

Killing What's Killing You | Guilt/Shame

Aaron Brockett | John 4:4-29

How's everybody doing today? It's great to see you. I want to welcome all of our guests and first-time visitors across all of our campuses. If I could just look into the camera and say hello to our North campus, West, Downtown, those of you here at Northwest, anybody tuning in online or on Facebook Live.

In fact, I was just reminded this last week, or I heard for the first time this last week, that there are 50 families that tune in from a ranch in Oregon every Sunday night and watch our services, and get this: They call themselves the Wild West campus.

So I just want to say hello to the Wild West campus. That's awesome that you guys are tuning in. I'd love to come out some time and ride a bull. That'd be amazing if you would let me. But we're really thrilled that you're here.

Before we get going, we had an amazing 2018, and our team has been working really, really hard over the past couple of months to prepare what we just kind of call an annual report. Basically, what that is is it's got some facts and figures in it, but more importantly, it's got some just incredible stories of people's lives that have been changed by what God's been doing here, so we want to share it with you.

You can go to the link on the screen and check that out maybe later today or this next week, and we're just trusting that God's going to do just as much, if not more, in and through our church in 2019.

Well, today we are wrapping up a four-week series that's taken us five weeks to get through because of the weather, but we've been in this series called *Killing What's Killing You*. If you're just now coming in and joining us in this series, this is all inspired by something that a guy named Paul writes in Romans 8:13, where he says, "But if through the power of the Spirit you **put to death** the deeds of your sinful nature, **you will live.**"

I think that one of the reasons why a lot of New Year's resolutions and goals maybe fall short or maybe we fail in them isn't because they're the wrong resolutions or goals, it's not because we're weak-minded people, but chances are something got in the way. Something short-circuited our best intentions.

God would actually say that thing that short-circuits our lives is sin. One of the original words for sin was an archery term. It just simply means to miss the mark. That's how I want us to think about it. Sin is missing the mark of God's best for our life, missing the mark of God's best intentions for us.

So we want to go after some of these things that are holding us back or even if we could go as far as to say that are just killing us. We want to get rid of them so that way we can live.

In week number one, we talked about the connection between envy and comparison. Then the next week we talked about the connection between worry and fear. Last week we talked about the connection between bitterness and anger.

Here's where we want to land the plane in this series. I want to talk about the connection between guilt and shame. I think that for many of us, this is the big one. This is one that's holding so many of us back, and God wants to remove guilt and shame from your life. I want you to be free from it.

Depending upon your perspective and your background, maybe that surprises you to hear a pastor say that or to hear that in church because maybe you sort of thought that the way all this worked is that I need you to be dependent upon guilt and shame so that you keep coming back.

It's kind of like a restaurant needs you to stay hungry or the Dos Equis guy needs you to stay thirsty. As a pastor, I need you to stay guilty so that way you feel the need to keep coming back every weekend. But no, that's not the way that this works. Jesus wants to free you from unnecessary guilt and just soul-crushing shame.

So here's where I want to start. What does guilt feel like? You know, I think that we all know what guilt is, but what does it feel like because that's a feeling that all of us are familiar with.

Guilt is that sick feeling in the pit of your stomach when you see the flashing lights in the rearview mirror and you know there ain't no way you're talking your way out of this one because you were going 20 miles an hour over the speed limit. There's no way that you're going to convince him otherwise. You're guilty.

Guilt is when a friend stops talking to you because you spoke behind their back. You violated their trust in some way, and you're guilty. There's no way that you can argue your way out of that one.

Guilt is when maybe a coworker rats you out or they get you written up because you were operating in a gray area.

Guilt is when you cause your child to cry because you raise your voice at them in anger.

Guilt is when your roommate gives you that "how could you" look when you borrowed something of theirs permanently and it's just violated some trust.

Guilt is when maybe you broke another promise to your spouse, something you said that you would never do again but you did it, and now it makes the conversation incredibly tense.

Guilt. It's an uncomfortable word. It's even more of an uncomfortable feeling, but I think it's important for us to understand that not all guilt is bad, that there is such a thing as healthy guilt.

Healthy guilt, or guilt from God's perspective, should work in our lives kind of like the check engine light on the dashboard of our car. You know, the one that you ignore all the time. The one that comes on and it seems like the car's running okay. It seems like things are going all right, but it comes on as an indicator to say no, actually there's something going on here that if I don't pay attention to it it's going to cause bigger problems later.

Guilt in our lives that's healthy is when God leans in and says, "Hey, come on. We've got some character things to look at." Maybe there's some stuff going on in your relationships that you need to pay attention to. Maybe there are some behavioral issues or some addictions that you need to let go of for your own good and the good of those around you.

I would even say that without healthy guilt it makes it impossible to apply Romans 8:13, our theme verse for this series, to our lives. You can't put to death the deeds of your sinful nature if you're not aware of them, and guilt is what makes us aware of some of these areas where you and I are just simply missing the mark of God's best for our lives. It's meant to be something good for us.

In fact, this is how Paul says it to a group of people gathered in the city of Corinth in 2 Corinthians 7:10. He says, "For the kind of sorrow," and that word sorrow is just another word for guilt, "**God wants us to experience** leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance," and that word repentance just simply means a turnaround; that's how I want you to think about it—I'm just going to turn this thing around, "results in spiritual death."

So the word for healthy guilt is conviction, and conviction is a good thing. Conviction motivates me or inspires me to take some action in my life. Conviction motivates me to have the hard conversation, the one that I've been dreading, like I know it's going to be a little bit dicey, but I know that this will be for the good of the relationship if I have it. Healthy guilt, or conviction, motivates me to swallow my pride, to make certain changes, or to say I'm sorry, so guilt in that sense is a good thing.

In fact, I would even go as far as to say if you can't remember the last time that you felt convicted or responded to that conviction, that's not a good thing because those things are meant for our betterment in life.

Shame? That's a different thing entirely. In fact, I said this last week: Bitterness is the result of unresolved anger that has built up in our lives over time. It's like the calcification of unresolved

anger, and so if I could use maybe another metaphor for how guilt and shame operate, I would simply say that shame is guilt that has passed its expiration date.

How many of you have ever opened up the fridge and there's like a gallon of milk in there that's like several months old? Yeah. It ain't good. It's past its expiration date. At one time it served a purpose. At one time it was good, but now it's past its expiration date. I would say that unresolved guilt, it ends up resulting in shame.

So either I didn't deal with guilt in a healthy way when it came up or maybe somebody else has actually pinned me down with my guilt and it's past its expiration date and it's turned into shame. What shame does is it actually blurs the lines between what I did and who I am. It's an identity issue. There's actually nothing good that can come from shame.

Nowhere in God's word will you see that God wants to keep anyone pinned down in shame. Jesus wants to free you from it or free you from it before it actually gets there.

This guy named Carl Jung says it this way: "Shame is a soul eating emotion." And I know that shame is eating away at a number of us right now. I know right now that maybe there are some of you who are feeling some shame in your life over something maybe that you've done but it's also maybe something that's been done to you and it happened a really, really long time ago and there's nothing that you can do to change it, but you still live with the remnants of the shame.

Maybe you were just a kid and an adult that you trusted put you in a situation or said something to you or did something to you that has now cloaked you in shame and you can't get free from it.

Or maybe your marriage fell apart and you did everything you could to keep it together, but nothing worked and it fell apart and now it's sort of blurred into your identity. Instead of being somebody who has had a divorce, you are divorced. You're a divorcee and it's become part of your identity, and even if the people in the room don't know you and you walk in, you just feel like they're sort of looking at you that way.

Maybe some of the reason why you walked away from God or the church is because every time you went they made you feel guilty and ashamed so you stopped going because every time you left you felt worse about yourself than when you came. You just never saw the hope. You never saw the redemption, and so as a result of some of these types of experiences, we can sort of project that onto God and we see God as maybe a police officer or the IRS just waiting to catch us in a violation.

So here's the tension that we face: Where does truth and love come into play? Because every single one of us has some areas in our lives that need to be confronted with truth in some way. There's some conviction. All of us are broken. All of us have made mistakes. All of us need to

grow. We all need truth, but yet we all need love as well. We need to know that we're worthy, that we're valued, that we're loved, and so how do these things operate?

This is so dicey in our world today, isn't it? Because we live in a world—we said this last week—that is so angry. We live in a world that loves tolerance. The only thing that we don't tolerate is intolerance and we're just like, "Man, how dare you speak that into my life because that may be true for you but it's not true for me."

So how do we be receptive to this because I don't know about you—I'm just speaking for me—I know that I've got blind spots and I know that I need people whom I love and trust, not everybody in my life but somebody in my life who loves me enough to actually say something to me that might hurt but I need to hear it and its conviction.

I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands. I'm not even talking about anything spiritual right now, but how many of you, even if you don't believe in God, you know somebody in your life right now where you can actually see some areas where maybe the check engine light has come on or should come on? You just see him making some decisions that you're like, "Man, I just see where that's headed, but I don't know how to speak truth into his life because I don't want him to think that I'm being judgmental. I don't want him to think that I don't love him."

This is a tension that we all face, and we need to look to Jesus because Jesus was the master at this. Jesus was the master at speaking truth into people's lives that they needed to hear, healthy conviction, in a way that also showed them that they were worthy and that they were loved. Two of the conversations that come to my mind happen in John chapter 4 and in Luke chapter 19.

Maybe for a number of you, especially if you've been in church for a while, these conversations are going to be somewhat familiar to you, but that doesn't mean that God can't speak something fresh through a familiar passage or remind us of some things that we oftentimes just simply need to reapply to our lives.

These two individuals that Jesus is going to speak the truth in love to couldn't have been more different. They were very, very different people, but they needed to be loved. They needed to be told that they were worthy, and yet they needed somebody who loved them enough to actually speak these words of truth into their lives. It's the woman at the well and a man in a tree.

In John chapter 4, we read about this conversation that Jesus has with this woman at a well, and starting in verse 4 of John chapter 4, it says, "He had to go through Samaria on the way." Actually, he didn't have to go through Samaria; he wanted to go through Samaria. Most Jews would go around Samaria because they didn't like the Samaritans, but Jesus knew that there was a divine appointment for him with a woman who desperately needed to be loved.

“Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was **surprised**, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, ‘You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?’”

So what I want you to understand, the setting here is that Jesus is by himself and he’s at this well where he knew that this woman would be. Now she comes to the well at an unusual time of the day. It’s about the middle of the day, which women would normally, during this time period, gather water at the well early in the day for a couple of reasons. They would do it while it was still cool out and they would do it because they needed water throughout their day. They would oftentimes go in a group. Kind of like ladies go to the bathroom in a group today, they would go to the well as a group in the early part of the day.

But this woman didn’t go with the ladies. She goes in the middle of the day when she knows that nobody will be there. See, this shows you how deep shame was running in her life. She was tired of the condescending looks and the gossip and the hurtful words that were directed her way. Any of you know what I’m talking about?

She’s like: I’m tired of it. I’m tired of being branded this way. And so she goes in the middle of the day so that way she didn’t have to put up with it anymore. She’s a loner. She’s been hurt by people.

I would imagine that when she sees the well... She sees this Jewish man sitting there and I’m sure that her heart sank, like: What is this guy doing here at the well? During the first century, women and men wouldn’t speak to each other in public unless they were married, and she’s a Samaritan and he’s a Jew and she’s alone and he’s by himself, and there are all kinds of reasons why this conversation could get awkward.

But it says that she was surprised at what Jesus said to her, and I think that what she was surprised by wasn’t just that he spoke to her but I think that she was surprised by the tone of Jesus. I think that when Jesus spoke to her, he had a warmth in his eyes that she hadn’t seen, from a man specifically, for a long, long time, and she could tell by the tenderness in his voice, in his body language that this guy was different, but she’s still guarded.

So they begin to talk and the conversation comes around. It moves from physical water that she would find in a well to living water and she’s spiritually thirsty and she sort of jumps at this opportunity to get spiritual water that he’s talking about, and then Jesus, he goes there. He’s going to speak truth into her life, but look at how he does it.

He says, “Go and get your husband,” She replies, “I don’t have a husband.” Well that’s true, but it’s not the whole truth, and so Jesus says, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband—for you have had five husbands,” Uh oh. Jesus, hold up here. You’re walking out on thin ice here.

You're going to offend her. And then he keeps going. "...and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now."

Oh my. Whoa, Jesus. This is dangerous territory here. He could've offended her. He could've hurt her. But then he says this. "You certainly spoke the truth!" and that's it right there. Jesus goes to this very, very sensitive place in her life. This is the reason why she wanted to go to the well alone. And he doesn't back away from it. He doesn't shy away from it. He goes right at it, but here's what he does. He opens the door for conviction here without condemnation.

He begins this conversation allowing her to hold onto her dignity and her worth, and he uses this exclamation point here as John is explaining this to us, I think because Jesus was absolutely thrilled that she didn't try to hide it. I think Jesus is so proud of her that she just comes clean in the moment and that's what he's thrilled about here.

See, listen. I want you to hear this. The one thing that God will never reject is authenticity. If you come to God and you're just simply real, he always receives you. I don't care what it is. The one thing that he just can't stand is self-righteousness and hiding and covering up and saying, "Well, I'm just not going to go there fully."

She just comes clean with it. She just takes off her mask and she says: This is me. Let the chips fall where they may.

Understand that Adam and Eve—God wasn't upset with them because they violated what he told them to do; God was disappointed because they hid from him when they did. This woman isn't hiding. She just comes clean. And hiding always turns our healthy guilt into unhealthy shame. Jesus wants to free her from this in this moment, not pin her down in further shame.

But there were some who weren't happy about this (there always is) and it was the disciples. They came back. It says in verse 27 when they came back from their errands or whatever they were doing, they were shocked to find Jesus talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask out loud. They thought it to themselves; they didn't ask it out loud, "What do you want with her? Why are you talking to her?"

Notice the woman left her water jar beside the well, the very thing that she came to get, because Jesus gave her something better, and she ran back to the village telling everyone "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!" and you have to stop and go, "Why would I want to do that? That could be kind of embarrassing."

This woman's saying: No, it's not. Actually this man told me everything I ever did. This man already knows everything, and he knows everything about you too, and you don't need to hide. Instead of being shamed, you're going to actually be free from that and you're going to actually find life and you're going to find worth and you're going to find value.

Jesus was able to not shy away from something she needed to hear, but he did it in such a way that she knew that she was loved, and the result was that she shared her story with everybody.

The next conversation happens with a guy who couldn't have been more different from this lady, but he needed the same thing. It says in Luke chapter 19, "Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region," tax collectors were people who got rich off the backs of other people. They were despised in this society, and Zacchaeus was actually the boss of those who did that, so he's especially hated, "...and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd."

My guess is that everybody in this community, they can't stand Zacchaeus because of what he's done. And we know that Zacchaeus was vertically challenged, and my guess is that he sort of developed a chip on his shoulder, like: Well, you know what? I know you all hate me, but you know what? Forget y'all. I'm just going to continue to do what I'm going to do, and he just sort of dug it in even more.

Who knows how Zacchaeus got into this occupation, but my guess is that he never set out to actually be this kind of a despised guy. He just kind of found himself there, and now that he was there, he's just sort of owning it. But he's dealing with shame. I know he is because he's like: I've been hearing about this guy named Jesus and I just wonder. I just wonder what if?

I would imagine maybe he got up that day. He had no idea Jesus was coming through his hometown, but he hears about it and so he goes down there to check it all out and see what it's all about. He can't get a good look at Jesus because everybody won't let him get a view, so he just climbs up in a tree.

As Jesus is walking through, he notices him and Jesus knows everything about him. Jesus says to him: Hey, Zacchaeus, why don't you come down. I'm actually going to stop. I'd like to come over to your house today to have a meal. Because Jesus doesn't just want to have a transaction here; he wants to have a relationship.

It says in verse 7 that the people were displeased because Jesus has gone to be the guest of a "notorious sinner" they grumbled—as if they weren't sinners.

But Jesus goes to Zacchaeus' house. We don't know all the fine details of the conversation. We really don't need to know. We just know it's the same deal: The warmth in Jesus' face, the tenderness in his eyes, the tone in his voice.

We know he spoke truth into Zacchaeus' life because it says in verse 8, "Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, 'I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!' Jesus responded, 'Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true

son of Abraham.” Then he says it right here, his whole reason why he came. **“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”**

Hey, if you're going to clap, just go all out. No half-clapping. They're all clappy or no clappy. My time's running out so if you're going to do it make it worth it.

Please don't misunderstand what Jesus said here. Jesus did not say: Because Zacchaeus is going to give to the poor I saved him. That's religion. Jesus says: No, salvation has come to this man's house because he put his trust in me, the one who speaks into his worth and his identity, and that's fundamentally changed him and now he's going to go and he's going to do these things.

Here we find these two examples, and in both of these examples, here's what's always sort of left me a bit baffled. Notice what Jesus didn't say to them—the woman at the well and the man in the tree. Notice that Jesus didn't grill them on what they believed. I'm not saying beliefs are unimportant—they are important—but Jesus didn't make sure that they checked all the boxes of belief before he would offer them grace.

Jesus never led them in a confession of faith, which I find kind of interesting. Jesus never said: Repeat after me. I am the Christ. I'm the Christ, the son of the living God. He never did that. I'm not saying that a confession of faith is bad. I'm just saying it's not there.

Jesus didn't actually demand proof of their change before he extended love and grace into their lives. He gave it first, and that kind of unconditional love and grace can actually change someone from the inside out.

So how this applies to all of our lives is every single one of us needs that type of grace and love spoken into us. I don't care if you have been following Jesus for decades or you're not following him right now or you're not quite sure what you believe; we all need that in our lives. And every single one of us knows of some people in our lives who are making bad decisions that we wish we could speak into but we're not quite sure how, and Jesus models this for us.

It's the tension. We talked about this before. It's the tension between truth and grace, and this is where we find ourselves, this kind of wrestling match. You look at a rubber band. It's not much use when there's no tension on it. It's just kind of there, but where a rubber band becomes useful is under tension, and there is tension between love and truth, between grace and truth.

See, we are able to do this in love. You don't do it from a position of superiority. You don't do it because you're actually reveling in that other person's guilt and shame. You're doing it because Jesus has accomplished everything for that person and for you and for me to be set free from the shame that is pinning us down.

Here's the tension that I face every time I step up onto this platform. I get nervous every time I step up here, not because I worry as much about how I'll do, but because I know that I've got to say some things that you maybe don't want to hear.

Sometimes preaching feels like stepping into oncoming traffic. You're just like this. It's like, "Well, that semi's going to hit me. I know this is going to hurt." And it's that tension between how do I speak truth? I don't want to back away from that but I also want you to know that you're loved.

Here's where I've kind of landed on this. We as a church, we want to deliver the truth of Jesus with the tone of Jesus. Both of those things need to be there. Jesus didn't water anything down with these two people, but he didn't back away from the truth, and that's where real change comes into play.

When I have people in my life who just tell me how great I am, I appreciate that, but it doesn't change me. Or when I have people that all they want to do is speak truth into my life, all they want to do is just reprimand me for something, that doesn't change me either. It's the handful of people in my life who I know love me so much that they'll say something to me that they know is going to hurt me, but they do it because they love me.

Listen, Jesus can deal with our sin. What he won't tolerate is self-righteousness, so if you're feeling self-righteous, then don't do this in somebody's life. Jesus never leveraged shame to change anybody's life. Why? Well, because if healthy guilt looks like conviction, unhealthy shame feels like condemnation, and that's the difference.

Conviction produces a disdain for sin in my life, at least that's what it should produce, but condemnation produces a disdain of self. In other words, could I say it his way? Guilt is feeling bad about what I've done. Shame is feeling bad about who I am.

It sort of sounds like this: "Man, I feel really bad for yelling at my kids today." That's guilt. That's a good thing.

"I'm a bad mom." That's shame. All of a sudden it's blurred into your identity.

"Man, I really messed up at work." That's guilt.

"I am a failure at what I do." That's shame.

"I fell into an addiction again." That's guilt.

"I can't do anything right. I'm just a big loser. This is who I am." That's shame.

It's an identity hack, and we stop believing in who God says that we are through the finished work of Jesus and we start hustling to make up for our shortfalls by performing and pleasing

and proving and perfecting and pretending and maybe a couple other words that start with p. That's all I could think of.

You can tell if you're guilt has passed its expiration date into shame when you start listening to your self-talk in those unguarded moments and you start saying things like this: "I'll be worthy if."

I'll be worthy if.

I'd be worthy if I could just get sober. I'd be worthy if I could just get that scholarship, if my salary could reach that certain level. I'd be worthy if my parents would finally approve. I'd be worthy if I could get pregnant.

Or maybe what about this one: If they only knew.

If they only knew the trouble I got into in college. If they only knew what I did on my last business trip. If they only knew what I looked at on the computer screen. If they only knew about that DUI I got, actually not that long ago. If they only knew about the emotional affair that I was having with somebody at work. If they only knew about the addiction that I've managed to keep hidden then they wouldn't want to have anything to do with me.

What about this one: I'm not enough.

I'm just not enough. I'm not qualified. I can't do it. It's just a matter of time before I get found out.

I want you to hear this even though you may not yet feel it or believe it. Your struggles and your sin do not define you. You are a treasured child of the Most High God. You are loved. You are not your mistakes. You're not your sin. You're not your propensities. You're not your addictions.

Jesus has spoken worth and value into your life. You want to know how much you're worth to God? You look at the cross of Jesus Christ, and he says: You're worth everything to me. I would give up the life of my only son so that you could actually lay down that cloak of shame you've been carrying around and you could separate your identity from those things that you've done or the things that have been done to you and you could find freedom in me.

Every now and then I'll have somebody come up to me and I'll be talking to them and I'll invite them to church or the conversation will turn to spiritual things and they'll say something along these lines: "Well, I've just got some work to do before I come to church." Or, "Well, I've just got some things that I've got to figure out, some questions I've got to answer, some stuff I've got to get cleaned up."

Or, "Pastor, you wouldn't want me to come to your church. I'd walk through the doors and the roof would cave in." I always just want to say, "Man, you're giving yourself way too much credit. You're not that great of a sinner."

Paul writes some of the most direct stuff on this and he would say: I'm at the front of the line. I am the worst of all sinners, but God's grace could get to me.

When you begin to find that shame that pops up in your self-talk or maybe you know of somebody in your life right now who just will not let you forget about some of the mistakes that you've made, that's when you need to begin to rehearse what God says about you and you need to turn the volume up on that.

In Hebrews chapter 12, it says that Jesus took on our shame. I love that. It's like he walked into the ring with our shame and took it down.

Isaiah 54:4 says, "Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid; there is no more disgrace for you."

Jesus wants to free you from your secrets and restore what shame has been taking from you for so many years. You're as sick as your secrets, and as soon as you actually just let go of those things and get honest about those things with God and maybe a few trusted people—not everybody needs to know, but maybe somebody does, somebody you know who loves you, has your best interests—all of a sudden, you just take the power out of your secrets.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."

What that means is that Jesus has accomplished everything sufficient for your salvation. And you can have confidence in that and you can say, "Because of that, I know he loves me. Because of that, I know he has my best interests in mind so I'm going to lean into this thing and I'm actually going to be open and willing to what he brings to attention in my life so that I can actually grow, and when I fail, I'm going to lean into his grace all the more."

So where do we go from here? Whenever we begin to feel convicted, you can either cover up or you can come clean. And by coming clean, you just realize there is no healing in hiding.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy."

So just at a very real practical level, how do we apply this to our lives? It's just simply this: When you're feeling convicted, just BREATHE.

Embrace your **B**rokenness. I'm a broken human being and I need Jesus. I need the grace and the love that he provides.

R is **R**elinquish control. Stop trying to manage your sin and just come clean with it.

E is **E**valuate myself with fearless honesty, knowing that God wants the best for me.

A is I'm going to go make **A**mends with the people I've wronged in my life due to the sin that has caused me to miss the mark.

T is I'm going to start **T**hinking in a whole new way. I'm going to be restored by the renewing of my mind.

E is I'm going to **E**ncourage others with my story.

As we conclude this whole series, I just want to read King David's words over us from Psalm 32 that just encapsulates all of this so beautifully. He says, "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally," meaning it took a while, "I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone."

That promise is not just true for David; that promise is true for you and for me today. If you let Jesus handle your secrets, he'll take care of your shame.

What I want to do, as we wrap up this series, is I just want to simply give you an opportunity to respond to Jesus today, to put your trust in him. Both the woman at the well and the man in the tree woke up that morning not expecting to meet Jesus and have their lives changed.

Did you know that most of the people in the New Testament who responded to Jesus and were baptized the day that they made that decision, they did it spontaneously. They did it because the Spirit moved and prompted them in their lives.

Yet, for so many of us today, it's kind of like, "Well, I need to take a class," or "I need some time to go by," or "I need to figure this stuff out before I give my life to Jesus or before I get baptized," and I would just simply say then you're sort of missing the power of what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life.

Today, if you're feeling prompted or convicted or you're just exhausted because you've been trying to manage this shame in your life, I just simply want to encourage you to let go of it by putting your trust in the fact that Jesus has done everything to accomplish your salvation.

Your life may be messy right now. You might be going through a messy divorce. You might be in the middle of an addiction you just failed in last night. You might be ashamed of some stuff in

your life. Yet today, I can't think of a better time for you just to simply step out and to say, "I just want to place my trust in the one whom I know has my best interests in mind."

All baptism is a picture externally of what's happening on the inside. It's a cleansing. It's being buried with Christ so that you can be identified with him and raised to walk as a brand-new creation. It's a celebration. It'll also make you nauseous and want to throw up because you feel vulnerable and you wonder what people are going to think.

I can't think of a better time than to just, instead of talking yourself out of it, just to be like, "Man, I really want that. I really want to just trust Jesus with everything." If you're still waiting until you get stuff figured out, you're really not trusting in him.

I was talking to a good friend of mine a few years ago who was helping me move. His name was Jeff. Jeff was this close, and I remember asking him about what he believed. He was right there. I said, "Jeff, why haven't you given your life to Jesus? Why haven't you been baptized?"

He simply said this. He goes, "I just don't feel like I know enough yet." He goes, "I just feel like I need to get some stuff cleaned up right now in my marriage and in my personal life, and then when I'm ready, I'll do it."

See, the whole point of this is that you'll never be ready. The whole point of this is that you can't do it. That's why Jesus came.

So here at Northwest, first hour, we didn't have any baptisms planned. We just kind of threw it out there. We had 20 people who just responded spontaneously and came up. Can I just tell you that having these conversations was just moving? I just want to give that same invitation to you right now at all of our campuses.

In fact, I'm going to pray and turn it over to the campus pastors for them just to provide specific instructions to whatever campus you're at. Let me just go ahead and pray right now.

Father, we come to you today and I just ask that we would be able to kill what's been killing us in the power of your Spirit. For some of us, it's envy and comparison. For some of us, it's worry and fear. For some of us, it's bitterness and anger. For all of us, it's guilt and shame. I just pray that we could trust that you have done everything sufficient to accomplish our salvation, and we need to rest in that.

I pray that if you're moving in some people's lives that they would have the courage to be obedient to it. We just lay this before you in Jesus' name. Amen.