesus, again, knows the perfect response to give to her at this moment. He says, go, get your husband, and come here.

She's wanted to avoid having to deal with the shame of her past, and Jesus instantly, in a moment, brings her right to the place where she needs to confront this shame. And I wonder if it was you or me in this situation, what is it that Jesus would have said to us that would have cut straight to our hearts as quickly as this comment cut to the woman's heart? Would it be something like, go, get your internet search history, and come here? Go, get the financial records you've been keeping for your company, and come here? Go, get your helper, and have her come here so she can share about the way that you've been treating her. Maybe it's something else. But I think for most, if not all of us, we have areas in our lives that we want to keep hidden, just like this woman did.

We have parts of our lives that we're ashamed of that we don't want anyone else to know about. And Jesus, in this story, knows exactly the issue that this woman is trying to avoid, and he brings her to the place where she has to come directly face-to-face with this issue.

So the woman responds and says, I have no husband, which technically is true, but really it's not.

[17 : 15] You know, it's like if you're a parent and you say to your kid, like, did you slap your brother? And he says, no, and technically it's true because he punched him instead of slapped him, but really he hit his brother, and that's what you care about, right?

And that's the nature of her response right here. She says something that's technically true, but a lie in the message that she's trying to convey by it. And maybe she did this because she's trying to avoid the shame. Maybe she did this because she just wants to get on with the good stuff and get this living water quicker. We don't know. But either way, Jesus' response to her is incredibly unique because he applauds her honesty, yet still confronts her sin.

He says, you're right. You don't have a husband because the five men who used to be your husband are no longer your husband, and the man you now live with also is not your husband, so you speak the truth. He doesn't point at her and say, liar! I know you've been married to basically every man in this city. He says, you speak the truth. But then he confronts her sin at the same time.

And what we see in this moment is that the woman is sexually captive. You know, I think at her heart, she's just like the rest of us. I think she, more than anything else in life, craves and longs for a genuine human connection.

She wants somewhere where she can be vulnerable and be accepted. She wants someone that she can be intimate with and someone who she can love them and they can love her back.

[19 : 15] Why else would she try again and again and again at love after it's failed so many times? I think most people would have given up by this point on the hope of finding love. And yet after her fifth failed marriage, she still has another boyfriend. Because she wants someone who loves her. She wants someone who accepts her. She wants a place to be vulnerable. And normally, even if we're not in a romantic relationship, we have friends that can do this role for us in our lives. But for her, because of her past, no one was willing to do that. No woman in this town would come near her because of fear that her reputation would rub off on them. No married man's wife would let her husband anywhere near this woman for fear that he would become husband number six or seven. No single man would want the stigma of being around someone like her unless they got some type of benefit from the deal. For her, finding love had reached the point of being a transaction. And the price that she paid for love, or at least the appearance of it, was her body. She was trapped, feeling like the only way she could get someone to even pretend to care about her in the world was through sex. And other than that, there was no way that she could find anyone to care about her. And I think in our context, it's easy to look at her and see her as broken and messed up. But at the heart, she's just like the rest of us. She wants someone to love her. She wants someone to care for her and accept her. But she feels trapped.

Because the one thing in life that she most wants, she can't get, no matter how hard she tries, again, and again, and again, and again, and again. And every step she takes to trying to find this true love, someone who will love her and accept her no matter what, actually alienates her further and further from the rest of society. And I think this is pretty common in our world today. Think about it.

What are the things that you do when you are desperate for love? For me, if I want more attention from Justine, what I'll do sometimes is act really childish and annoying to get her to notice me.

And the thing about acting like a five-year-old is that when you're three and you act like a five-year-old, everyone says, wow, you're really mature. This is awesome. And when you're an adult and you act like a five-year-old, people are like, wow, you're really annoying. Stay away from me. And so my efforts to try and get attention and get someone to notice me actually drive her away and make her be like, no, I don't want to hang out with you if you're going to act like a child right now.

But we see this other places too. People want to find someone who will love them. And so sometimes, as a single, we want to find that person that we're going to be with for the rest of our lives. But we believe what culture has told us, that you're never going to find someone who's going to be willing to stick around long enough in a relationship with you to marry you unless you sleep with them while you're dating. And so there's a strong temptation to compromise on our sexual standards so that we can find someone who's going to love us.

[22 : 48] Maybe if you're married and you have a spouse who just spends really long hours at work, and when they get home, they're too tired to focus on you, and you want that attention. And so we nag, nag, nag, because we want to be noticed and think maybe once we're noticed, then that love will develop again. But it doesn't happen.

Maybe you're a husband and you just get frustrated because you get home from work at the end of the day, and that one thing you want is sex from your wife. And you think to yourself, I deserve this.

I know I've been there before. Like, I work really hard for this family to help support us and help us be able to make it financially in this expensive city, and it was a stressful day at work, and I just want to decompress, and I deserve this.

And when she says no, how do we respond? I think what we find is that in those moments where we are desperate for love and we are desperate for attention, we act out in ways that a rational version of ourselves would never do. But that makes sense for us in that moment, in that state of mind that we're in, because we crave and long for this attention and being noticed.

And that's exactly what this woman has been doing her entire life, jumping from man to man, hoping that one of them will love her, hoping that one of them will accept her.

[24 : 27] And so when this woman finally gets around to responding to Jesus' comment, she changes the subject completely, because she does not want to deal with this issue of her life.

Have any of you ever found it's way easier to have a really deep theological discussion about something that has nothing to do with your life than it is to deal with a really simple question that goes straight to your heart? I find that.

And this woman does exactly that right here. She says, okay, this just got way too real, way too fast. This is way too uncomfortable right now.

We can't talk about this anymore. And so what her version of this is, is, oh, okay, I see you're a prophet. You know things about me that you wouldn't have been able to know otherwise.

So I have a question for you. The Jews say that we should worship here. The Samaritans say that we should worship here. Who's right? You tell me, because you're a prophet. And Jesus, again, brilliantly responds to her.

[25 : 31] And he's not distracted again. He says the hour is coming and is now here, where it's not here or there, but it's going to be how we worship God that matters, not where.

And something really interesting about his response, when he says the hour is coming, in the book of John, that always refers to the cross. What he's saying is, I personally am going to do something so big, so powerful, so world-changing, that it's not going to matter where we worship God anymore.

It's going to matter how we worship him. And how we worship God needs to be in spirit and in truth, which, again, is an interesting response, because truth is the one thing this woman is trying to avoid in this moment.

And the woman, seeing that she's not getting anywhere, says, well, you know, there's this guy coming. He's called the Messiah. When he comes, he can tell us all about it. Like, let's ignore this conversation, just move on with life.

And Jesus' response is stunning. Now, I love the ESV translation of the Bible, but I feel like it doesn't quite get the fullness of what Jesus is saying right here.

[26 : 50] It does an okay job. It says, I who speak to you am he, which technically, yeah, he said that. But something like the New Living Translation gets this much better.

It pulls out more of the nuance of what Jesus is saying. And it says, I am the Messiah, with the words I am in capital letters.

Now, here's why that's significant. Because in the Old Testament, God's covenant name, by which he related to the people of Israel, was, I am.

And in this moment, Jesus is saying to the woman, not just this guy that you're talking about is me, but he's saying, I am the Lord of the universe. I am the God of the Old Testament that you've been reading about.

I'm not just a man. I am God. And normally in a conversation, if someone makes that type of a claim, you think they're crazy.

[27 : 50] But the crazy thing about this conversation is that when Jesus says this, the woman believes him. Now, at this moment, the disciples come back, sort of startled that Jesus is talking to a woman.

You can sort of imagine a conversation between them. Peter's like, hey, who's that talking to Jesus? And John's like, I don't know. I wonder what they want. And Andrew's like, hey, a new friend. And then, I don't think he was really like this, but I sort of picture in my mind, Judas just like in the back, like hands in his pocket, scuffling along, like, he's talking to some random stranger.

He never talks to me like that. And as the disciples arrive, the woman leaves. She goes back into the town, and she starts sharing with everyone there about this man that she has met.

Two super interesting things about this. First, she leaves her water jar at the well. The task that she had originally come to do is no longer as important to her as the task of going and sharing with people about this man that she has met because he has changed her life.

But the second and even more amazing thing is the message that she brings to the village. Look at this transformation in her life. She goes from going to the well by herself in the heat of the day to avoid people and avoid the shame of her past to running around the middle of the village screaming out, guys, come here.

[29 : 16] meet this man. He just told me everything that I have ever done. The woman who more than anything else wanted to hide, wanted to not be known, all of a sudden is boasting in the middle of the town to everyone who will listen that someone knows everything I have ever done.

And how does that transformation happen? Why is it that she's so different? It's the power of grace in her life. I'm sure that for her whole life or at least since her first divorce, everyone who found out her story has shunned her.

Everyone who met her has tried to avoid her as soon as they found out what type of a person she was. And then along comes Jesus, the man who knows everything and yet still loves her.

You notice his tone of voice doesn't change once it comes out that she's had five husbands. His offer of living water doesn't come off the table once she lies to him.

He engages her, he accepts her, he loves her, even though he knows everything that she has done wrong. He revealed the deepest, darkest parts of her life that she didn't want anyone else to see and he was still talking to her like a normal person, still showing her love.

[30 : 41] And my guess is that he was the first person since at least her first divorce that treated her in that way. And when that happened, she realized that freedom came not from hiding, not from isolating, but from being fully known at her darkest and worst and yet still fully loved.

And it says that many people from the town came out and believed in Jesus. So I want to look at one truth from this story and one next step for us.

And the key truth that I want us to see today is that Jesus reveals her sin and our sin for the sake of healing it and restoring it. You know, I, a lot of times, am just like this woman.

When I sin, I feel that the best way to deal with it is to hide it until it goes away. Hope that it gets better without anyone else finding out. And my experience in my life has shown me that this leads to feelings of shame that eat me away from the inside.

You know, when I first moved to Hong Kong, I started struggling with a little bit of depression because I was, I was sad because I was, you know, had no one that I knew here, I had no one that I could talk to about everything that I was going through.

[31 : 58] And in that moment when I started to feel that, this voice in my head said, Eric, you shouldn't be feeling these things. You work at a church. You can't let people know about what's going on in here because they will think that you are really, really messed up.

So you need to hide it. You need to bury it and hope that it goes away. And maybe someday when it's gone away, you can talk to people about how you used to deal with this. But until then, you can't say a word to anyone.

And so I did. I hid it. I buried it. I hoped that it would go away. And what happened is that the, I'd go out and I'd talk with people and I'd have this big smile on my face and as soon as the people were gone, I'd feel this emptiness inside that would just eat away at me.

And this shame from knowing that I was being a fake with everyone that I was interacting with. And it got worse and worse and worse until God finally brought me to a point where he said, Eric, you have to deal with this.

And I started sharing with people about what was going on and in that moment was when I started to find freedom from everything that I had been experiencing. It was in that moment that I realized people don't just love me because they know some fake version of me.

[33 : 17] People love me even though they know me at my worst. People love me not because they think I'm better than I am but just because they love me.

And the scariest, darkest parts of me that I'm afraid of, they still love me through those moments. And it was liberating. It was life-changing.

And you know what the crazy part is? Even though I've been through that experience, I still tend towards hiding in isolation when there are things in my life that I'm ashamed of because it's so pervasive and so prevalent, this belief, that freedom comes from isolation and hiding in my mind.

And what this woman shows us is that freedom comes from being fully known and yet fully loved. Pastor Tim Keller in his book *The Meaning of Marriage*, he has this quote.

It's brilliant. He says, to be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. Basically, if someone loves you but they don't know truly who you are, it feels good but it's a little scary because you're always worried they're going to find something out that makes them stop loving you.

[34 : 24] Then he says, to be known and not loved is our greatest fear. That's exactly what this woman had lived out her entire life. The people in her village knew everything about her and that was precisely why they avoided her and hated her.

And that's what all of us I think fear the most in life is that someone will find out everything there is to know about us and precisely because they know the truth they will avoid us, they will hate us, they will not love us.

Keller says, but to be fully known and truly loved is well a lot like being loved by God. It's what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness and fortifies us for any difficulty that life can throw at us.

It's exactly what Jesus did for this woman. He said, I know everything about you and I still love you. That's what he did for me and that's what he wants to do for all of us. He wants us not to keep hiding but to bring our sin into the light so that he can heal it.

And it doesn't matter what the sin is that we're hiding from. Jesus is big enough and powerful enough to see it and still accept us because in his death he has already paid the price for it.

[35 : 43] Jesus doesn't love some idealized version of us. He loves us with all of our sin, with all of our crap, with all of our issues. That's why he died for us because we are messed up people and he still wants to love us and accept us.

So what we see is the woman's been looking to this husband for something that she could only ever truly, fully find in the Messiah. He wants to give her life.

He wants to be the place where she can be fully vulnerable and still accepted, fully intimate, fully loved and known and accepted. and he wants to be that place for each and every single one of us today.

And again, he is the only one who's able to do that perfectly every single time because he has already paid the price for all of it through his death.

And the other thing is that he's given us a community of his followers to help us as we follow him, which leads us to our action step. I know it's far easier to hide and pretend that the shame and guilt in our lives don't exist than to deal with it.

[36 : 58] You know, one thing I noticed is that when I want intimacy, it's far easier to get physically naked with Justine than to get completely emotionally vulnerable with her. But God wants us to find that place in him where we can be fully known and in the community of his people where we can be fully known and we can be fully accepted and loved.

And I don't know what it is that you're struggling with today, but I know that on your own you're not big enough or strong enough to handle it, but Jesus is. So it may be something sexual.

It may be an addiction to pornography. It may be just these feelings of inadequacy because of the way that your spouse interacts with you and treats you.

It might be a struggle with same-sex attraction. It might be that you regret giving up your virginity. It might be non-sexual. Maybe it's depression. Maybe it's these feelings of guilt over decisions you've made at your workplace or in relationships with your friends.

But regardless of what your struggle is, the path to freedom comes not through hiding and isolating and hoping that it goes away, but through being known and being loved and still being accepted.

[38 : 15] So what we're going to do is after service, we're going to have a few staff people appear over by these banners. Chris will be there, Henrika will be there, Sylvie will be there, and I'll be there. And if you feel like you have been hiding, have been isolating, and you want someone to talk to about it, we will be available to talk to you.

And if you say, like, I have to run off right after service or I don't really feel comfortable talking to you guys about it, my encouragement to you, my challenge to you, is sometime this week, call your community group leader or someone from your community group and share with them about what's been going on in your life.

In fact, I would encourage you, if that's what you're planning on doing, pull out your phone right now and put a calendar reminder in there so that you can remember, because I know I have a tendency as soon as I get out that door to forget.

So help your phone to remind you, use it for good, not evil. And use your phone to remind you, call someone, a friend, a community group leader, to talk to them about what's going on in your life.

Because God gives us freedom not as we hide our sin and brokenness, but as we bring it into the light and let him heal us. And he's given us the community around us to help us in this process.

[39 : 31] So this week, let's learn to find this freedom in confession, trusting that the blood of Jesus is powerful enough and strong enough that he can still love us and accept us no matter what it is, that we have done and that he is strong enough to heal all the wounds from our past.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your love. We thank you for the power of the cross to forgive sin, to make us new, to take away this need that we feel to isolate ourselves, to take away our shame and our guilt, to give us new life, to give us hope.

God, I pray that we would be like this woman, that we would be people who see the beauty of being fully known and fully loved and find that as a liberating truth in our lives, that you would empower us as we experience that forgiveness to go out into our worlds and share with the people around us how great and powerful and intense your love is for us.

I pray for anyone here who feels like they need to confess something but is afraid, that you would give them the boldness to step up and share with someone today or this week about what's been going on in their lives and that through this you would help us grow as a people who love you and love one another.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.