

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

LIES WE BELIEVE | WEEDS IN MY GARDEN

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Well, it is good to be with everybody across all of our locations and those of you joining us online. We want to welcome you here for week two of a very honest series and conversation around a subject that we are all experiencing, at least to some degree. And that is the subject of mental health.

We're calling this series Weeds in My Garden. And that is a line from a lyric out of a song called Honest from Kyndal Inskeep.

And I just want you to know, right now, today, maybe you got invited by a friend, maybe you heard we were doing a series on mental health, maybe you stumbled across this message online—I want to welcome you wherever you may be joining us from geographically.

But I also want to say this. I want you to know that you are welcome right now, here, as you are however you might be joining us emotionally or mentally. And I know that maybe for a number of us, at one time or another, if we're really being honest, we're not always honest about how we're doing.

And maybe there is a very good reason for that. Maybe at one time or another we were honest with how we were doing and it wasn't received very well.

Years ago I got together and had lunch with a young guy in our church. We sat in the booth and we were eating chips and salsa waiting for our food to get there. We're both semi healthy. We're eating chips and salsa, but we've also got water with lemon. They kind of offset each other.

We're sitting there and he's talking to me and I just asked him how he was doing. We were kind of both leaning in, maybe a foot or two from each other. And I take my water and I take a big drink. I don't know if you've ever had this happen but it went down the wrong pipe. I didn't even have time to think. My body just reacted to it.

I'm not exaggerating when I say this. I wish I were exaggerating for the sake of a good sermon illustration, which I never do, by the way. Alright? Used to long ago when my kids were in Kids' Ministry and they weren't here. But now I've got teenagers. And they keep me honest.



So, I'm not exaggerating this. I take the water. Get the wrong pipe. Any my body just projectiled—spews it out. Now, that poor dude didn't know what had hit him, man. He's sitting there and it sprayed him and literally water is dripping off of his nose. At first I think he thought that I did it on purpose. He looked at me like really confused and hurt and then angry. And I was like, "Bro, man I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do that." And he just didn't know what to do with all of that. I handed him napkins and stuff. Now, maybe there was a time in a conversation like that where you were talking to some people and that's exactly what you did, except it wasn't H2O that came out of you. It was your emotions. You were just like, "Blaaaah." And they just didn't know what to do with it. You just kind of blindsided them with it and they just kind of sat there with it.

Maybe they had a confused look on their faces. And you just kind of like felt silly. Or maybe their eyes glazed over and they didn't know how to respond. They awkwardly changed the subject. And you just felt stupid. Or, maybe at its worst they judged you, shamed you, dismissed you, tried to fix you. And you just didn't feel heard. What I want you to know, number one, is if you've had that experience, man, I'm so sorry that you had that. I want you to understand what's happening. They just didn't have the emotional capacity to just kind of sit in that with you. That's number one. The second thing is very like what was happening is your mess was busting up against their mess that they had tightly hidden away in a storage closet of their own emotions. And that was making them uncomfortable.

They were like, "Man, if you're going to get honest that means I'm going to have to get honest. And I don't want to get honest. So, I'd just rather deflect back upon you a little bit of shame or judgment or just try to fix you so I feel better about myself. Now, here's the lie that I think many of us end up believing. We look around, maybe in a room like you're in right now. I know that I fall into this. I still struggle with this. I begin to feel if I'm struggling emotionally or mentally and that I'm the only one. I look around and it seems like everyone else is doing so good.

The way that other people present themselves, both physically and virtually, makes them look better than likely what they really are.

So, here's what we do. We compare other's outside presentation with how we're doing on the inside. And that is a comparison that you will always lose. It's one of the biggest lies that we end up buying into.

I've heard from so many of you after week one of this series, whether you grabbed me somewhere or you sent me a DM or texted me, and you were just like, "Man, thank you so much for this. I just, at times, feel so isolated and alone."



And I just want you to know that over 92 percent of our church said that they either have, are, or know somebody who is struggling with their mental health.

Now, when we end up... If we've ever gotten the message that it wasn't safe to lay it out there, how we're doing, what we end up doing is we end up saying, "Well, okay. I guess I'll just give you roses so you won't see the weeds in my garden."

Where this becomes especially damaging is in our most, if I can use this term, sacred of relationships. You know, all of the people who are in your life are in your life for a reason. And God brings some people into your life for a long time and sometimes it's just for a season then He moves them out.

Every person that you've ever had interaction with, there is something there where God is shaping you through that relationship and interaction.

It's kind of like concentric circles. You have some people who are on the outside. It's like layers of an onion. And right there in the bullseye, those are your sacred relationships. I would say that when we begin to just give each other roses so that we won't see the weeds in our gardens, then it begins to affect the relationship and it damages it. Especially your marriage. Especially your relationship with your kids or your parents. Especially family or your close network of friends. If you begin to isolate from them, that's like so, so damaging to your spiritual, emotional, and mental health.

The other place that it's really damaging is within the church. And when I say church, I don't mean a building, a service, an institution, or an organization. When I say church, I mean the gathering of imperfect people like you and like me who are coming, not because we've got it all figured out, but precisely because we don't.

And one of the things that we noticed last week is that Jesus was always drawn toward hurting people. People who were hurting physically, but also people who hurting mentally and emotionally. Jesus didn't avoid them. Jesus pursued them.

You've got a woman who was hiding in broad daylight at a well because of her guilt, sin, and shame. Most people went to the well early in the morning, she went to the well in the middle of the afternoon.

Most people went to the well in the morning, not just to get the water for the day but so that they could catch up with the town gossip. If you went to the well in the afternoon, you were the town gossip.

She was there and Jesus pursues her. He went out of His way. The text said that He had to go through Samaria. News flash. He didn't have to. He could have gone around. But He went straight through because He was pursuing her.



Jesus would pursue a shady tax collector hiding in a tree. In fact, the only people that Jesus reserved His harshest words for were the people who were pretending to have it all together when they didn't have it all together.

Here's what I want you to know. A Christian is not an adjective. A Christian is not a perfect person. A Christian is not somebody who has all of the answers, or who used to struggle a long time ago.

A Christian is a standing. It is the standing that you have before God. And you didn't earn it. You didn't bring anything to the table. It's not because you've got all of the right answers or you live a holier lifestyle.

I don't have it all together, but I'm following One who does. So that means that I'm going to continue to take off the mask. I'm not just going to give you roses so you won't see the weeds in my garden. I'm just going to give you access to the whole thing.

That's called confession and repentance. A Christian does that every day on a continual basis. And that means that we're still going to hurt and we still have the capacity to hurt others. It means that we're still going to say things that we don't mean.

It means that we're still going to wrestle with our mental health. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you won't struggle with your mental health. If that was the heart and the compassion that Jesus had for people, that should be part of the mission of our church.

So, last week we laid out these three general principles. If you missed that message you might want to go back and catch it because I just kind of laid out some scaffolding for our five weeks together.

The next three weeks we're going to get as applicable as we possibly can with the real issues that showed up in the stats, both nationally and in our church.

I just feel like the best way for us to kind of deal with it... Everybody is talking about these issues; it would be awkward for us not to talk about them in the church. And we should actually have more to say about them because God's Word speaks life into these issues.

So, we're just going to run right at this. Next weekend we're going to talk about suicide and self-harm. The weekend after that we're going to talk about worry, anxiety, and depression. And then the very last week of this series we're going to talk about burnout and stress. So, we're going to get very applicable with all of those subjects.



Here's where we're going today. Today I want to expose some of the lies that we are tempted to believe in our minds. And what I want to do... The Bible says that as a person thinks, so they are. So, what you think eventually comes out of your mouth. What you think eventually makes its way to your feet and determines your steps.

So, our mind, our mindset, is really, really important and we need to understand that oftentimes what we label negative self-talk, there is actually something or someone that is behind that. I want to pull back the curtain of the spiritual realm so that we can kind of see what's going on here.

Last week we said that mental health issues can be found in one of four categories.

SITUATIONAL: seasons or scenarios

BIOLOGICAL: chemistry or wiring

CLINICAL: diagnosis and professional help

SPIRITUAL: matters of your soul, sin, and faith

So, you could experience a mental health crisis in one of these categories or in all four. And we're all susceptible to any one of these four.

The first could be situational. This is my mental health is struggling because of a season or a scenario I find myself in. It's a season of transition or change, maybe it's a relationship that's ending, maybe it's a health thing—whatever may be going on. It's a season. It's not going to last forever but it kind of feels like it is at times. It's a season or a scenario.

The second is biological. And that is maybe some sort of chemistry or wiring that you have. And maybe you didn't know it for years and years and you're struggling.

Here's number three. It's clinical. And that's when you got a diagnosis and some professional help and there is no shame in that.

And the fourth is spiritual—matters of your soul, sin, and faith.

Now, I said last week that we don't want to be too narrow minded when it comes to a very complex, broad issue. That's certainly true.

And maybe a well-meaning Christian or maybe you heard this in a sermon or maybe at church—whatever kind of over spiritualized the biological, or the clinical problem that you had and it just kind of made you feel that you weren't a good enough Christian or that was part of the reason why you were going through mental health struggles.

Now, we don't want to over spiritualize, but we also don't want to over correct and diminish the spiritual realm or the power of prayer. We never want to diminish or explain away anxiety, depression, or poor mental health by suggesting that there must be something wrong with your spiritual life.

We also don't want to dismiss the fact that there is a spiritual realm and we are in a spiritual battle. I want you to know this. Whether you realize it or not, whether you believe it or not, right now you have a very real enemy and it's not a general enemy, it's a very special enemy with a name. His name is Satan. He's doing everything within his power to keep you away from God. And actually, he attacks your mind in all four of those categories.

Some of you are like, "Oh, come on Pastor Aaron. Do you really believe in Satan?" Yes I do. Yes I do.

There have been moments, and I'm just guessing some of you feel this way as well, you've had this experience, I've had instances of such darkness in my life: dark thoughts, dark feelings, dark emotions. There have been times when I have been tempted to do the unthinkable. And I'm like, "Where in the world did that come from?" Ironically, it has been my encounters with the lies of Satan that have actually reinforced my belief in the truth of a good God.

I find it kind of interesting that, statistically speaking, more people, statistically, believe in God than they believe in Satan. And I think he relished that.

Think about it, man. If you had an enemy what better way to defeat your enemy than to convince him you're not real? Or that you're just kind of like some little cartoon character with horns and a pitchfork running around playing pranks on people? I just need you to know the best way to lose a war is to realize you're not in one. And I want you to see that we are in one. So, in your Bible, Revelation, chapter 12 verses 7-9, check out what's going on here. It says:

"Then," what's the word? War. "war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him." Revelation 12:7-9 (NIV)

Now, oftentimes we look at this and we're like, "Well, how in the world did this happen? I have no idea. But it says that it did. And it actually explains a lot.

Let me kind of explain what's going on here. A lot of people think that the book of Revelation is all about predictions for the future. And it's not that that is entirely wrong, it's just not entirely right.

The book of Revelation actually is a book of worship and the meaning of the book is found in the description of its title, it is a revealing—a revealing of Jesus Christ, a revealing of what's going on right now behind the scenes in the spiritual realm.

The Bible is not an ancient book that tells us what happened, the Bible is a timeless book that tells us what always happens. And then it says this in verse 10:

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the” circle this word, “accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night...” Can I just say this before I read the rest of the passage? Remember a couple of weeks ago we were talking about the Holy Spirit and I said we have an advocate? We have two advocates in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. An advocate is somebody who, when you mess up and sin, says, “Oh, I’ve got this one.” We actually have an enemy who is an accuser. And what it is saying in this passage is that he is accusing us before our God day and night. So, he’s actually accusing you. And it says, he:

“has been hurled down. They triumphed over him,” How? “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” Revelation 12:10-11a (NIV)  
It doesn’t say anything at all about our actions.

Man, I like this crowd. I think I could just go, “Baaah,” and you guys would cheer. Alright? So, that’s awesome. Little known fact, I preach better and shorter when you cheer. There is so much here. Here’s the big idea. Satan has been defeated. The cross of Jesus Christ defeated him. Now, until the return of Christ he has limited domain in the world. And he is like a dog with rabies, chained up. He will bite anything that he can within the radius of his reach.

What’s he’s doing is, he hates God’s creation with everything that he has and he wants to destroy God’s creation. He can’t destroy Creator, so he’ll just destroy creation. Now, who is the crowning achievement of God’s creation? If you didn’t know, just pull out your phone and turn on the selfie camera and look. It’s you.

It’s you, man. Somebody needs to hear that today because you have such a low view of yourself, either because of the negative thoughts you’ve been saying to yourself, or what others say to you, or what they’ve done to you.

You need to know that you are the crowning achievement of God’s creation. And you may not have a very high view of you, but He has a high view of you. You may not believe in God, but He believes in you. And Satan actually hates you. He’s doing everything that he can to destroy you.

A lot of people think that if you become a Christian, then somehow that makes life easier. I don’t know where we got that thought because the Bible never says that. In fact, Jesus said the opposite of it. He said, “In this world you’re going to have trouble and you’ll be hated because of Me. However, take heart. I’ve overcome the world so you



can have a sense of hope and peace in the midst of all of that.” And we have victory by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony.

Now, when you give your life to Jesus, if that has occurred, if that happened, you popped up on Satan’s most wanted list. I’ve heard it described this way before:  
The birthmark of a believer is a bullseye

Meaning that before you gave your life to Jesus Satan had no reason to attack you. You were not a threat. He is totally fine to leave you in your indifference, with you being unaware or you worshipping created things rather than Creator God. But when you gave your life to Jesus, you not only earned a Savior, you also gained an enemy. And here’s what you need to know about your enemy. Alright? He’s actually not very creative or innovative, it’s just that he’s spent centuries sharpening the one or two tools that he has. And he is a copyright violator and a plagiarist.

He takes the good things of God and he spins them to make you worship those things rather than Creator God, which is behind every sin. There’s actually a good, created thing that God made for our enjoyment or fulfillment and Satan wants you to make that thing ultimate.

And so, what we’ve got is a true God in heaven and Satan who counterfeits by being the counterfeit god of this world. God gives the Holy Spirit. Satan counterfeits with unholy spirits called demons. God creates revival and awakening. Satan counterfeits with riots and division. God tells people to repent of destructive behavior and false beliefs. Satan counterfeits with tolerance and normalizes destructive behavior and false beliefs. Whatever God creates. Satan counterfeits. And he’s still doing it today. So, we’ve got to understand that and especially in an election year. The Bible says that we don’t wrestle with flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of darkness in the spiritual realm.

Which means that the real enemy is not people from other nations, political parties, lifestyles, or ethnicities, but we understand that there is an enemy behind the scenes pulling the strings getting people to worship creation over Creator God. So, here is his greatest counterfeit. Are you ready for this? He creates as much havoc, pain, and chaos in your life to get you to cry uncle and blame it on God so that you’ll reject Him. I am constantly amazed at how much flack God gets for Satan’s schemes. So, you, in fact, have an enemy. And he fights dirty.

The next thing that I need you to know is how the enemy attacks. Now, if I were to ask all of you: What is the primary thing that Satan does? A number of you might say temptation. And you’re not entirely wrong. You’re just not entirely right. So, yes, Satan



does use temptation. He tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. He tempted Jesus in the desert when He was fasting 40 days and 40 nights.

But temptation is only one of the things that he does. Actually, in Revelation 12, I had you underline the word; it says he's an accuser. So I need you to understand that Satan is accusing the brothers and sisters day and night. He is also a liar. Listen to Jesus's description of him in John 8:

"He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."  
John 8:44b (NIV)

Meaning he's the very best liar, he's fluent in the language of deception. That, at least, right there ought to alert you to the fact that there is some deception going on and that you have an enemy coming against you who wants you to be separated from God. Check out this description in 2 Corinthians 11. It says:

"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14b (NLT)  
One translation uses the word masquerades. He's just messing with us. He's just pretending to be somebody that he is not, which is why 1 John 4 encourages us to test the spirits, because not every spirit is from God. There is one Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is always pointing us to Jesus. There are unholy spirits that deceive you in your mind. And Paul urges us in 2 Corinthians 10 to:

"...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)  
Now, some of you are going, "Okay, Pastor. I thought this was a series on Mental Health, not spiritual warfare. They overlap. I want you to see that we don't want to over-spiritualize mental health, and we don't want to under-spiritualize mental health. We want to pull back the curtains in the spiritual realm to see what's really going on. The only way to get out of a fight without being knocked out is to realize you're in a fight. And he doesn't fight fair.

I have only been in one fist fight in my entire life. And, luckily, I'll just give you a sense of relief, it wasn't last week. It was when I was a freshman in high school. A bunch of neighborhood boys were getting together playing tackle football in a back yard. Somebody called me a name that I can't repeat from this platform. And I said something that was very smart aleck back. I had a really sharp wit even then. And it kind of set him off. I think I said something about his mom.

So we hiked the ball. I didn't even see him coming. He was in my blindside running full speed with his fists in a ball. And as soon he got up to me he just—boom—hit me right in my eye socket. I didn't fall down. I stayed on my feet. Alright?



And then the two of us on our feet just kind of danced around each other with our fists up. And then we stopped. That was basically all we did.

We never got down to the ground. I'm glad we didn't. because, I don't know if you've ever been in a fist fight, I hope that you haven't, or if you've ever watched MMA, which I hope that you have—understand that the fight gets dangerous when it goes to the ground. What happens when it gets to the ground and somebody gets on top he has the opportunity to do some ground and pound.

Here's what I want you to know about Satan. We think that Satan, the primary thing that he does is temptation. I think he wants you to think that. But really, all he is using temptation for is just jabs.

He's jabbing you with these light, little temptations trying to soften you up, get you disoriented, maybe get you to fall and then as soon as he can pounce and get the fight to the ground, he will and he'll ground and pound you with lies and accusations.

And this happens in your mind. This is how this relates to mental health. First of all I want you to see this. Satan is trying to convince you of some lies. Here's the first one: Your issue is your identity

You are starting to define yourself as the issue that you are grappling with rather than, "No, no, no. This is who I am. This just happens to be the issue that I'm dealing with." Satan will blur those lines and he'll say, "No, no, no. You are your issue. And what you've done or what's been done to you or what you are struggling with—that's who you are and that's who you will always be."

This just turns into a ground and pound of lies. We call it negative self-talk, but I would contend that there is an enemy behind it.

So, do any of these sound familiar? "I'll never be happy." That is not true. Now, it feels true in the moment but that is not true. "I'm not enough." That is not true. God said that you are a valued son or daughter of the King. His image is stamped all over you. Some of you may be like, "Well, I'm worthless." Well, Jesus would say otherwise. He would say, "You are worth Me going to a cross for."

Some of you would say, "Well, my parents hate me." Or, "My depression is making everybody miserable." "I'm a burden. It would be better off if I wasn't around." That is not true. It feels true but it's not true.

Maybe you're thinking to yourself, "You know what? I don't have what it takes." Or, "I'll never find love again." Or, "I'm just going to fail again, it's just a matter of time."



And the reason why he wants to convince you that your issue is your identity is the deconstruction, the dismantling, and the disassembling of the image of God within you. Come on. Think about this. We said this before. You give your life to Jesus—that's a standing. From that standing for the rest of your days—however long that—you are being formed more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus preparing you for an eternity with Him.

Satan actually wants to convince you that you don't have that standing, that you are your issues and he is trying to deform you out of the image of God and disintegrate that—just obliterate it.

Listen, man. Sin is not just a list of naughty things God doesn't want you to do. Come on man. We're just cheapening it when we think about it like that. Sin, if you take any one of the top Ten Commandments, God's top Ten: murder, lying, stealing all of the ones that are in the Ten Commandments, play them out to the fullest extent. And where it leads is to the de-imagining of God within you.

And so Satan is trying to convince you that if you begin to think of yourself only as your issues that you'll begin to convince yourself that that is the way that God thinks and feels about you as well, instead of that you are a valued son or daughter of the King. Something does not need to be true to destroy your life. It just has to be believed. Satan cannot steal your salvation, and he knows it. If you've given your life to Jesus, if you've confessed that He is Lord and Savior that is a standing that is secure. You cannot lose that because you didn't earn it. Jesus earned it for you. So, that's a secure standing that you have.

And then it says in Ephesians that the Holy Spirit seals your salvation so it can't be taken. Satan knows that. He knows that he can't take your salvation. So here's what he will do. He will steal the joy of your salvation to the point where you are like, "You know what?" You're a Christian, but you don't see yourself the way that God sees you; you are part of the redeemed.

Here's another lie that he tells us:

You are your diagnosis

Whatever you've been diagnosed with you just kind of begin to over own that and when you look in the mirror all you see is your anxiety, your depression—whatever it is that you may be wrestling with. I'm not trying to diminish the diagnosis you've been wrestling with. I'm just saying that there is your diagnosis and then there is you.

Abigail Shrier has written a book called *Bad Therapy*. I highly recommend it. In the book she says this. There is an increase right now... I think this is probably true for every generation but specifically younger generations to begin to refer to themselves as their

diagnosis. So they will say things like, "Well, I'm anxious." Or, "I'm depressed." Or, "My chemical diagnosis."

It's sort of like when we refer to: my wallet, my purse, my keys, my car. Your keys aren't you. Neither is your depression. Your identity is not your pants. Neither is your identity your diagnosis.

And Satan is so crafty that he'll lie to you through the four categories.

So, the lie shows up in the situational category by convincing you that you'll never get past your past. This season that you are in will never stop. You didn't just go through a divorce; you are your divorce. And that's a lie.

He'll come to you in the category of the biological. As you come to grips with your wiring and chemical makeup and you begin to struggle, as anybody would, and you say, "Why am I this way? I don't want to be this way. How am I going to get out of this?"

And you begin to buy into the lie, "I'll never be the person God created me to be." Or, "I'll never be who my parents aspire for me to be." "I'll never be able to live out my purpose like other people seem to be living out theirs." And that's a lie.

Satan comes in the category of the clinical as you deal with the weight of a diagnosis and the life that you were hoping to have feels like it is slipping through your fingertips as you face chronic fatigue or discomfort.

It definitely shows up in the spiritual when Satan whispers.

And he's already whispered in some of your ears this morning, "You're such a fraud. How can you go to church with your Bible and your little devotional book looking all nice on the outside, lifting your hands in worship when you know where your hands were last night.

"You are such a hypocrite. How could you go there and pretend to be somebody that you are not?

"How many times have you told God you wouldn't do that thing that you did? But you did that thing again. Man, He's so sick and tired of your nonsense.

"You might as well reject Him and walk away from the church before everybody discovers who you really are and they reject you because you're a failure. You're a hypocrite. You're too far gone. You're damaged goods. You've messed up too many times. And if people only knew..."

I need you to look right at me. Those are lies. Those are lies. The truth of the gospel is that God is inviting you to come as you are. Some of us are in a ground and pound of

failures and shame and those lies and accusations are directing your steps with eternal consequences.

I want to say this. If Satan is the father of lies, what you need is the Spirit of truth. And the only way to counter the lies and accusations of the enemy is with the truth of God. That is the only antidote. Here's the deal. You've got to rehearse it. We ruminate on things that are untrue in our mind. That's the source of a lot of mental health issues. We have to rehearse the truths of God.

So, let me just give you a few:

God is not surprised by your struggles

He's not afraid of your brokenness. He is not allergic to your pain. He is not dodging your suffering. Maybe others who have called themselves Christians have done those things but that is not the nature and the heart of our God.

Jesus came to earth to help, to heal, and to bring hope. Jesus didn't come to earth just to die on a cross for your sins. Now, He certainly came to do that, but if that's all Jesus came to do, then God would have beamed Him down to earth as a 33 year old man and He would have immediately gone to a cross and the transaction would have been done. But instead He is Emanuel, God with us. He was born as a baby. He grew up as a helpless toddler. He went through all of the awkwardness of adolescents. He experienced... The Bible says He was tempted in every way that we are. So, He identifies and knows. And then He spent a number of years in relative obscurity knowing that He was touching and impacting the lives of people. Why? Because He came to bring as much comfort and hope and peace as possible to people and He's still doing it today.

So, Jesus—just as Satan works through the four categories, Jesus comforts in the four categories. He speaks to the situational anguish you're experiencing, because He did so to a woman caught in adultery.

Jesus speaks to the biological issues that maybe you are wrestling with because He touched a woman with a flow of blood.

Jesus spoke to the clinical and medical challenges that you might be wrestling with. He did so when He spoke to a demon possessed man.

He certainly speaks to the spiritual struggles as He did to the paralytic on a mat.

God is not surprised by your struggles. Here's the second truth:

God is not surprised by your sin

Guys, here's the thing. He already knows. You think you're hiding from Him? He already knows. All He is waiting for is for you to do is to just come out in the open.

Some of you have not been able to get past your past. And there has been this reoccurring sin in your life that you can't get any victory over. It's the same prayer of forgiveness that you've been offering to Him 1,000 times. And you keep failing. You're carrying around the weight of your failures, guilt, and shame.

And God is saying, "Would you just come to Me as you are and let Me carry that weight." Some of you strayed in your marriage years ago and by the grace of God your spouse forgave you, your kids forgave you, God forgave you, you didn't forgive you. And you are just pinned down by your failures and shame.

Maybe in a moment of anger you said some words, they escaped from your mouth. They damaged a relationship that means a lot to you. The damage is done. You can't undo it. But maybe by the grace of God they forgave you, you can't forgive you. You're still on the ground in this ground and pound of lies, accusations, and shame. You've not stood in victory from that. And you need to understand you cannot out sin God's grace. Some of us try. Some of us are trying. But we can't out sin Him. If you want to know how God views you, then you look at how Jesus interacted with others and how He spoke about others.

I think this is encapsulated in the parable found in Luke 15, the parable of the prodigal son.

I love how the late Tim Keller said, "We should actually call that the parable of the prodigal father, because prodigal just means extravagant."

We oftentimes say, "Well, this is the prodigal that kind of left home, but the father's demonstration toward his son was extravagant grace. If you know the story, the younger son tells his father, "I want my share of the inheritance early." That was the first century Jewish version of, "I wish you were dead." I would actually argue that's the current day version as well if you've ever said that to your parents.

His father gives it to him to the dismay of the older brother. And he runs away to Vegas or something and he spends it all on wild living and he has nothing.

And it affects his mental health. We find in the passage that he is ruminating. He's thinking thoughts to himself like, "You know what? What have I done? Even my father's hired servants live better and eat better than I am. I'm here eating pig slop.



So, here's what I'll do. I'll go back to my dad and I'll grovel. And I'll tell him, "You don't need to treat me as a son, just hire me on as one of your hired men."

So, he gets his things, swallows his pride and he goes back home. And I love what Jesus said in the parable. The father was standing on the horizon waiting for his son. And he sees his son in the distance.

And he doesn't just casually walk back inside and say, "Well, well. Look who decided to come home." No, that's how we would tell the story. That's how we would act. A little bit of passive aggressiveness. We know we'll forgive; we just don't want to make it too easy on him.

No, what did he do? The father hikes up his garments, puts on his first century Nike sandals and he ran, he sprinted toward his son. That's the word that is used. And I love that because this is an older gentleman. And I don't know if you've ever seen a man over the age of 50 sprint—it ain't pretty, things jiggling around. He's running to his son and he embraces his son.

And his son starts his rehearsed speech but his dad cuts him off. And, oh man, he puts his ring on him, killed the fattened calf.

Now, I always thought the reason why the father ran to his son is because he missed him. And I'm sure that was true. But that's not all of the truth.

In fact, in the first century, Jewish world the reason why the father ran to his son was because if the community would have seen his son first, they would have stoned him to death.

What that son did was so disrespectful that it would destroy the fabric of their society. So, the community would have taken justice into their own hands and put that young man to death.

What the father was doing was protecting his son, laying down his life, putting himself between the son and those who would stone him.

Here's what I want you to see. I say all of that to say this—that's how God sees you. You just come to Him, "God, here I am again. I looked at that thing I told you I'd never look at again." "I did that thing. I can't believe that I did that thing."

"I've been hiding all of the weeds in my garden." And God is not like, "Well, well, well, well." No man, He's running toward you.

Here's the last thing I need you to hear:  
God is not reluctant to save



He's not reluctantly going, "Well, you know, we'll see." I love what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah, chapter 59. He says these words:

"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save..." Isaiah 59:1a (NIV)

I love that. It's not just this idea that God wants to save, that He desires to save but He can't, that He's got these tiny little t-rex arms, "I'm trying to get to you but I can't get to you."

In chapter 65 it says this:

"All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people..." Isaiah 65:2a (NIV)

This is the position of God right now. His arms are outstretched toward you. It's a favorable disposition toward you.

I love what Kyndal Inskeep said in the song last week. She said, "God takes our messes and turns them into messages. God takes the tragedies in our life and turns them into testimonies."

Some of you right now are on the ground in a ground and pound of lies, shame, and accusations from your enemy. You need to be released from that.

Before we go any further and get really specific and we talk about suicide and anxiety and stress, you need to be released from the lies that Satan has been feeding your mind by rehearsing the truth of God.

So, here's what I want to do as we wrap up our time together at all of our campus locations. We're going to have regular men and women around the room and you can just walk up to them and here's what I want to ask you to do. You just walk up and you say, "I need released from..." and then whatever it is that you need to be released from. "I need release from shame." "I need release from my anger." "I need release from my bitterness." "I need release from the past that I can't let go of. I can't get past my past." You just simply say that. We'll just pray a very quick prayer over you that you would be released from that thing that you came in here with today. You may be on the ground in a ground and pound, but you can walk out of here on your feet as a son or a daughter of the King.

So, let me pray and then I want to ask you to respond.

Father, we come to You right now and I just pray today that we would understand that we have a very real enemy and that he is lying to us. And the way that we combat those lies is with Your truth.

So, Father, I pray that you would release strongholds, break chains, the things that are keeping us held back from actually having a right view of ourselves.

Honestly, what keeps us from having a right view of You, God, is that we don't have a right view of ourselves. So, I pray that You would help us see us rightly before You and





that there would be some people who will experience freedom today. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Now, here's what I want to ask you to do. I just want to ask you to get up where you are and to come down from or to the sides or to the middle of the room, wherever you see prayer counselors and just walk up to them and say, "I need release from..."

Now, some of you in the room right now are like, "Well, I don't know that I need to be released from anything." And that is great. And I celebrate that with you.

You're not a passive observer here. You are an active participant. Be praying for those who do. Because, right now, Satan hates what's going on here and you need to be praying that people would have the courage to step out and to receive this. So, just for a couple of minutes, would you come?

