

Week 5, Is there room for me?

Welcome/ Shout outs (Abby and Izzy, Karen, Greg, Bill, Nepal)

Series Review: God is the Author of my Story

- Often, the best way to see forward is to look back.
- When we look back: You are not alone. I am always present.
- When we look back: Step into the Water.
- When we look back: Don't forget what God has done.
- **When we look back: I was chosen by God!**

Intro: I will never forget, sitting on the couch beside my mom, my dad standing at the door holding a suitcase, he was leaving for good. As a five-year-old boy, I wondered, what's wrong with me, what did I do to make him leave. (pause) Of course, I did not do anything but it is hard to explain that to a five-year-old.

- When I look back on my life, I have experienced a lot of rejection.
- Growing up, I attended 8 schools before graduating from High School. I was always the new kid, and often an outsider.
- When my mom remarried, she married an educator who thought I wasted too much time playing sports and going to church when I could have been studying. I never measured up.
- The most emotionally difficult part of ministry, I hear it from pastors over and over again, it is impossible to please people. The moment they see imperfection, real or imagined, they are done with you.

Let me ask you a question: **Do you believe you are loved, wanted, and pursued by God?**

Belonging is one of our most fundamental human needs.

- The Need to Belong Theory
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- Self-Determination Theory
- Attachment Theory all teach that belonging is one of our most fundamental needs.

Attachment theory says, that from infancy we are all asking one basic question:

"Is there someone who delights in me, who will be there for me?"

Belonging isn't a luxury. It's essential to healthy human functioning. God says it this way,

"It is not good for man to be alone."

Do you think a prostitute feels alone? Isn't that strange, night after night, she gives herself away to multiple men and yet, she is alone. In fact, often what drives this behavior is loneliness. Desperately wanting to feel chosen, loved, and wanted. That was Rahab's story.

Read: Joshua 2:1-21

Monthly Practice: Spiritual Gifts

I can identify with Rahab. My first sexual experiences were in pre-school, several of my friends growing up had porn throughout their houses, I was sexually abused in 5th grade and by middle school I was sexually active. Sex felt like love. I felt chosen, wanted, I was not alone.

Like Rahab, I spent most of my life wondering, if people knew the truth about my past would they still love me? I think you could argue, this is the number one question the Bible answers, no matter what you have done, **You are loved by God and He is coming for you**. Turn to your neighbor and say, **God is coming for you**. Now turn to your second choice, **you can't hide, God will find you**.

Rahab is a Gentile, a woman, and a prostitute, living inside a condemned city But God...

John 15:16, "You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit..."

The biblical answer for our longing to belong isn't simply finding our tribe. It's discovering that **before we ever sought God, He sought us. Genesis 3**

God does not just let her live. God does not just promise her forgiveness and eternal life. God redeems her life. **Rahab discovers, despite my past, God is the author of my story**.

Matthew 1:5 records: Rahab marries Salmon. "Salmon is the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab..." Rahab becomes the mother of Boaz. Boaz grows up to become the wealthy, godly man in the book of Ruth and marries Ruth, another Gentile outsider who puts her faith in God. Boaz and Ruth become the grandparents of King David. David's family line gives birth to Jesus the Messiah. Matthew could have left this out but Matthew was a tax-collector, he knew what it was like to be an outsider. Jesus made Matthew an insider. He knew how it felt to be rejected but Jesus chose Matthew. Ancient genealogies almost never mentioned women but Matthew intentionally includes five women:

- Tamar- a widow, who secretly prostitutes herself to her father-in-law to secure her place in the family, but God includes her in His story.
- Rahab- a prostitute
- Ruth- a gentile widow
- Bathsheba- a victim of rape and power abuse.
- Mary a virtuous woman, the mother of Jesus

Matthew is making a theological statement before Jesus was even born. The arrival of Jesus proves **God's grace is big enough for you!** God offers her more than forgiveness and eternal life. God gives her a future that totally exceeded her expectations. She becomes:

- a wife,
- a mother
- an Israelite with a new family
- ancestor of King David, Messiah!

That's redemption. God doesn't merely erase her past. He rewrites her story by writing her into His story! This is what we mean by redemption!

Vision: Helping people follow Jesus and experience the Hope of Redemption! New Series

"God didn't choose Rahab simply so she could experience His love. He chose her so she could become part of a family that reflects His love to others. That's still God's plan today. The church is called to become the kind of people who make others feel what Rahab felt." We are the body of Christ. We should convince the world that they are known, loved and chosen. What does that look like?

1. **Love people!** When I met Dr. Bennett, I was a seminary dropout with a failing marriage. Dr. Bennett was a retired famous pastor, author, seminary professor and yet he made me a priority. He stopped, he saw my pain, and he cared. That's what Jesus did again and again in the NT and what He does with us. The greatest experience in life is to be truly known and loved. Jesus, the fields are white unto harvest. We are surrounded by people who are looking for love.
2. **Believe in People.** The first night I met with Dr. Bennett and his wife, I shared my story, and cried my eyes out. The first night, Dr. Bennett said to me. Allen, there is something special about you. Something I do not see in many pastors I meet. Somehow, Dr. Bennett could see beyond my current circumstances. He saw potential. My life was a mess but He believed Jesus could redeem my mess. Often, when people decide to follow Christ, it is because their life has fallen apart. God has them right where he wants them. Like the prodigal, they have come to their senses. Churches are messy, like nurseries and we have to all be ok with that. When I met Dr. Bennett, my life was a mess.
3. **Lead People.** This begins by telling the truth. Paul said, "Speak the truth in love." The truth sets us free! We will not affirm sin or brokenness when Jesus came to love us into healing and transformation. Dr. Bennett loved me unconditionally but he loved me enough to tell me the truth. Often, we avoid telling the truth, in the name of love but if we are honest, it is not love for the person in sin, it is love for ourselves. We are actually protecting ourselves. Dr. Bennett, like Jesus, led by example. He often said, the church will become a reflection of who you are. This leadership requires patience. Change takes time! I often say, I am amazed by all that God has done in my life but I am surprised it has taken so long. When I met Dr. Bennett, he was 74. He gave me the last 20 years of his life.

48 years ago, as I watched my dad walk out the door, I did not yet know, I was known, loved and chosen. I did not understand God was writing my story but He was. God is also writing your story!

Invitation