

Breaking the Relationship

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. You can see that Allie and I are both dressed as twins today. I did get the St. Patrick's message that I should wear green, so there could be a smooth transition between him and me. Not that anyone's fooled. I think the accent might give me away.

But I do want to come before you this morning to say I'm thrilled to be here. This is probably, I think, the first time that a foreigner has spoken here at Haddington Community Church.

And so I want to show you my good faith as someone from outside this culture. And I want to tell you that in my manuscript this morning, I have added yous in words like color and favor and neighbor.

And you can probably hear that when I say that. And I have replaced all the Zs in words like recognize and apologize. And to show you my good faith, I just called that letter Z instead of Z. So I'm working here. I'm working to be cross-culturally appropriate across that gap.

But truly, it is an honor for me to be able to be here with you, to speak and to open up God's word here before you this morning. And I do want to speak on behalf of our team, the East Mountain UK team.

[1 : 1 2] We have felt the love and the grace of your community since the very first day that we were here among you. So for the seven months that we've lived and we've served here and we've seen you on Sundays, we have felt that love and that warmth.

So I just want to take a personal moment to say thank you for that. And if you're a visitor here today, we hope that you have felt that same love and warmth as well. So I do have the privilege this morning to share with you from this particular passage.

And it's not an easy passage, but it's a passage from the book of Exodus that we've been studying, which is one of the world's greatest stories. And it's a story that we've been seeing over the weeks has three main protagonists.

We see that God is there in the story all over it. Moses is there, his servant. And then we see the people of God, the Hebrew people. Now, for sure, there are other players as well.

There's Pharaoh. There's Aaron, Moses, his brother. There's Miriam, his sister. And some of them, Aaron, for example, come into our passage today. But for the most part, Exodus is the story of God.

[2 : 2 2] It's the story of God approaching and freeing his people from slavery. For not only the slavery, the physical slavery in Egypt, but also freeing them from spiritual slavery, from the old way of doing things, to come into a new relationship with him.

And it's the story of God fulfilling his promises to Abraham and using a man, Moses, a weak and sometimes sinful man, to do it.

Now, up to this point in the story, we've seen God work through Moses to accomplish these things. We've seen God working in Moses in his own reluctance to be a leader.

And then we've seen God working through him to bring about wonders, wonders that have been accomplished in the land of Egypt so that his people could go free. We've seen God bring his people unscathed through plague after plague.

And then we've seen him even part the Red Sea so that they can walk through on dry land. God has been physically present with his people. He's led them with a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire at night.

[3 : 34] And he's fed them physically with manna, with this bread from heaven. He's provided them quail to eat. He's provided them clean water to drink. And now he's brought them, at this point in our story, to Sinai, to the holy mountain where he had met with Moses before.

And he wants to give them another physical sign of his presence with them. A physical sign of this new covenant, of a new relationship that he wants to establish with them.

He wants to give them these tablets of the law that Exodus says that he wrote with his own hand. Now, it sounds all good up to this point, right?

It's been fairly smooth sailing. They've come through unscathed. They've crossed the Red Sea. They're at the holy mountain. They're receiving the tablets. It all should be good from this point on. Smooth sailing. First start of the right and straight on until Canaan.

Right? Unfortunately, no. There's just a few complications. You see what I did there? I used we. That was another of my cross-cultural divide moments.

[4 : 41] Before we dig into this passage in Exodus 32, I did want to address something with you that I wrestle with whenever I come to this account in Exodus.

And in particular in this chapter in 32. And this is my confession. When I look at these Hebrews who have been freed from slavery by God, I tend to think along these lines.

You've got to be kidding me, right? I mean, come on. Was it not enough that God has saved you from these plagues, from plague after plague after plague, and that you weren't touched by them?

I mean, was it not enough that your firstborn weren't killed when God passed over, and the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed? I mean, the Red Sea parting, did that not do it for you?

The pillar of fire? The pillar of cloud? No? Crickets? Crickets? How is it that you end up here in chapter 32 dancing before a golden calf?

[5 : 44] How could you so quickly leave the God who had done everything to save you? And this is my biggest question. What more could God have done to win your hearts?

And I admit this to you this morning because it's a dangerous place for me to be in as I'm looking at this text, to put myself above these men and these women, for me to remain a spectator in this story.

And I admit it to you this morning as an invitation for you as well, because if you two struggle with how these people were able to so quickly leave their God, then I want to invite you with me to come down into that camp, to the foot of Mount Sinai, where we together are waiting on Moses to come down.

And he's been gone a long, long time. And what will we discover there together as we enter this text? Now, one more word of setup.

In Exodus chapter 24, and it's not one that we have read together, but we're told in Exodus 24 that Moses has gone up to the mountain to confirm the covenant with God and the people, and that he has brought 70 elders from Israel halfway up the mountain.

[7 : 04] And in that moment, the 70 elders and Moses have this appearance of God. They see God's physical presence, and all the elders bow down. And in that moment, the people rise up, and they respond, and they say, everything that the Lord has said we will do.

So it seems like things are going well. The 70 elders go back down, and Moses ascends the mountain again, this time with his servant Joshua. Joshua goes with him about halfway, and then Moses goes all the way to the top.

And he's gone a long time. In fact, chapter 24 tells us that it was 40 days and 40 nights. It's almost a month and a half that the people don't see Moses.

And maybe you've heard that number before as you read through the Bible. Does that ring any bells? The 40 days and the 40 nights? Remember the story of Noah and the ark? How many days did it rain?

40 days and 40 nights. Do you remember the story of Jesus in the New Testament, the part of the Bible that talks about him and his life? He spends 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil.

[8 : 16] So when we see the number 40 in the Bible, it's generally a sign of testing. These 40 days that Moses spends on the mountain are like a time of patient endurance.

It's testing the hearts of the people. And how did the people of God do in the time of this testing? Well, not too well. Chapter 32, verse 1 says, When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, Up, make us gods who shall go before us.

As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. Now remember, Aaron is Moses' brother.

He was the one that was tasked to speak with Moses before Pharaoh. And he was also the one that has been asked to lead the people in how to worship this one true God.

And after a while, as the people are waiting, they get antsy. And they head to Aaron, the second in command. Moses is gone. He may be dead for all we know.

[9 : 26] We haven't seen the evidence of God's presence for a long time. Chapter 24 also tells us that when Moses first goes up to the mountain, the glory of God descends on the mountain like a cloud.

And the people see it. But after six days, that glory dissipates. And so they're left without Moses and without a sign of God's presence. So they come to Aaron and they say, we're tired of waiting.

Make us gods. Moses and his God haven't been seen in these parts for a long time. So we know that you're second in command. In fact, what they're saying is you, Aaron, take Moses' place.

And you provide us with a God to replace the God that he told us about. And Aaron doesn't really hesitate. And maybe it's out of weakness.

Maybe it's out of fear. Maybe he feels flattered that they're coming to him. We don't know. But verse 2 says, Aaron says, take off the rings of gold that are in your ears, the ears of your wives and sons and your daughters, and bring them to me.

[10 : 35] So the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graven tool and made a golden calf.

Now, we know this is bad, right? But how bad is it? Well, think about this. Where in the world did these people get their gold earrings?

I mean, they had been slaves for generations in Egypt. And slaves generally aren't the kind of people that are just swimming and find jewelry. So where did they get the earrings? Well, the Bible actually tells us exactly where they got them.

In Exodus chapter 12, the Hebrews are leaving from Egypt. And verse 35 says, the people of Israel had also done as Moses told them. For they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing.

And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. So they let them have what they asked. Thus, they plundered the Egyptians. So it's God who had miraculously provided these gold earrings.

[11 : 44] He had moved in the hearts of the Egyptians as the people were leaving and provided them with these riches. And now the people were bringing the riches given to them by the true God.

They were handing them to Aaron, who hammered and shaped them into a gold covering for a statue of a calf. A bull. One of the gods of fertility that had been worshipped in Egypt, which was the land of their slavery.

And the people look at this statue. And in verse 4, they say, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it.

And Aaron made the proclamation and said, tomorrow will be a feast day to the Lord. And they rose up early the next day and they offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings.

And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. And just so you understand exactly what's going on here, the Hebrew word that gets translated into English as to play has a distinct sexual connotation to it.

[12 : 56] So these people have taken the gifts of God, they've used them to create a false god, and now they're worshipping it by feasting and drinking and participating in an orgy.

That's what they're doing. This is bad. And this is where I am tempted to rise up on my high horse and go, how could you?

I mean, come on. I, for one, would never, ever do something so willfully and ridiculously sinful. And maybe you're tempted to join me on my high, high horse and judge them for their sins.

Because this is what this passage is really all about. It's about sin. And this is where it begins to smart.

This passage pinches us in all the wrong ways because it's about sin. And sin is like a dirty word in our culture, isn't it? And we don't like the sound of it.

[13 : 59] It's so old-fashioned. It's so quaint in all the negative kind of ways. For me, as an American, it conjures up images of old preachers in dusty suits in a tent meeting revival in the South.

Maybe for you, as Scots, it conjures up images of John Knox beating on the pulpit at St. Giles. Or some preacher in an island in the North. A doer Scott who never smiles at anything.

And for him, anything that's enjoyable is a sin. Sin may bring that up in your mind. On Thursday, I was in the city. I was doing some preparation for this.

And I went into a coffee shop right near the Royal Mile. And they have this section where you can do a book exchange. They have all these books there. And I saw one that caught my eye. I actually took a picture of it. The book was called Legacy of Sins.

And there was some poorly done artwork of this woman from like the 19th century. In fact, it looked like it was drawn in the 1990s, but it was supposed to be some Victorian-looking woman who was all prim and dour, but she kind of had a seductive look on her face.

[15 : 07] It was a romance novel. I can't do it very well, sorry. I can show you the picture later if you want to see it. But it was like, this is how our society looks at sin. If they think about it at all, it's something naughty.

Ah, sin. It's something to be laughed at, to be winked at, to kind of smirk about, but ultimately indulge. But as we go back to this passage in Exodus 32, we see this is not a romance novel.

And if it is, it's a romance gone horribly awry. In fact, one of the studies I was looking at called this honeymoon adultery. I thought that was pretty telling. The people have pledged their troth to God, so to speak, to be in a relationship with this God who would save them.

Remember, they're the ones who said, everything the Lord has said we will do. They said, I do to being God's special people. And I'll live according to his ways. And now in his absence, literally in a month and a half, they've gone off and they're having a fling with another God.

And even in our jaded culture, we might look at that and go, yeah, that's kind of a sin. So if this passage is about sin, if it's about this breaking of the relationship, the covenant relationship between God and his people, how do the three main players deal with it?

[16 : 33] How does Moses respond when he finds out? How do the people, and Aaron is the people's representative, how do they react when they're confronted? And most importantly, how does God respond?

He's the one who's been wronged here. How does he feel about sin? And what does he do about it? That's the question. So while Moses is here on the mountain, God tells him what the people are doing in real time down below.

In verse 9, God's anger here is burning white hot.

He is not happy. And he is offering to take out all of them and to start over again with Moses. And in the next verses, we see Moses begins to plead with God.

He says, God, please relent. He says, God, if the Egyptians here, what will they think about you? They'll think you brought your people out to do terrible things. And then he reminds God of his promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to make them into a great nation, to bring them into the promised land.

[17 : 52] And God has compassion in that moment, and he relents. Now, does this mean that God is soft on sin, that he doesn't care? No, not at all.

And as we'll see, he is not soft on sin. And does it mean that God is a pushover? Can he so easily be convinced by a human being?

In verse 10, I believe that when God says to Moses, now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them, and I may consume them, in order that I might make a great nation of you.

I believe that he's not really asking for Moses' permission here. I mean, God doesn't need Moses' permission to do anything. He doesn't need any of our permission to do anything.

What I believe he's doing here is giving Moses an invitation. He's inviting Moses to intercede for his people. He's showing to Moses that he has a special place as a mediator.

[18 : 57] And it also shows us, we'll see what kind of mediation is really needed to deal ultimately with sin. But we'll get to that in a bit. So God relents, and Moses takes the tablets, and begins to descend from the mountain.

And it's interesting here, Exodus goes out of its way to tell us that these tablets were written on both sides. On the front and the back, they were written. The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

God had written these things with his own finger. They are the real work of a real God who wants to be in real relationship with his people. Contrast that to what's going down below.

The people are worshiping a false God who can't speak to them. And even if it could move, can you imagine it trying to carve out some sort of communication with its hooves on the grass? No.

The real God is communicating with his people. So Moses goes down. He meets up with Joshua, his aide, and Joshua begins hearing what's going on below. He says, I think there's war happening here.

[20 : 03] And Moses says, Nope, it's not war. It's singing. And then he comes down into the camp. And Moses sees for the first time with his own eyes what God had told him.

And apparently, to hear it from God on the mountain was one thing, but when he sees what's actually going on, he is incensed. His anger burns hot, just like God's.

And he takes the tablets and he throws them down and he smashes them. And this is about as symbolic as you can get for what has happened between God and his people.

He goes and he takes the statue of the calf, he burns it, he grinds it up, and he sprinkles it on the water, and he makes every single person drink of it. There's brokenness, there's bitterness, there's devastation.

And these are the consequences of sin. I mean, it all seemed okay when the party was going on, but now in the aftermath, there's nothing but ruin. And Moses turns to Aaron and says, Aaron, my brother, what in the world happened here?

[21 : 10] Verse 21, what did this people do to you that you brought such a great sin upon them? And Aaron said, let not the anger of my Lord burn hot. You know the people, you know that they're set on evil, for they said, make us gods who shall go before us.

As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him. So I said to them, let any who have gold take it off. So they gave it to me.

I threw in the fire and out came this calf. And as Allie read it, I heard you laugh because it's one of the most ridiculous lines in all of the Bible. Moses is giving Aaron the benefit of the doubt here.

He said, what did they do to you to make you do this? And he gives him the chance to explain and also the chance to mediate for the people as he had done with God. And instead, what we see is Aaron's weakness.

We see Aaron's sin. We see his pathetic excuse. And first, he blames the people. It's them, Moses. They're evil. You know.

[22 : 13] They forced me to do it and so I gave in. Yeah, I told them to give me the gold, but I took the gold and I threw it in the fire and poof, out came this golden calf. I mean, it's like a five-year-old who you've caught red-handed with a crayon in front of a wall that he's well-decorated.

You're like, what did you do? He says, well, it wasn't me. You know that street performer we saw in Edinburgh at the festival? Yeah, the guy who did the art stuff? He broke into the house and he came to the window and he did this and he handed me the crayon and he told me to hold it and he said, the title of this artwork is called It wasn't me.

I mean, actually, if my five-year-old did that, I'd be pretty impressed, but I mean, it's about that ridiculous about what Aaron says, but Aaron's response, if we're honest, his response to sin is a lot like our own.

It wasn't really my fault. It was their fault. I mean, and even if part of it was my fault, you need to understand the extenuating circumstances. I was under a lot of pressure.

I needed a release, so I threw this in here and out this came and voila. So even if I did it, I didn't do it. And Moses, we see with Aaron, he doesn't respond with indulgence or with understanding or pity or even with a chiding.

[23 : 37] He looks around and he sees that everyone is out of control and he offers a way to make a clean break. He says, who is on the Lord's side?

In other words, yes, what you have done is ridiculously bad, but what will you choose to do now? And many do choose to turn away from their own sin, but some do not.

And chapter 32 tells us that the sons of Levi, and this is the tribe from which Moses and Aaron came, they rally to Moses and they end up slaying 3,000 people who absolutely refuse to turn back and to choose God.

And this is harsh. Even though it's a small percent of the people who come back and say, no, we choose the calf over God, it still sounds to us harsh.

And it is. Because God sees sin as something far worse than I think we do. Like Aaron, we tend to excuse what we do and then we excuse the things that separate us from him.

[24 : 44] We downplay it. And I tend to look at people like Aaron and the Hebrews and think, well, come on. I may be bad sometimes, but I'd never do that.

My sins aren't nearly so bad in comparison to these people. I mean, if I had seen God provide the way he provided for them, I would never have ended up dancing in front of that calf. But am I so sure?

I told you that I'm tempted to look down on these Hebrew people. But just this past week, I saw how easily sin gets twisted in my own heart.

This past week, Kirsten and I were invited for lunch on Wednesday at someone's house. And we were running late. We wanted to stop by a grocery store and pick up some groceries and a bouquet of flowers for our host to say thank you.

And we got in and we got the stuff. We got into the queue at the cashier and I had picked the slowest queue in the market. And the man who was there working as the cashier made me very, very angry.

[25 : 48] And I'll tell you why. He was chatting with the people in front of us who had two or three items and he was going so slowly. So I'm like, okay, come on, come on, come on. He finally checks them out and he gets up and he starts ringing up our stuff and he wouldn't even look at me to say hello.

He would not even look at me at all. But then he turned to the people behind us and started talking with them. And I realized that something ugly was happening in me in that moment.

So I tried to, I actually paid, there were two transactions I paid with my Barclays card, contactless, went through no problem, tried to use the same card for the second transaction, gets declined. I'm like, what?

So I pull out another credit card, an American card and he runs through and he said, sorry, I can't take this card. I'm like, okay, maybe we'll try Kirsten's card. So Kirsten tries her card, same thing.

Sorry, can't help you, can't use that card. And I had just had it. I wanted this man to pay. I was angry, I was rude, and I was cold to him.

[26 : 50] And I walked out of that store and my wife looked at me and said, what just happened back there? What was going on inside of you? And I honestly had no idea how to answer that question.

And that night, as I was brushing my teeth, all I can say is God spoke to me and revealed to me what was happening in my heart. I was angry in that moment at that man for treating me as someone less than worthy of being known.

And that comes from my own story. And that's what God showed to me in that moment. I was angry and furious at this man for things that he could have no way of knowing, for things he had nothing to do with.

But he had triggered something deep in me in that moment in the queue at Morrison's. And it was laid bare for all to see. God said to me as I was brushing my teeth, Chris, whose side are you on?

And if you're on my side, what are you going to choose? What do you need to do? And I knew I had to go back to that Morrison's and I had to make it right with this man.

[27 : 58] I mean, I prayed for forgiveness in my own heart because I recognized it was ugly, it was sinful. I admitted my sin to my wife. I didn't need to see this man ever again. I could have been okay. But God was calling me to be obedient.

So I went back on Thursday and he wasn't there. And I'm actually glad he wasn't there. Because as though I was sitting in that parking lot at Morrison's getting ready to go in, I was already working on how this would be a great illustration in this sermon.

I was shifting it and twisting it to my own advantage. And even now as I'm telling you this, I am risking pride about sharing with you how humble I was in recognizing in that moment that I could be thankful that I wasn't there so it could be even a better sermon illustration right now.

I mean, do you see how twisted this thing is? Do you see how deep it goes? One little sin of anger leads to a cascade of sins of pride.

I take what God has given me, the gold earrings, so to speak, of my own human dignity and my place as a son of God and I hammer it around an idol of how I think I deserve to be treated.

[29 : 12] And then I worship it. And I'm proud of sharing with you my depth of insight and my humility and recognizing my own sin and how I want to get rid of the idol. I mean, this is a mess.

Do you see that? It's a mess. It's a twisted mess. So I cannot say that I would not be willing to dance in front of that calf. One sin leads to another and it twists and twists around until it brings you to places you didn't know you could go.

It goes deep into the core of who I am and if I might be so bold to say into the core of all of us. So how does God even deal with this? So we know how God feels about sin.

How does he deal with it? We see it in the next bit in Exodus 32. Verse 30. The next day Moses said to the people, you sinned a great sin and now I will go up to the Lord and perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.

So Moses returned to the Lord and said, alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They've made for themselves gods of gold but now if you will forgive their sin but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.

[30 : 20] But the Lord said to Moses, whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book. Moses thinks, what can be done? Maybe I can make atonement and atonement is just a fancy word if we break it down at one-ment.

How can I bring back together the two parties, God and his people in a right relationship? Maybe I can bridge the gap. So he goes to God and he tries and he even offers to be blotted out of God's book.

The book of people who've said, I choose God. But God says very clearly to Moses, no Moses, you can't atone for the sins of the people because no sinful human being can do what Moses wants to do.

God says that each person will die for their own sins. Now remember that question that I asked earlier, what more could God have done to win their hearts?

Beyond the miracles of the Exodus, beyond the provision of food and water, God could do something and this passage hints at what he did do. There was something he would do to win their hearts by dealing with their sins, with our sins once and for all.

[31 : 29] Because Moses is a picture of what God himself would do to make at-one-ment of this broken relationship. Moses had just spent 40 days on the mountain receiving instructions on how to worship the one true God and how to present animal sacrifices to deal with the sins of the people.

But the blood of all those sacrificed animals wasn't enough either. Just as Moses couldn't take the sin of the people away, neither could the sacrifices the Jewish people were instructed to make.

They only pushed the sins forward. They pushed them forward to a time when God himself would come down in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The man who lived a sinless life.

The man who suffered and died and was resurrected to deal with the sins of the world. The sins of the Hebrew people and Moses' sin, they're pushed forward to the cross.

And then our sins, the sins of all of those who lived after Jesus, were pushed backwards to the cross. So they are met in that moment where God comes as a man and sacrifices himself.

[32 : 35] They're dealt with decisively there because God takes sin very seriously. So seriously that he's willing to take it upon himself. And that is the good news of Christianity.

We don't have to die for our sins. Jesus did that for us. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament, the part of the Bible that speaks about Jesus, in the letter to the Corinthians, the second one, says, For our sake, he, God, made him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus gets blotted out of God's book instead of us. The writer of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament says that in this way Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses.

Moses actually pointed towards Jesus. What Moses wanted to do for the sins of the people but couldn't do, Jesus actually did. And so instead of a message of doom and gloom this morning, this part of Exodus story points us to the greatest hope that we as humans could ever have.

When I first saw this passage I thought, oh great. chapter on sin. Thanks, Allie. Really appreciate that. You get the guest speaker to speak on Exodus 32. But now, having spent a week with this, I think, great.

[34 : 00] A chapter on sin. Because all of us, every human who has ever lived except one, has been in that camp when Moses returns. All of us have a relationship with God that without his intervention looks like those two broken tablets lying at Moses' feet.

God's feet. And I have the chance to speak on this topic this morning. So I can't do that without laying out the obvious choice before us today.

As you're hearing these words, I want to invite you with me back to the foot of Mount Sinai where we hear Moses call out, who is on the Lord's side? How will you respond to that call today?

And maybe you already know that mediator, that great mediator, Jesus, the one who's greater than Moses. And maybe you have already had your sins pushed back to the foot of the cross.

Jesus has dealt with it and you know him as a friend. And you can say today, I'm on his side. And it doesn't mean that you won't ever sin or that you won't ever struggle with sin because brothers and sisters, you will struggle with that all of your lives.

[35 : 12] And I will too. But you know who to go to to deal with those sins. And that is awesome news.

Choose him again today. Or maybe you're standing in front of that smoking altar with the gleam of the golden calf in your eye and you realize that you don't have a way to deal with who you are and what you've done and the fact that you and God are not really on speaking terms.

The relationship is broken. And you know that when Moses says, who is on the Lord's side, you can honestly say, probably not me. But maybe there's some small, small niggling part of you that says, I'm not on his side, but I'd like to be.

The golden calves in my life have left me pretty empty on the other side of the party. And this is the beauty of a passage like Exodus 32. It gives us the chance to choose again.

Being on his side is not taking on a burden. It's having a burden lifted off. Because he's the only one that can deal with this thing that we call sin. He's the only one that can bridge that distance between himself and us.

[36 : 26] And today is another chance if you'll take it. To be in a right relationship with God through his son, Jesus. So if that calls to you this morning, take some time to speak that desire to God in your heart as we pray.

Because he will hear you. And then if you're brave, if you're feeling brave, come talk to Allie or to me or other leaders in this church. We would be happy to tell you about what it's like to walk with Jesus in that way.

To join that band of forgiven sinners, no longer at the foot of the mountain, but at the foot of the cross as we journey together to the promised land.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, first I want to thank you that you bridged that gap of sin by the blood of your son Jesus.

I want to thank you that you gave your son for us to suffer and die so that we wouldn't have to. That you blotted him out of your book so that we wouldn't have to be blotted out.

[37 : 32] And that you raised him to life. For that we thank you and we worship you. And Lord, I pray that as we have all been confronted with that decision today that we would stand up and say we choose you.

We choose to be in relationship with you. God, I thank you for what you're doing here this morning. I pray that your Holy Spirit would continue to do your work in the hearts of all the men and women present here today.

And as we get ready to sing, Lord, that you would continue that work as we go from this place. We thank you for it. In the name of your son, by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Amen.