



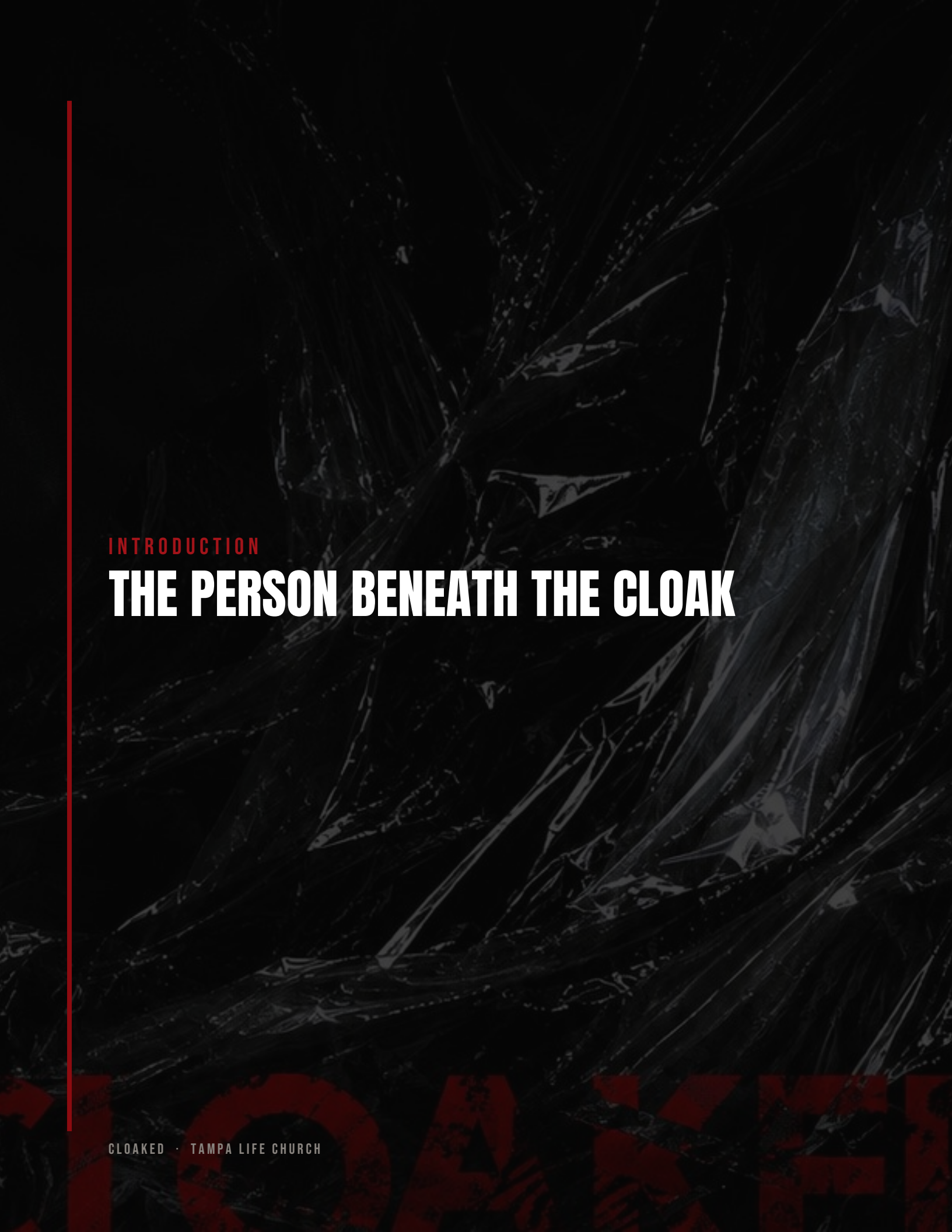
TAMPA LIFE CHURCH

CLOAKED

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

PART 5

Part 5: The Person Beneath the Cloak



INTRODUCTION

THE PERSON BENEATH THE CLOAK

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One of the greatest tragedies of human nature is that we often become known by what has happened to us instead of who God created us to be. A person battles addiction, and eventually everyone calls them an addict. Someone experiences divorce, failure, depression, or betrayal, and before long that season becomes their identity. The wound receives more attention than the person.

This is exactly the world Bartimaeus lived in. Mark does not simply introduce him as “Bartimaeus.” He introduces him as “Blind Bartimaeus.” His condition had become part of his name. Society no longer saw the man; it saw the disability. His blindness had become his identity.

Yet when Jesus arrived, something extraordinary happened. Jesus never addressed him by his condition. He simply called the man. While the crowd focused on the cloak, Jesus saw the person beneath it.

That is the heart of mercy. Mercy refuses to allow a person’s worst season to become their permanent identity. Mercy sees beyond failures, beyond labels, beyond wounds, and beyond appearances. It sees people the way God sees them.

Perhaps the greatest miracle in this story is not merely that Bartimaeus received his sight. The greater miracle is that he was restored to who he had always been beneath the cloak.

Today we will discover that mercy is not simply something God gives us. It is something God desires to produce within us. And when His mercy changes the way we see others, and even ourselves, we begin to reflect the very heart of Christ

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PART

WHEN YOUR CONDITION BECOMES YOUR IDENTITY

01

"And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging."

MARK 10:46 (KJV)

Mark is intentional with every word he writes. Instead of introducing us to simply "Bartimaeus," he calls him "blind Bartimaeus." That detail reveals something deeper than a medical condition. It reveals how society had come to define the man. His blindness had become his introduction. Before anyone knew his heart, his faith, his family, or his dreams, they knew his limitation. His condition had become his identity.

This is one of Satan's oldest strategies. He cannot always destroy a person's destiny, so he attempts to redefine their identity. If he can convince someone that they are nothing more than their failure, their addiction, their fear, or their past, he can keep them from believing God still has a purpose for their future. Long before he traps someone's actions, he seeks to imprison their identity.

Sadly, this still happens today. People often become known by the darkest chapter of their lives. One mistake becomes the lens through which everyone sees them. We hear phrases such as, "He's the alcoholic," "She's the divorced woman," "He's difficult," "She's depressed," or "They're rebellious." While those descriptions may reflect real struggles, they never tell the whole story. They describe a battle, but they do not define the person.

The danger is not only that others begin to speak these labels over us. Eventually, we begin speaking them over ourselves. At first we say, "I struggle with anger." After enough time we begin saying, "I'm just an angry person." The struggle quietly becomes our identity. What began as a season becomes a permanent self-description.

The Bible consistently teaches that God refuses to define people by the labels the world gives them. Throughout Scripture, He calls people according to His purpose rather than their present condition. When God looked at Gideon, He did not see a fearful farmer hiding behind a winepress. He declared, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (Judges 6:12, KJV). Gideon certainly did not feel mighty, but God spoke to the man Gideon would become rather than the fear he was presently experiencing.

The same principle appears throughout the ministry of Jesus. Simon was unstable, impulsive, and inconsistent, yet Jesus renamed him Peter, meaning "a stone." Christ spoke identity before Peter ever lived up to it. The Lord was not denying Peter's weaknesses; He simply refused to let those weaknesses have the final word.

This reveals an important spiritual principle: God always speaks to destiny before everyone else sees it. Faith looks beyond the present condition and embraces God's future for a person's life.

Paul later explains this new identity in Christ:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 (KJV)

Notice that Paul does not say some things become new. He declares that our entire identity is transformed through Christ. Our past no longer possesses the authority to define us. While we may remember where we came from, we no longer live under the authority of those former labels.

Isaiah reminds God's people of this same truth:

“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.” — Isaiah 43:1 (KJV)

ISAIAH 43:1 (KJV)

What beautiful words. God says, “I have called thee by thy name.” Heaven does not introduce us by our failures. Heaven knows our names. The Lord does not see merely what sin attempted to make of us; He sees what His grace is still creating within us.

Perhaps that is why Bartimaeus' story is so powerful. Before the miracle ever took place, Jesus refused to address him by his blindness. The crowd may have called him “Blind Bartimaeus,” but Jesus simply called the man. Mercy always reaches beneath the cloak and speaks to the person hidden underneath.

As believers, we must learn to see people through the same lens. The church should never become a place where people are permanently identified by their worst decision. Instead, it should be the place where people are reminded that God's grace is greater than their past. We are called to recognize the image of God beneath every wound, every failure, and every label.

This truth also applies personally. Many Christians continue wearing cloaks that Jesus has already removed. They still introduce themselves by failures God has forgiven. They continue living under names that Heaven no longer uses. The enemy constantly reminds us of what we were, while the Lord continually calls us toward what we are becoming.

Never forget this principle:

The enemy calls you by your failure. Jesus calls you by your future.

Until we believe what God says about us, we will continue living beneath cloaks that Christ never intended us to wear. The miracle of Bartimaeus began long before he received his sight. It began the moment Jesus looked beyond the cloak and recognized the man beneath it. And that is exactly how the mercy of God still works today.

PART

MERCY SEES THE NAME BEFORE THE CONDITION

02

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

MATTHEW 5:7 (KJV)

One of the most profound truths in this message is that mercy begins when we remember there is a name beneath the condition. That simple thought captures the very heart of the Gospel. Mercy is far more than feeling sympathy for someone who is hurting. It is choosing to look beyond what is immediately visible and recognizing the image of God that still exists beneath every wound, every failure, and every broken season of life. When Jesus walked through Jericho, the crowd saw a blind beggar sitting beside the road. They saw a man defined by his disability and limited by his circumstances. Jesus, however, saw something entirely different. He saw a man whose faith was reaching beyond his condition, a man whose life was about to be transformed, and a disciple hidden beneath a beggar's cloak. The crowd noticed blindness; Jesus noticed a soul.

This difference between the perspective of man and the perspective of God is found throughout Scripture. Human beings naturally evaluate people by what they can see. We notice appearance, behavior, personality, and reputation, often forming conclusions long before we know someone's story. God, however, has always looked much deeper. When Samuel went to anoint the next king of Israel, he was impressed by the appearance and stature of David's older brothers. Yet the Lord interrupted his thinking with a timeless principle:

"For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

1 SAMUEL 16:7 (KJV)

Nothing has changed. We are still tempted to judge people by what is visible, while God continues to work from the inside out. Mercy, therefore, requires us to slow down before reaching conclusions. It refuses to write someone's entire story after witnessing only one painful chapter. It understands that a person's current struggle may explain where they are, but it does not determine who they can become through the grace of God.

Pastor Tisdale points out that long-term struggles often become permanent labels in the eyes of others. People are introduced by their weaknesses rather than by their names. Someone becomes "the addict," "the angry person," "the depressed one," or "the backslider." While those descriptions may reflect real battles, they never tell the whole story. Mercy never denies reality, but neither does it reduce a person's entire identity to that reality. It recognizes that there is always more beneath the surface than what the eye can see.

Jesus demonstrated this repeatedly throughout His ministry. When He called Matthew, everyone else saw a dishonest tax collector who had enriched himself at the expense of his own people. Jesus saw a future apostle. When He stopped beneath the sycamore tree and called Zacchaeus by name, the crowd saw a

corrupt man who deserved rejection, but Jesus declared that salvation had come to his house and reminded everyone that he too was “a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:9, KJV). The Lord did not ignore Zacchaeus’ sin; He simply refused to let sin become the man’s permanent identity. Mercy always speaks to the person God intends someone to become rather than the failures that currently surround them.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples is found in Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman. The disciples would have seen her as a woman with a shameful reputation and a complicated past. Society had already written her story. Jesus, however, saw a thirsty soul longing for living water. Before the day was over, the woman who had been rejected by her community became the one who invited an entire city to come and meet the Messiah. Mercy saw an evangelist where everyone else saw a failure.

This truth should profoundly affect the way we minister within the church. Too often we are tempted to make quick assumptions about people based on outward behavior. When someone becomes distant, we assume they no longer care. When someone reacts emotionally, we question their maturity. When someone struggles repeatedly, we begin to believe they simply do not want to change. Pastor Tisdale reminds us that when mercy disappears, we stop seeing people and begin seeing problems. Leaders begin noticing patterns instead of potential, and believers begin recognizing failures more quickly than evidence of God’s grace.

Jesus never ministered that way. He addressed sin honestly, but He never confused a person’s behavior with their identity. When the woman caught in adultery stood before Him, He neither excused her sin nor condemned her to remain in it. Instead, He lovingly declared, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11, KJV). Truth and mercy walked hand in hand. Holiness was preserved, repentance was required, and yet grace opened the door for transformation.

John beautifully summarizes the ministry of Christ by saying that He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, KJV). Those two qualities were never in competition with one another. Truth without mercy becomes harsh and often drives wounded people farther from God. Mercy without truth leaves people comfortable in the very bondage Christ came to break. Jesus perfectly balanced both. He loved people enough to tell them the truth, and He loved them too much to leave them where they were.

As followers of Christ, we are called to cultivate that same perspective. Every one of us came to God wearing a cloak of some kind. Some wore the cloak of pride, others the cloak of fear, addiction, shame, bitterness, or failure. Yet Jesus looked beneath every one of those garments and called us by name. He saw what His grace could accomplish long before anyone else did. If we have truly experienced that kind of mercy ourselves, we should be the first to extend it to others.

Perhaps the question we should ask ourselves is no longer, “What is wrong with this person?” Instead, we should begin asking, “What does God see in them that I have not yet learned to see?” That single question changes the way we lead, the way we parent, the way we serve, and the way we love. Mercy begins the moment we choose to see people through the eyes of Christ rather than through the labels the world has placed upon them.

PART

**TRUTH WITHOUT MERCY WOUNDS, MERCY WITHOUT TRUTH
LEAVES PEOPLE BOUND**

03

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth."

JOHN 1:14 (KJV)

One of the greatest tensions every believer must learn to navigate is the relationship between truth and mercy. Throughout church history there have been those who emphasized truth so strongly that mercy almost disappeared, while others emphasized mercy so heavily that truth became secondary. Jesus embraced neither extreme. The Bible says He came "full of grace and truth." Notice that Scripture does not present these as competing virtues but as complementary characteristics of the nature of Christ. Wherever Jesus went, truth and mercy walked together.

Pastor Tisdale makes a profound observation in this lesson: truth without mercy becomes a knife in the wrong hand, while mercy without truth becomes permission to remain bound. That statement perfectly summarizes the ministry of Jesus. Truth has the power to expose what is wrong, but mercy determines how that truth is delivered. Without mercy, truth can become harsh, cold, and destructive. It may expose the problem, yet fail to restore the person. On the other hand, mercy without truth may make people feel accepted while leaving them imprisoned by the very sins Christ came to deliver them from.

This balance can be seen throughout the ministry of Christ. Jesus never ignored sin, but He also never allowed sin to become a person's permanent identity. Consider the woman caught in adultery. The religious leaders wanted justice without mercy. They dragged her into the public square, exposed her shame, and demanded immediate judgment. Their concern was not restoration but condemnation. Jesus responded very differently. After confronting the hypocrisy of her accusers, He looked at the woman and declared,

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

JOHN 8:11 (KJV)

Notice the perfect balance. Jesus did not say, "Neither do I condemn thee," and stop there. Had He done so, He would have ignored the seriousness of her sin. Neither did He simply say, "Go, and sin no more," without first extending mercy. Instead, He offered forgiveness before He called for transformation. Grace opened the door, and truth showed her the path forward.

That pattern should shape every area of Christian ministry. Our responsibility is never merely to point out what is wrong. Even the Pharisees could do that. The ministry of Christ goes further. It seeks restoration. It speaks truth with the hope of healing rather than with the desire to humiliate. The purpose of biblical correction is not to win an argument; it is to restore a brother or sister to fellowship with God.

The Apostle Paul reflects this same principle when writing to the church at Ephesus. He instructs believers to speak "the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15, KJV). Truth and love cannot be separated without damaging both. Love without truth loses its power to transform, while truth without love loses its power to heal. God's design is that every difficult conversation be governed by both conviction and compassion.

This balance becomes especially important within the church. Sometimes believers become so passionate about holiness that they begin measuring spiritual maturity by how quickly they can identify someone else's failures. Discernment is necessary, but discernment without compassion can quietly become judgment. Pastor Tisdale reminds us that when mercy disappears, we begin seeing problems instead of people. We notice behavior before we recognize brokenness. We become experts at identifying weaknesses while forgetting that every believer is still a work in progress.

Jesus never ministered that way. Whenever He confronted sin, people left with hope instead of despair. His words pierced the conscience, yet they also lifted the heart. The rich young ruler walked away sorrowful, not because Jesus was harsh, but because truth lovingly exposed the idol he refused to surrender. Peter wept bitterly after denying Christ, yet Jesus later restored him rather than replacing him. Thomas doubted, but Jesus invited him to touch the scars rather than rejecting him because of his unbelief. In every case, truth revealed the need while mercy preserved the relationship.

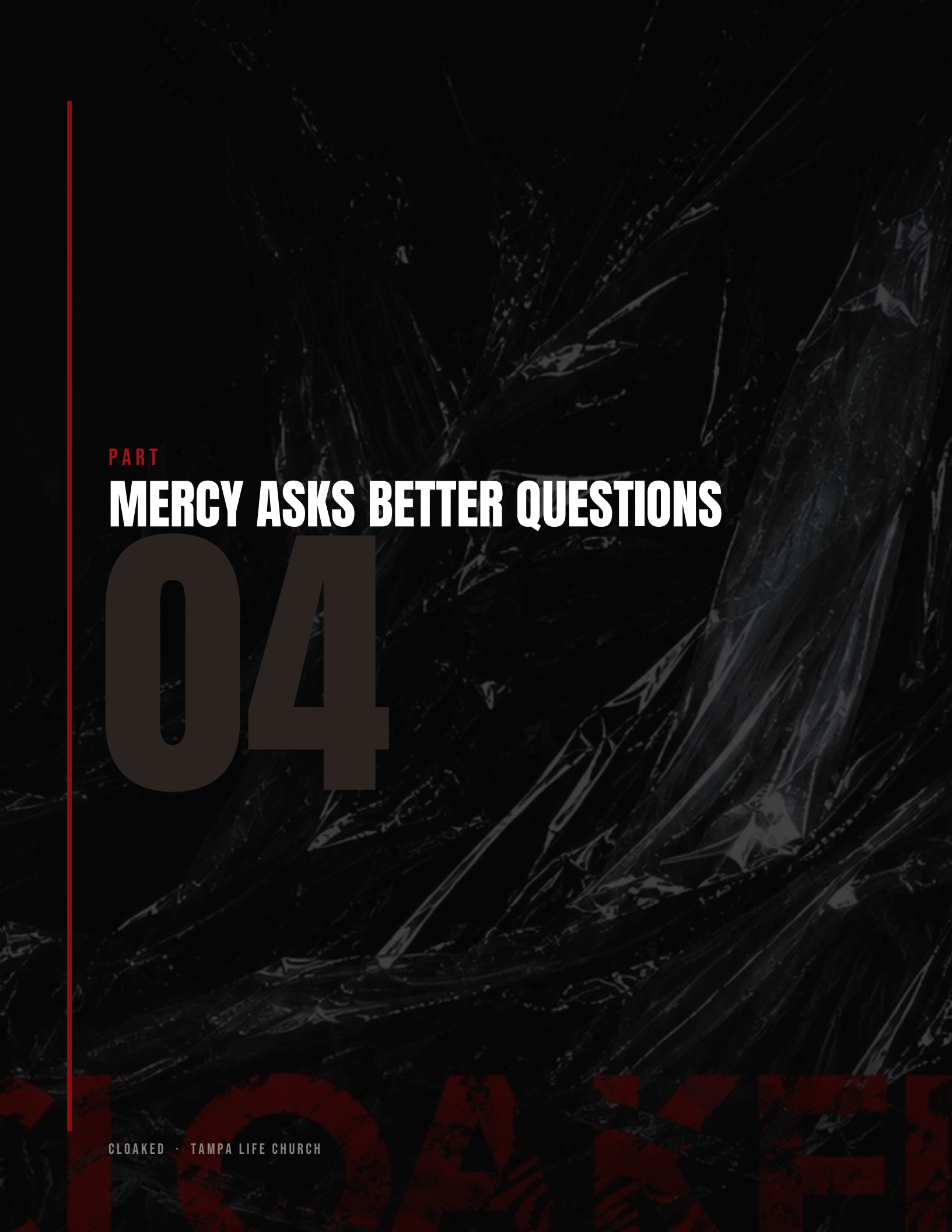
This is an important lesson for every Christian leader, parent, spouse, and friend. Our goal is never simply to be right. We are called to help people become right with God. There is a significant difference. A person can win an argument and still lose a soul. Jesus never sacrificed truth, but neither did He use truth as a weapon to wound people unnecessarily. His words always carried the hope of redemption.

Perhaps one of the greatest evidences of spiritual maturity is learning to tell someone the truth with tears rather than with triumph. The Apostle Paul described his own ministry this way when he reminded the Ephesian elders that he had warned people "with tears" (Acts 20:31). His correction flowed from love, not frustration. He grieved over the possibility of people being lost because mercy filled his heart even as truth filled his mouth.

As disciples of Christ, we should continually examine our own hearts. Do people experience hope after we speak to them, or only condemnation? Do our words invite repentance, or do they simply expose failure? Can others sense that we genuinely desire their restoration, even when difficult truths must be spoken? These questions reveal whether we are ministering in the spirit of Christ or merely expressing our own opinions.

The cross itself is the greatest picture of this divine balance. At Calvary, God's truth declared that sin demanded a price. His holiness could not ignore rebellion. Yet God's mercy refused to abandon humanity. Justice and mercy met at the cross. Truth was fully satisfied, and grace was freely offered. Because of the cross, we never have to choose between truth and mercy: they have already been perfectly united in Jesus Christ.

When the church learns to live in that same balance, it becomes a place where sinners are convicted without being crushed, where holiness is preached without becoming harshness, and where broken people discover that the same God who lovingly exposes their wounds also possesses the power to heal them. That is the ministry of Jesus, and it must become the ministry of His Church.



PART

MERCY ASKS BETTER QUESTIONS

04

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

GALATIANS 6:1 (KJV)

One of the clearest evidences of spiritual maturity is not how quickly we can identify someone's fault, but how carefully we seek to understand the person behind it. Pastor Tisdale makes a powerful observation that challenges every believer: mercy asks better questions. Judgment is usually satisfied with appearances. Mercy, however, is never content with what is merely visible. It understands that behavior is often the fruit of something much deeper. Before mercy reaches a conclusion, it pauses long enough to ask what may have happened beneath the surface.

Human nature has a tendency to write entire biographies based on isolated moments. We see someone become quiet, and we assume they are arrogant. Someone arrives late, and we conclude they are irresponsible. A person reacts emotionally, and we quickly label them unstable. Another becomes defensive, and we decide they have a rebellious spirit. Without realizing it, we transform one moment into a permanent judgment about someone's character. Yet we have forgotten an important truth: we often know the behavior, but we do not know the burden. We see the reaction, but we have no knowledge of the battle that produced it.

This was never the approach of Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, Christ continually looked beyond behavior until He found the deeper need. When others saw a tax collector, He saw a lonely man searching for purpose. When others saw a woman washing His feet with tears, they saw only her sinful reputation, but Jesus recognized a heart that had been deeply forgiven. While others condemned Peter's denial, Jesus understood the fear, confusion, and crushing disappointment that filled his heart. The Lord consistently looked beyond actions until He reached the condition of the soul.

Perhaps this is why Proverbs gives us such wise counsel:

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

PROVERBS 18:13 (KJV)

Although this proverb speaks about listening before answering, the principle reaches much further. Spiritually, we should never reach conclusions before hearing someone's story. We rarely possess enough information to judge another person's motives. We may witness their actions, but only God fully understands the heart.

Pastor Tisdale poses several questions that beautifully illustrate the perspective of mercy. Instead of immediately criticizing someone's behavior, mercy asks, “What wound taught them to respond this way? What fear is driving that anger? What shame is hidden beneath their distance? What grief is producing their silence? What long-term battle has shaped the way they see themselves?” These are not questions that excuse sin; they are questions that seek understanding before offering correction.

This principle is deeply biblical. Throughout Scripture, God continually addressed the heart before addressing the behavior. David's adultery was a terrible sin, but the Lord ultimately exposed something much deeper: a heart that needed repentance. Elijah's discouragement after Mount Carmel was not simply weakness; it was exhaustion, loneliness, and fear. Martha's frustration was not merely about serving; it revealed an anxious and troubled heart. Again and again, God demonstrated that lasting transformation occurs only when the root is addressed rather than merely trimming the branches.

As believers, we must guard ourselves against assigning motives where we have only witnessed moments. Only God knows why someone responded the way they did. We may know what happened, but we rarely know everything that led to that moment. Perhaps someone is carrying years of rejection. Perhaps they are quietly battling anxiety. Perhaps they have experienced betrayal that has made trusting others incredibly difficult. None of those realities justify sinful behavior, but they often help us understand why healing must accompany correction.

James gives the church practical wisdom that reflects the spirit of mercy:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

JAMES 1:19 (KJV)

Those three commands are remarkably connected. People who listen well usually judge less quickly. Those who are eager to hear are slower to criticize because they recognize how much they still do not know. Mercy listens before it labels. It seeks understanding before it offers opinions. It chooses compassion over assumptions.

This principle transforms every relationship. In marriage, mercy asks, "What is my spouse carrying that I have failed to notice?" As parents, mercy wonders, "Is my child's attitude revealing a deeper struggle?" In ministry, mercy asks, "Is this resistance actually pain?" Even within friendships, mercy chooses to believe the best while still remaining grounded in truth.

The Apostle Paul reflects this spirit perfectly in Galatians 6:1. He does not command spiritual believers to expose one another. He commands them to restore one another. Restoration always requires patience because healing rarely happens instantly. Broken bones must be carefully set before they can become strong again, and wounded hearts require the same careful attention. A harsh hand may make the injury worse, while gentle wisdom creates an environment where healing can begin.

Ultimately, mercy reminds us that every person we meet is fighting a battle we cannot fully see. Some battles are visible, while others remain hidden beneath carefully worn cloaks. Our responsibility is not to speculate about motives but to love people enough to point them toward Christ. We cannot heal every wound, but we can refuse to become another source of pain. When we begin asking better questions instead of making quick assumptions, we create room for the Holy Spirit to work in ways that judgment never could.

Perhaps before speaking about someone else's struggle, we should first ask ourselves one simple question: "If Jesus were standing here, what would He see that I have overlooked?" That question has the power to transform not only the way we see others, but also the way we represent Christ to a hurting world.

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PART

THE MINISTRY OF RESTORATION

05

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:1–2 (KJV)

One of the most challenging statements in this message comes from Galatians 6. Paul does not address pastors, elders, or ministry leaders specifically. Instead, he addresses “brethren.” Every believer who desires to be spiritually mature is included in this instruction. The ministry of restoration is not reserved for a select few; it is part of the calling of every follower of Jesus Christ. If we claim to be spiritual, then we are also called to become restorers.

Pastor Tisdale points out something that is easy to overlook. Paul does not say, “If someone is overtaken in a fault, expose them.” He does not say, “Discuss them.” He does not even say, “Avoid them.” His command is remarkably simple: restore them. That single word changes everything. God’s purpose has never been merely to reveal brokenness; His purpose has always been to heal it. The goal of spiritual maturity is not becoming better at identifying faults but becoming more effective at bringing people back to Christ.

The word restore is significant. In the original Greek, it carries the idea of setting something back into its proper place. It was used for mending fishing nets, repairing damaged equipment, and even describing the careful setting of a broken bone. None of those tasks are done carelessly or violently. A fisherman does not tear his net apart because it has a hole; he patiently repairs it. A physician does not break a fractured arm again; he gently resets it so healing can begin. Likewise, spiritual restoration requires patience, wisdom, humility, and love. Hurting people are not projects to complete; they are lives that God desires to heal.

This is why Paul adds another important phrase: “in the spirit of meekness.” Meekness is not weakness. It is strength under control. It is humility that remembers its own dependence upon the grace of God. A meek believer never restores someone from a position of superiority. They never say, “I’m here because I would never make the mistakes you made.” Instead, they recognize that apart from God’s mercy, they could easily find themselves in the very same place.

Paul immediately reinforces this attitude when he writes, “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Before reaching toward someone else’s failure, we are instructed to examine our own hearts. That command protects us from pride. It reminds us that every believer is capable of falling if they cease depending upon the Lord. Spiritual maturity does not eliminate the possibility of failure; it produces greater humility because we understand how desperately we still need God’s grace.

This principle echoes throughout Scripture. The Apostle Peter, who once confidently declared that he would never deny Christ, learned through painful experience how quickly self-confidence can collapse. Only hours after making that bold declaration, he denied the Lord three times. Yet Jesus did not discard Peter because of his failure. After the resurrection, Christ intentionally restored him. Three times Jesus

asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” and three times He entrusted him once again with the responsibility of feeding His sheep (John 21:15–17). The same disciple who had failed publicly was restored publicly because mercy refused to let failure have the final word.

This restoration is one of the most beautiful pictures of the Gospel. Jesus did not pretend Peter had never sinned. Neither did He continually remind Peter of his greatest failure. Instead, He confronted the issue, restored the relationship, and recommissioned him for ministry. That is what biblical restoration looks like. It acknowledges the wound, but it also believes healing is possible.

Pastor Tisdale offers a practical challenge that every church should remember: restore people, don’t report people. Those words expose one of the subtle dangers within Christian communities. It is often easier to discuss someone’s failure than it is to walk beside them through the difficult process of restoration. Conversations about people’s weaknesses require very little sacrifice. Restoration, however, requires time, patience, prayer, and genuine love. It requires us to carry burdens that do not belong to us simply because Christ carried ours.

This is exactly what Paul means in the next verse:

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:2 (KJV)

Notice that Paul does not tell believers merely to notice one another’s burdens. He commands them to bear them. Carrying another person’s burden means entering their struggle with compassion instead of standing at a distance with criticism. It means praying when they are too weary to pray, encouraging them when they have become discouraged, and reminding them of God’s promises when they have forgotten them. Restoration is never accomplished through condemnation. It is accomplished by believers who are willing to walk with wounded people until healing begins.

This is one of the reasons the early church was so powerful. It was not simply a community where truth was preached; it was a community where grace was lived. Believers confessed their faults, prayed for one another, encouraged one another daily, and bore one another’s burdens. They understood that no one grows spiritually in complete isolation. God designed His Church to become a place where broken people could find restoration instead of rejection.

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles to restoration is pride. Pride whispers, “I would never do that.” Mercy quietly responds, “Except for the grace of God, neither would I be standing today.” The longer we walk with Christ, the more aware we become of how much we still depend upon His mercy. That awareness produces humility, and humility produces compassion.

Every one of us has needed someone who refused to define us by our worst moment. Someone prayed for us when we stumbled. Someone encouraged us when we doubted. Someone believed God still had a purpose for our lives even when we struggled to believe it ourselves. We are standing today because

someone chose restoration instead of condemnation.

Now the responsibility becomes ours.

The Church should never become known merely for exposing sin. It should become known for restoring sinners through the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Holiness and restoration are not enemies; they are partners in the work of the Gospel. God's truth reveals what must change, while His mercy provides the hope that change is possible. When those two work together, lives are transformed, families are restored, and people who once sat beside the road wearing cloaks of shame begin following Jesus with joy.

That is the ministry Christ has entrusted to His Church. It is not merely the ministry of correction. It is the ministry of restoration. And when the Church embraces that calling, it begins to reflect the very heart of the Savior who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10, KJV).



PART

THROWING OFF THE CLOAK

06 CLOAK

“And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.”

MARK 10:50 (KJV)

Perhaps the most overlooked moment in the entire account of Bartimaeus is found in a single verse. Before Jesus ever touched his eyes, before the miracle had visibly taken place, and before he could prove that anything had changed, Bartimaeus threw away his cloak. At first glance, this may seem like an insignificant detail, but Mark intentionally records it because it reveals what was happening in the man's heart. His healing had not yet become visible, but his faith had already begun to change the way he saw himself. Long before his eyes were opened, he had already decided that he would no longer live as the man he used to be.

Historically, many scholars believe that Bartimaeus' cloak was more than an ordinary outer garment. It likely identified him as an officially recognized beggar. It represented his occupation, his dependence, and his place in society. Every day he wore that cloak because it told everyone who he was and why he was sitting beside the road asking for help. It had become both his identity and, in many ways, his security. Without it, he had no visible proof of who he had been.

This makes his actions even more remarkable. Bartimaeus threw away the very thing that had sustained him for years before he had any physical evidence that his life was about to change. His faith moved before his circumstances did. He refused to hold on to the old identity while reaching for the new one that Jesus was offering.

That is often where true transformation begins. Before God changes our circumstances, He begins changing our identity. Many people ask God to transform their lives while continuing to cling to the labels, habits, and mindsets that belong to their old life. They want a new future, but they are unwilling to release the old cloak. Bartimaeus teaches us that faith is willing to let go before it can fully see.

This same principle appears throughout Scripture. When Abram encountered God, the Lord did not merely promise him a son. He first gave him a new name. Abram became Abraham because God wanted his identity to reflect his future rather than his present reality. Likewise, Jacob wrestled with the Lord through the night, and when the encounter ended, he walked away with a new name: Israel. Before God changed the direction of his life, He changed the way Jacob would understand himself.

The Apostle Paul describes this transformation in a similar way:

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

EPHESIANS 4:22–24 (KJV)

Paul uses the language of clothing. He tells believers to put off the old man and put on the new man. The Christian life is not simply about changing behavior; it is about embracing a completely new identity in Christ. Just as Bartimaeus cast aside his cloak, believers are called to lay aside the old garments of sin, shame, bitterness, fear, and condemnation that no longer belong to them.

This is where many Christians struggle. They sincerely believe God has forgiven them, yet they continue wearing the cloak of yesterday's failures. Although heaven has declared them forgiven, they still define themselves by what they once were. They continue introducing themselves by old labels that Christ has already removed. Some still wear the cloak of guilt. Others wear the cloak of fear, rejection, insecurity, addiction, or regret. While those experiences may have shaped part of their story, they were never meant to define the rest of it.

Pastor Tisdale points out something that deserves careful reflection. Sometimes we become so familiar with the cloak that we begin protecting the very identity that is keeping us bound. We stop expecting change because we have lived with the struggle for so long. We quietly conclude, "This is just who I am." Yet that is one of the enemy's greatest deceptions. Satan cannot prevent God's grace from reaching us, so he tries to convince us that lasting transformation is impossible. He wants believers to remain seated beside the road wearing garments that Jesus has already called them to leave behind.

The remarkable thing about Bartimaeus is that he did not wait until he could see clearly before he acted in faith. He responded immediately to the voice of Jesus. His confidence was not in what his eyes could verify but in who had called him. Faith always trusts the character of Christ more than the evidence of the moment.

Hebrews reminds us of this truth:

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith... Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

HEBREWS 12:1-2 (KJV)

Notice that believers are instructed to lay aside whatever hinders them from following Christ. Some weights are sinful habits, while others are false identities that continue to shape the way we think. A believer may have abandoned sinful behavior years ago and yet still carry the weight of shame. Another may have received God's forgiveness but still struggle to forgive themselves. Those cloaks become unnecessary burdens that prevent us from walking freely with the Lord.

This truth has profound implications for the Church. Sometimes people finally begin changing, but those around them continue handing them the old cloak. They remind them of who they used to be instead of celebrating who they are becoming. They continue speaking old labels over lives that God is transforming. Yet Jesus never called Bartimaeus "the blind man." The crowd did. Christ simply called him to come. Mercy refuses to keep dressing people in garments that God has already removed.

The same principle applies to us personally. We must eventually make a decision. Will we continue wearing the garments of our past, or will we believe what Christ says about us? Every believer reaches a moment when they must stop agreeing with the accusations of the enemy and start agreeing with the promises of God. The cloak may have described yesterday, but it has no authority over tomorrow.

Perhaps that is why Bartimaeus never returned to pick it up. Once Jesus called him forward, there was no reason to go back to the garment that had defined his old life. He had found something infinitely greater than the security that cloak once provided. He had found the Savior.

The same invitation is extended to every believer today. Jesus is still calling people out from beneath the garments of shame, fear, failure, and condemnation. The miracle begins the moment we believe that His voice has greater authority than the labels we have carried for years. Like Bartimaeus, we are invited to leave the cloak behind and follow the One who alone has the power to make all things new.



PART

RECEIVING MERCY FOR YOURSELF

07

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

ROMANS 8:1 (KJV)

As Pastor Tisdale begins to conclude this message, he takes the lesson in a direction that many of us never expect. Throughout the sermon he has challenged us to become more merciful toward others, but now he turns the mirror toward our own hearts. His question is both simple and profound: What if the person you have shown the least mercy to is yourself?

Many believers have learned how to forgive others, encourage others, and even believe God's promises for others. Yet when they look in the mirror, they continue to see themselves through the cloak of their past. They believe God can restore marriages, but not theirs. They believe God can heal broken hearts, but somehow their own wounds are beyond repair. They rejoice when others testify of God's grace, yet quietly wonder if they have exhausted His patience with their own failures.

That is one of the enemy's greatest strategies. If he cannot keep someone from coming to Christ, he will try to keep them from enjoying the freedom Christ has already provided. He whispers accusations until believers begin agreeing with them. They may be forgiven by God, but they continue living as prisoners of shame. Their past becomes louder than God's promises, and condemnation slowly replaces confidence.

There is, however, an important distinction every Christian must understand. The Holy Spirit convicts; Satan condemns. Conviction is one of God's greatest gifts because it leads us toward repentance and restoration. Condemnation, however, drives us toward hopelessness and despair. Conviction says, "This part of your life needs to change." Condemnation says, "You will never change." Conviction points us to the cross; condemnation points us back to our failures. Conviction produces repentance; condemnation produces paralysis.

Paul makes this distinction beautifully in Romans:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."

ROMANS 8:1 (KJV)

Notice that Paul does not say believers will never remember their past. He says they no longer live under condemnation. The sentence has already been paid. Christ has already borne our guilt upon the cross. The enemy may continue bringing accusations, but Heaven has already declared us forgiven.

This truth is essential because many sincere Christians unknowingly place themselves on a throne that belongs only to God. They continually judge themselves for sins that Christ has already forgiven. They replay conversations they wish they could change. They revisit decisions they regret. They carry guilt over failures as parents, spouses, leaders, or children of God. Pastor Tisdale speaks directly to those hidden struggles, reminding us that while we may bear responsibility for some of our pain, God's mercy is still

greater than our mistakes. His grace has not been exhausted simply because we are disappointed in ourselves.

The Scriptures continually remind us that God's mercy is not an occasional gift; it is part of His character.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 (KJV)

What an incredible promise. Jeremiah wrote those words while surrounded by the devastation of Jerusalem. Humanly speaking, everything appeared hopeless. Yet in the middle of overwhelming loss, he remembered something that circumstances could not erase: every sunrise brings fresh mercy from God. Yesterday's failures do not cancel today's grace. Every morning is another reminder that God's faithfulness is greater than our weakness.

David understood this as well. After his own terrible failures, he did not merely pray for forgiveness; he learned to rest in God's mercy. That is why he wrote:

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities... Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

PSALM 103:2-4 (KJV)

Notice David's language. God does not simply forgive; He redeems. He does not merely remove guilt; He restores purpose. Mercy is never satisfied with leaving us where it found us.

This is precisely what happened to Bartimaeus. Imagine if he had responded to Jesus by saying, "Lord, I cannot come because I am still blind." Imagine if he had refused to leave his cloak because he believed he would always be a beggar. He would have remained beside the road, not because Jesus lacked power, but because he could not believe his identity could change.

Many believers unknowingly do the same thing. They continue wearing garments that Christ has already invited them to remove. They still introduce themselves by old failures. They still define themselves by old wounds. They continue saying, "This is just who I am," when Heaven is saying, "That is who you used to be."

Receiving God's mercy requires humility because it forces us to stop trusting our own judgment about ourselves and begin trusting His. It means believing that God's verdict is greater than our feelings. It means accepting that if the Lord has forgiven us, we no longer have the right to keep condemning ourselves.

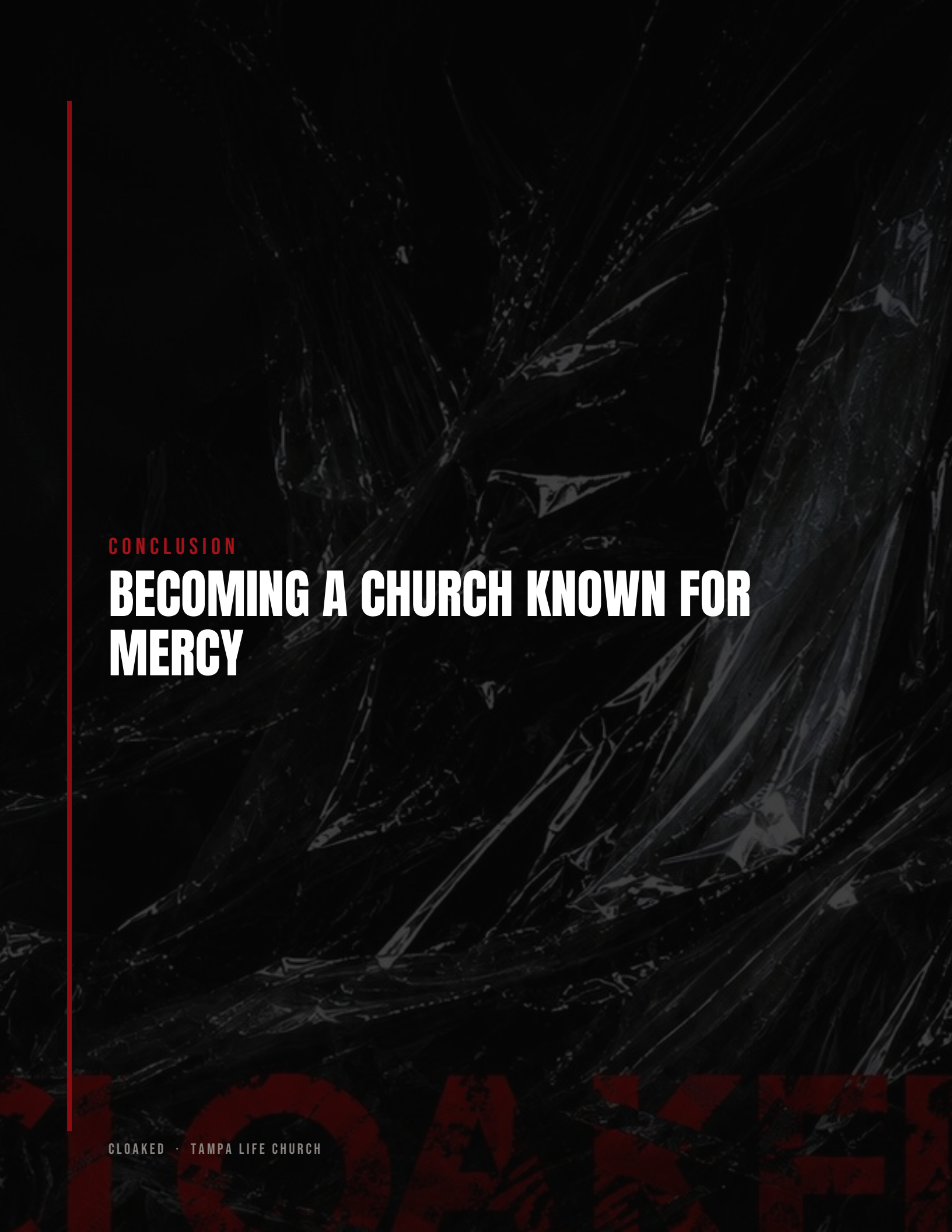
This does not mean we ignore responsibility for our actions. Repentance remains essential. Apologies should still be offered where necessary. Broken relationships should be pursued with humility whenever possible. But after repentance has been made and forgiveness has been received, we must refuse to keep living under a sentence that Christ has already removed.

Perhaps this is why Bartimaeus immediately followed Jesus after receiving his sight. He did not return to the roadside to relive his past. He walked into his future. Mercy had not only opened his eyes; it had given him a completely new life.

That same invitation is extended to every believer today. The Lord is calling us to stop introducing ourselves by our failures and start believing what He says about us. We are not the sum of our worst decisions. We are not defined by our deepest regrets. We are not permanently identified by the seasons we survived.

We are sons and daughters of God, redeemed by His blood, sustained by His grace, and renewed every morning by His mercy.

When we finally receive that truth for ourselves, we discover that the same mercy we have been extending to others is the very mercy our own hearts have needed all along.



CONCLUSION

BECOMING A CHURCH KNOWN FOR MERCY

Throughout the Cloaked series, we have watched Bartimaeus move from the roadside to the presence of Jesus. We have studied his cry, his faith, his persistence, his discernment, and finally, his mercy. Yet perhaps the greatest miracle was not simply that he received his sight, but that Jesus restored the man who had been hidden beneath the cloak all along.

This is the heartbeat of the Gospel. Jesus did not come merely to improve people's lives; He came to restore their identity. Sin had covered humanity with garments of shame, guilt, fear, and condemnation. From the Garden of Eden onward, mankind has been hiding behind cloaks. Adam hid behind trees. Moses hid behind excuses. Gideon hid behind fear. Peter hid behind failure. Thomas hid behind doubt. Bartimaeus hid beneath a garment that announced his blindness. Yet every time Jesus encountered someone hidden beneath a cloak, He spoke to the person rather than the label.

The same is true today. Every church is filled with people wearing invisible cloaks. Some wear the cloak of disappointment because life did not unfold as they expected. Others wear the cloak of regret, carrying mistakes they wish they could erase. Some quietly wear the cloak of anxiety, smiling on the outside while fighting fear within. Others carry rejection, loneliness, addiction, grief, bitterness, or shame. The garments may be different, but the need is always the same. Every person longs for someone to see beyond the cloak and recognize the value God has placed within them.

That is why the Church must become more than a place where truth is preached. It must become a place where mercy is experienced. People should leave our services knowing that holiness is still God's standard, but also knowing that grace is still available. They should hear truth without feeling rejected. They should experience conviction without drowning in condemnation. They should discover that the same Savior who exposes what is broken also possesses the power to heal it.

Pastor Tisdale reminds us that mercy is reciprocal. Jesus said,

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

MATTHEW 5:7 (KJV)

That promise reaches much deeper than a future reward. It reveals a spiritual principle that affects every relationship we have. The measure of mercy we extend to others helps shape the atmosphere in which we ourselves will one day live. Every believer will eventually need grace. Every family will experience moments of weakness. Every church member will have seasons of struggle. Every leader will discover areas where they still desperately depend upon God's mercy. If we desire to receive mercy when our own difficult moments arrive, we must become people who freely extend it today.

Mercy, however, should never be confused with compromise. Biblical mercy does not ignore sin, excuse abuse, or abandon holiness. Mercy never asks darkness to remain hidden. Instead, it creates an environment where truth can accomplish its purpose without destroying the person. Mercy protects dignity while truth produces transformation. Together they accomplish what neither could achieve alone.

This is exactly how Jesus ministered. He never lowered God's standard, but He always lifted broken people. He never celebrated sin, yet He consistently offered sinners hope. His life demonstrated that holiness and compassion are not enemies. In Christ they are perfectly united.

Perhaps the most challenging part of this lesson is not learning to show mercy toward others but learning to receive God's mercy for ourselves. Many believers continue introducing themselves by names that Heaven no longer uses. They still see themselves through failures that Christ has already forgiven. They continue wearing garments that Jesus has already invited them to remove. Yet the voice of the Shepherd still calls us forward, just as He called Bartimaeus.

***The crowd may remember your past.
The enemy may repeat your failures.
Your own mind may replay your regrets.
But Jesus continues calling your name.***

When Bartimaeus heard the Lord's voice, he did not negotiate with his past. He did not stop to gather the cloak that had defined him for years. He simply left it behind and followed Jesus. That is the invitation extended to every disciple. There comes a moment when we must decide whose voice will define us. Will we continue believing the labels of yesterday, or will we embrace the identity Christ speaks over our lives today?

May we become believers who see people the way Jesus sees them. May we become leaders who restore rather than merely correct. May we become families where grace and truth live together. And may our churches become places where those who arrive wearing cloaks of shame leave clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

For in the Kingdom of God, mercy does not have the final word because people deserve it. Mercy has the final word because Jesus does. And wherever His mercy is received, cloaks are laid aside, identities are restored, and lives are forever changed.

CLOAKED

REFLECT

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

 REFLECT

What “cloak” have you been wearing that has become part of your identity? Is there a label from your past, such as failure, fear, shame, rejection, or regret, that you have allowed to define you more than God’s Word? What would it look like to lay that cloak down and embrace your identity in Christ?

 REFLECT

How do you normally respond when you see someone else’s weakness or failure? Do you tend to judge quickly, avoid them, talk about them, or prayerfully seek their restoration? What practical changes can you make this week to reflect the mercy of Jesus?

 REFLECT

Pastor Tisdale reminded us that mercy asks better questions. Think of someone who has been difficult to love. Instead of asking, "What's wrong with them?" what different questions could you ask that might help you see them through the eyes of Christ?

 REFLECT

Have you accepted God's mercy for your own life? Are there past mistakes that you continue to replay, even though God has already forgiven you? How does Romans 8:1 challenge the way you view yourself?

 REFLECT

Who has been an instrument of God's mercy in your life? Reflect on someone who chose to restore, encourage, or believe in you during a difficult season. How did their mercy impact your walk with God, and how can you become that kind of person for someone else?

 REFLECT

Galatians 6:1 teaches that spiritual people restore others “in the spirit of meekness.” Why do you think humility is essential for restoration? How does remembering your own need for God's grace change the way you minister to others?

 REFLECT

If Tampa Life Church became known for only one thing after this lesson, what would you hope it would be? What can you personally do to help create a church culture where truth is faithfully preached, mercy is freely extended, and broken people find hope, healing, and restoration through Jesus Christ?
