

Genesis 38

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- [0 : 0 0] If you've ever looked around at the world, or looked around at your family, or looked around or looked at your own life and thought, this is just a mess, this chapter is probably even messier.
- So here we go, Genesis 38. It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adulamite whose name was Hira. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua.
- He took her and went into her. And she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Ur. She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah.
- Judah was in Kezid when she bore him. And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord.
- And the Lord put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother. But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his.
- [1 : 0 8] So whenever he went into his brother's wife, he would waste the semen on the ground so as not to give offspring to his brother. And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also.
- Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah, my son, grows up. For he feared that he would die like his brothers.
- So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. In the course of time, the wife of Judah, she was daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers.
- He and his friend hired the Adulamite. And when Tamar was told, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Anaim, which is on the road to Timnah.
- For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, come, let me come into you.
- [2 : 1 0] For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, what will you give me that you may come into me? He answered, I will send you a young goat from the flock. And she said, if you give me a pledge until you send it.
- He said, what pledge shall I give you? She replied, your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand. So he gave them to her and went into her, and she conceived by him.
- Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adulamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

And he asked the men of the place, where is the cult prostitute who is at Anaim by the roadside? And they said, no cult prostitute has been here. So he returned to Judah and said, I haven't found her.

Also, the men of the place said, no cult prostitute has been here. And Judah replied, let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her.

[3 : 09] About three months later, Judah was told, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality. And Judah said, bring her out, and let her be burned. As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law.

By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. And she said, please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff. Then Judah identified them and said, she is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son, Sheila, and he did not know her again.

When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, this one came out first. But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out.

And she said, what a breach you have made for yourself. Therefore, his name was called Perez. Afterward, his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

So last night, I was putting my kids to bed. And as usual, a part of our usual routine, I read them a couple of stories. A story that my son chose was from one of his favorite series, The Berenstain Bears.

[4 : 23] Papa, Mama, Brother, and Sister Bear, and in some cases, Honey Bear, reside in a big tree house down a sunny dirt road in Bear Country.

In each book, they face some kind of conflict or challenge, but by the end of the story, everything has been resolved, and a moral or safety-related lesson has been clearly, maybe even too clearly, communicated.

According to Wikipedia, there are over 300 Berenstain Bears books, including over 40 in a series with explicitly Christian themes.

This morning's Bible passage covers all kinds of things that are not found in any of the Berenstain Bears books, or most other children's bedtime stories.

Its content is much closer to a supermarket tabloid that stares at you as you walk through the checkout line or a soap opera. If this chapter were made into a movie, it would be R-rated.

[5 : 26] Betrayal, deception, scandal, lots of sex, prostitution, death. It's a hot mess. If anything is clear from this passage, it's clear that the Bible is not the product of the Victorian era.

It was not written by mismanagers. But you might ask, what is God doing in all this mess? What in the world are we supposed to learn from such a crazy story?

Last week, we looked at the theme of shattered dreams. How Joseph's dreams of greatness were shattered by the favoritism of his father and the jealousy of his brothers. At the end of the chapter, we saw Joseph sold into slavery and taken down to Egypt.

At first glance, this chapter seems to be a detour from the story of Joseph. Joseph isn't mentioned at all. Neither is his father Jacob, nor the other brothers. The focus shifts to Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar.

On the service, they do some pretty weird things. But I hope that as we dig into some of the details, and there are a lot of details, but that you'll see what's motivating Judah and Tamar.

[6 : 37] That you'll begin to relate to their characters and their stories. And most of all, that you'll be drawn to the God who is powerfully at work in each of them.

Now, the basic contrast between Judah and Tamar is this. Judah was brought up in the family of God, and he did everything he could to get out of it.

Tamar was brought up outside the family of God, and she did everything she could to get in. So this morning, we'll look first at what God does with Judah, the insider who wanted out, and then we'll look at what God does with Tamar, the outsider who wanted in.

So first, Judah, the insider who wanted out. Now, before we jump into this chapter, let me set the stage from earlier in the book of Genesis to paint the picture of how Judah got to where he is now.

Judah was a young man with a lot of potential. He was born into the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God had promised that that family, Abraham's physical offspring, would be the means of his promised blessing for the whole world.

[7 : 51] And within this family, his name stood out. Judah, which means praise. His mother praised God at his birth, and his name called him to live a life in praise of God.

Judah also had natural leadership gifts. When he spoke, his brothers listened. And they did what he said. And yet, while Judah had a lot of potential, he received little attention from his parents, especially from his dad.

You see, Judah's dad, Jacob, had 12 sons by four different women. Judah was child number four. Imagine growing up in that family. His dad had been tricked into marrying his mom.

And his dad really loved a different woman, Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. So Jacob always deprioritized Judah's mother, Leah, and her sons.

He paid them little attention. He gave them little affection. Judah grew up in a home where mom was constantly trying and never succeeding to win dad's affection. And dad was lavishing his love on another woman and a different set of kids.

[9 : 06] Not surprisingly, Judah and his brothers began to feel resentful. And their resentment continued to build up against their dad's favoritism and neglect.

And they expressed their favoritism, Judah and his brothers, in different ways. We learn from chapter 35, verse 22, that Judah's oldest brother, Reuben, slept with his dad's mistress.

In a failed attempt to seize the reins of leadership in the family. For brothers two and three, Simeon and Levi, their anger and resentment turned into violent rage.

When their sister Dinah was violated, they not only punished the guy who did it, they massacred his whole town. Chapter 34 of Genesis.

Judah took out his resentment in a more calculated way. He took the initiative to sell Joseph into slavery, to get rid of his younger brother for good. You see, Rachel, his dad's favorite wife, had already died.

[10 : 08] And perhaps Judah hoped that with Joseph gone, maybe his dad would finally pay attention to him and his brothers. Maybe something would change in their family for the good, but it didn't.

They came home. Joseph's gone. Jacob was heartbroken. And he refused to be comforted. He found no comfort, no joy from any of his other kids.

And so finally Judah was fed up. He was fed up with his distant dad, who poured all his affection into his other wife and his other kids. He was fed up with all the family drama and dysfunction.

And so he left home, an angry young man in his 20s, determined to make a fresh start. That's where we get in verse 1. It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adolamite, whose name was Hira.

Judah's response to his dysfunctional family was to run away as far as he could. On the one hand, it's very understandable when you think about all that he grew up with. But the problem with Judah's response is that it wasn't just Judah's family that was dysfunctional.

[11 : 23] Judah himself was also dysfunctional. And while you can run away from a dysfunctional family, you can't run away from your own dysfunctional heart.

So after running away from his dysfunctional family, Judah ends up reproducing a family that is just as dysfunctional. He actually ends up acting just like his dad, whom he resented and hated.

We see that just like his dad, Judah was selfish and distant from his wife. Notice the verbs in verse 2. Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite.

He took her and went into her. The language is meant to remind us of Eve in the Garden of Eden. She saw the forbidden fruit. She took it and she ate it.

Judah wasn't full of tender affection or steadfast love. He was simply grabbing whatever was available to satisfy his own lustful impulse.

[12 : 29] He wanted sex and he wanted kids. So we got married. It's a bad way to start a marriage. And over time, Judah didn't grow any closer to his wife and his kids.

And if anything, he became even more distant. When his first son, Ur, was born, Judah named him. When his second and third sons were born, his wife named them.

When his third son was born, he was apparently out of town. Verse 5 seems to indicate he was in Hezib. Ironically, the word Hezib sounds like the word for lying in Hebrew.

We could translate it. Judah was living in the city of lies. And then in verse 12, when Judah's wife died, he got over it quite quickly. The next phrase, verse 12, after it says the wife of Judah died, it said when Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers with his friend, Hyrod the Adolamite.

Modern equivalent, he went to Myrtle Beach over spring break. And he wasn't going with Campus Crusade for Christ to do a mission project. Judah was selfish and distant from his wife, just like his dad had been.

[13 : 41] And also, just like his dad, Judah failed to train his sons in the way of righteousness. Verse 7, Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death.

This is the first time in all of Scripture that God singled out an individual as incurably wicked and killed him. Judah's second son, Onan, was no better.

Then Judah said to Onan, go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother. You might say, what in the world is that about? Well, in many traditional clan-based societies, if a married man died with no kids, his brother or the nearest unmarried male relative was obligated to marry the widow.

Now, there were two basic reasons for this ancient custom. Number one, it was an act of honor to the deceased brother. The first son born would be counted as the son of the dead brother so that the dead brother's genealogical line would continue instead of being cut off.

And his inheritance would stay within the family instead of passing to outsiders. So first, it was a way to honor the dead brother. And second, it was a way to provide security for the widow who was otherwise defenseless and had few or no options in the ancient world.

[15 : 13] Now, what Onan did in verse 9 is that he took on the appearance of honoring his brother and providing for Tamar, but in reality, he wasn't doing either.

He was happy to have sex with Tamar and to appear to do his family duty, but he didn't want the responsibility of raising a child who would carry on his brother's name and not his.

You see, the problem with Onan was this. The appearance of righteousness and faithfulness and loyalty masked the reality of selfishness and greed and deception.

It was the same problem with Ananias and Sapphira in the book of Acts in the New Testament. We might call it hypocrisy. And hypocrisy makes God rightfully angry more than almost anything else.

And it wasn't just Onan, who only cared about his appearance, Judah, was the exact same way. It wasn't an accident that Judah's sons were wicked. Judah seems to have the same tendencies.

[16 : 26] Verse 20, Judah sends his friend to pay the prostitute that he had used because he didn't want to do it himself. He got his friend to do his dirty work.

And when his friend didn't find her, Judah's concern was people will laugh at us. He was concerned only about his appearance, his reputation. See, Judah failed to train his sons in the way of righteousness because he was not righteous himself.

And the family that he had created was just as dysfunctional as the one he had run away from. But Judah was totally blind. He saw his problems and he blamed everyone else.

Verse 23, he even blamed his friend, his buddy Hira, who he seems to like hanging out with. He says, you see, I sent this young goat and you didn't find her. But even more than Hira, he blamed Tamar.

Verse 11, Judah said to Tamar, remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah my son grows up, for he feared that he would die like his brothers. He implied that later on, when Shelah grew up, Tamar could marry him.

[17 : 48] But if you look in verse 14, it says he didn't keep his word. He probably never intended to. Judah wanted to get rid of Tamar because in his own mind he had concluded that she was the problem.

Why did my two sons die? It was her fault. It's always her fault. It's certainly not my fault and it's certainly not my kid's fault. It's the classic mentality of an abuser.

Always blaming someone else. Or maybe we should say instead it's the classic mentality of a sinner. Ever since Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake.

You see, Judah was willfully blind. Refusing to acknowledge his own selfishness, his own impulsiveness, his own foolishness. He was trapped in his pride and in his fear.

This is what the Bible calls sin. It's at the root of every dysfunctional family and every dysfunctional human being. It may not manifest itself in prostitution or spousal abuse, but it carries on the blame shifting, responsibility evading, self-justifying, fear-driven, God-avoiding pattern that started all the way back with Adam and Eve.

[19 : 13] And the Bible says all of us have participated in this pattern. And until our sin is acknowledged and repented of and not simply excused and justified, it's a downward spiral with no end in sight.

You see, almost this whole chapter is a downward spiral for Judah. He ran away from God's chosen family when they were at their worst. He created his own family that was just as dysfunctional as what he'd run away from.

His family was on the brink of total destruction. He slept with a prostitute, left his IDs with her and couldn't find her to get him back. But what we also see in this chapter is that through all this mess, God was pursuing Judah.

God was pursuing Judah all the way down, his downward spiral, in order to humble him and eventually to restore him. I'd say, how do we see God pursuing Judah?

Well, for one thing, God put Judah in situations that made Judah face up to what he was running away from. Judah ran away from home because he was furious with his dad.

[20 : 30] And then, God put Judah in the exact same situation as Judah's dad. Judah lost his wife. Just like Jacob had lost Rachel.

Judah lost not just one son, but two. And just like his dad, Judah was left alone, fearing for the safety of his youngest son.

Well, that alone didn't sink in quite yet, so God went one step further. Just before Judah ran away, he and his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery.

And they had dipped Joseph's robe in blood, brought the robe to Jacob and said, this we have found. Please identify whose it is.

Well, if you look down in verse 25, Tamar used the exact same words. By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. Please identify whose these are.

[21 : 41] Tamar's words not only revealed Judah's hypocrisy in condemning Tamar, they brought him face to face with his hypocrisy in deceiving his father and selling off his brother nearly 20 years ago.

And finally, Judah breaks down. Verse 26, he identified them and said, she is more righteous than I.

Verse 26 is the first time in this whole chapter that spans a period of over 20 years where Judah stopped running away and stopped blaming everybody else and finally acknowledged his sin and took responsibility for it.

It's what the New Testament calls repentance. In the context of the bigger story, it's the turning point of Judah's life. Because after verse 26, whenever Judah appears, his character is completely different.

Instead of selfishly, fearfully running away from his messed up family, he exercises courageous and self-sacrificial leadership to put it back together. We'll see it more in the next several chapters.

[23 : 02] But Judah becomes a truly changed man. Why is this story in the Bible? Because it's such a clear picture of God's amazing grace to humble and restore even the worst of sinners in the craziest of situations.

Maybe you can relate to Judah in coming from a very dysfunctional family. But if you're honest with yourself, you can see that the problem is not only with your family members whom you may have left behind long ago.

The problem is in your own heart too. Maybe you have brought anger, unforgiveness, selfish demands, fearful accusations into your adult life, into your friendships, into your marriage, into your relationship with your kids.

Maybe like Judah, you have been a selfish jerk. You've left other people in the lurch who are depending on you for help. You've made all kinds of promises to get people off your back and you haven't followed through.

You've acted out of selfish impulses and blamed other people for the results of your own foolishness. You have worked hard to appear kind and loyal.

[24 : 29] But in reality, you have not been. If any of those statements you recognize to be true of you, there is good news for you today.

As we read in 1 Timothy, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He came to save selfish jerks.

He came to save sex offenders. He came to save slave traitors. He came to save spouse abusers. He came to save self-righteous hypocrites.

Judah was all of the above. And the same God who pursued Judah to humble and then restore him is here today. To humble and then restore you.

By his amazing and glorious grace. You are not too messed up for God to forgive and heal and restore you. No matter how horrible are the things you have done, no matter how broken is your past, you are not beyond the reach of God's grace.

[25 : 35] and neither is your craziest, most offensive, most selfish, most bitter, most immoral, most hypocritical neighbor.

the God of the Bible delights in saving the worst of sinners, showing us mercy, displaying us patience, and transforming us by his grace.

And if we have been saved by that grace, that should become our delight and our ambition as well. But also do not be mistaken.

You will never be truly restored by God unless you are first humbled by God. The turning point in Judah's life was when he was finally humbled, when he faced up to all his sin that he had been running away from for 20 years, for his whole life even.

Maybe you've been running away from God and his people. For months or years. Maybe you've been living in denial or blame or avoidance.

[26 : 47] And today God is bringing you face to face with what you've been running away from and calling you to acknowledge like Judah your unrighteousness. James said humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

Jesus said blessed are the poor in spirit. Those who acknowledge that they've got nothing. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Brothers and sisters, we will never become great leaders in our families. We will never become godly leaders in God's church unless we are frequently brought down to our knees in confession of sin and humble dependence on God.

See what we learn from Judah is that God humbles and restores even the worst of sinners. The insider in God's family who did everything he could to get out.

But this story is not only about God's work in Judah, it's also about God's work in Tamar. The outsider who did everything she could to get in. You see, in many ways, Tamar was the opposite of Judah.

[28 : 01] She was not born into the family of God's promise. She was from a pagan Canaanite background. She was a spiritual outsider with no knowledge of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with no access to the promises and blessing of God.

And her first contact with God's chosen people was with Judah when he was at his worst, when he had abandoned his brothers, run away from his dad, and forsaken his place in the family of God.

This would be like growing up in a Buddhist family, having never heard of Christianity, and the first person you meet who has any connection to the Christian church is the disillusioned atheist son of a former pastor who committed adultery with his church secretary and embezzled half the church's savings.

Most likely, you would think, I don't want anything to do with Christianity if that is the kind of life it produces. And the more time Tamar spent with Judah's family, the more she bore the brunt of their dysfunctionality.

Her father-in-law was selfish and distant from his wife. His sons, her husbands, were no better. So wicked that God personally struck them down.

[29 : 15] Tamar was used, lied to, left alone, and grieving, and defenseless, and finally condemned to die. Humanly speaking, Tamar had every reason to run away from Judah's family just like Judah had run away from his dad.

Judah had already sent Tamar back home. Presumably, she could have just asked her dad for permission to marry a nice Canaanite man. But she didn't.

Somehow, now in the process of being connected to Judah's dysfunctional family, Tamar had heard about the God who had made promises to Judah's ancestors, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

She heard about the God who had promised to Abraham, I will surely bless you. I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 22, 17 and 18. God had promised that his plan of redemption for the world would be carried out through the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[30 : 28] And though Tamar's understanding of God may have been limited and imperfect, she believed the promise of God. And because she believed, she risked everything she had to belong to God's family and to carry on the family line through which God had promised to bring his blessing to the world.

Judah's family was tottering on the brink of total extinction. Judah's wife had died. Two of Judah's sons were dead. Judah showed no intention of ever letting her marry his youngest son, Shelah.

There seemed to be no way forward. Tamar was desperate, alone, and abandoned, and so she took a risk. She knew Judah very well. Her plan worked without a hitch.

She even got his signet, cord, and staff, in other words, his ID and credit cards. Now what motivated Tamar to do what she did? Was it revenge?

Wanting to give Judah a taste of his own medicine? You tricked me by not letting me marry your son, so I'll trick you and get you back. Was it desperation?

[31 : 37] Was she simply obsessed with having a child? There would have been probably easier ways. Or was it faith? Believing that God had promised to bless the world through Abraham's physical descendants and risking it all to be part of that family.

Her motives may have been mixed, but in verse 26, Judah said, she is more righteous than I. It could even be translated more strongly.

She is righteous, not I. Tamar was righteous because she refused to go back to her pagan religious background.

She clung to God's promise that a Savior would come from the seed of Abraham. Maybe you're here today and you're not a Christian believer. Maybe you never expected to hear a sermon like this in church.

Let me challenge you, Christianity is probably not what you think it is. The Bible is not primarily a set of rules or rituals or principles to help people be nicer and a little more well-behaved.

[32 : 48] The church is not a club that exists to help its members feel better about ourselves. The Christian message is that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

In other words, being a Christian means acknowledging that I am more flawed and more sinful than I ever dared to imagine. But knowing that in Jesus Christ I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared to hope.

That's the Christian gospel, the good news. It's a message of liberating and transforming grace. Grace. it's the promise that attracted Tamar.

Tamar was righteous because she refused to go back to her pagan religious past. She was also righteous because she was loyal to the people of God even when they were at their worst. Even when she had been mistreated and abandoned by them.

And maybe you can identify with her. Maybe you've had terrible experiences with Christians. Maybe you've been ignored in the midst of your grief.

[34 : 02] Maybe you've been made to feel like an unwanted outsider. Maybe you've been lied to, put off, and finally left alone by those who initially said they cared.

Maybe you've seen abusive marriages, messy divorces, and unresolved conflicts among church people. Maybe you've been sexually abused and treated as damaged goods by church members or even by church leaders.

Maybe you've been blamed and condemned for the failings of others. But for some reason you're still here today. You're still listening to the word of God.

You're still present with the people of God. And I want to say to you, my sisters and brothers and friends with deep wounds, the Lord Jesus Christ is here for you today.

To heal you of any bitterness that may still remain in your heart and to honor you for your faithful perseverance and your loyalty to God's people even when we have fallen far short.

[35 : 11] Tamar was righteous because she refused to go back to her pagan past, because she was loyal to the people of God even when they were at their worst, and finally because she acted boldly and decisively to align herself with God's promises and God's family in the face of a seemingly impossible situation.

Now obviously the details of Tamar's action are not to be imitated. But R.C. Sproul says this, Our role in redemptive history does not hinge on us acting boldly to raise up physical offspring for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

However, this has not eliminated God's call for us to take daring moves of faith. Like Tamar, we may be forced to put our lives or livelihood on the line in order to do what is right or to stand up for Christ.

Have you stepped out in faith in a way that has cost you? Is Jesus calling you to make a bold move for his sake today? What we see at the conclusion of this passage in verses 27 to 30 is that God honored Tamar, the desperate outsider who risked it all to get in on God's promises and be part of God's family.

God honored her by preserving her through a treacherous delivery, one of the most medically hazardous presentations possible, locked twins, one of whom was in a transverse position.

[36 : 37] You can ask an OBGYN about it. They'll immediately do a C-section, but they couldn't back then. Either the baby or the mother could have easily died, but God preserved them.

They're a skilled midwife. They're a skilled doctor. God honored Tamar with not just one son but two. And what we see is a picture of God's blessing, God's life, God's joy, God's freedom breaking through and beginning to redeem this horribly dysfunctional family.

He was honoring this desperate, abandoned, abused woman who wanted above all else to have a place in the family of God. Tamar became not just the mother of two twin boys but an ancestor of King David and King Jesus himself.

Tamar is one of four faithful Gentile outsiders included in the family of God and prominently listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter one. No matter what your background, no matter how much of an outsider you might feel like, no matter how badly you've been treated by Christians in the past, if you want in on the promises of God in Jesus Christ, there is a place of honor for you in the family of God.

Because in Jesus Christ, the promise that Tamar heard and held onto has been fulfilled. in Jesus' death and in his resurrection, the blessing of God has broken through.

[38 : 14] The dividing wall has been broken down. And all the world can enter in. Let us pray. God, we thank you for your amazing grace in the midst of such a mess.

We thank you that you put this story in your word so that we might know that you came into the world to save sinners and to welcome outsiders.

Lord, we pray that you would humble us, that you would show us our sin. For we all are sinners.

We pray that you would humble us in order to restore us. And we pray that we would cling to you by faith and trust your promise that in your great mercy you will honor us and include us and never leave us and never abandon us.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. As the music team comes up, we're going to sing a minute.