

Well, good morning, everybody. My name is Shawn. I have a new life in Christ. And I struggle with pride and people pleasing. I also struggle with some residual irrational fears of growing up as a child in the 80s.

Like, I still to this day, when I get on an escalator, look down and make sure that my shoe is tied because. And I don't know if it ever happened, but, like, there were rumors going around my elementary school that someone got their foot ripped off at Castleton Square Mall because their shoestring got caught. And so I'm just not going to take that chance. And that just seared into my mind. And so every time I just.

Quick check. Yep. Okay, I'm good. Time to go. I am still afraid of what might happen if I break the.

That little FBI warning that starts at the beginning of, like, a movie that you put in. Like, is somebody serving time in prison right now because they illegally copied? Does somebody have to drop 250k for that? Like, I don't even wanna take that chance. And so, like, yeah, let's not do anything with these videos other than watch them.

I have this irrational fear that if I swallow a watermelon seed, it's gonna, like, grow and expand in my stomach and it's just gonna, bleh. Explode out. And, like, because I grew up in a time before, like, fangled, seedless watermelons that we have now. And so we had to worry about things like that. And a few years ago, comedian John Mulaney captured another one of my childhood fears.

Maybe you had this one, too. Let's check out this video.

Fear of quicksand growing up. Yes, because of the shows and movies that we grew up watching. I read this last week that in the 1960s, 3% of all shows and movies involved quicksand as one of the plot twists. Like, that's a lot of quicksand for never having come across quicksand in my life. And so things like Batman and Indiana Jones and Gilligan's island, they form this fear inside of us, right?

And the truth is that because of our body's density, no one could really ever drown in quicksand, but we could possibly get stuck in it. And the reason why people get stuck in it is because when they get into it and they start to kind of sink a little bit, there's a panic that rises up and a survival instinct that kicks in. And whenever you feel like, oh, I am in a threat, your body reacts to it, and it's like, we have to get out of here. And so start to, like, try to run out of it as quickly as you can, but every time you put weight on one foot, you sink even further, further. And so you just end up getting stuck.

And so the way to get out of quicksand is not to try to rush out of

it. It's actually counterintuitive. The way to get out of quicksand is to lay your body down on it. Which even as I say that, I'm like, yeah, that's what the quicksand wants you to think. Like, that can't be the way to do it, but you actually make your body larger on it and then you barrel roll off of it.

You didn't know that you were going to come to church today and get a life saving, but you are welcome. It makes sense. But I don't like it. In other words, to get out of quicksand, you. You have to get into it in order to get out of it.

Like you want to get out of it, you have to get into it. And I don't like this. And, and not just because, like, I'm afraid that I'm going to get stuck in quicksand. I don't like this because after 45 years of life, 25 years of ministry, 23 years of marriage, almost 14 years of being a dad, I know that this is true. Not just about quicksand, but it's true about relational conflict.

It's true about the patterns that we get stuck in. It's. And it's true about those hurts and those pains that we carry. If you want to get out of it, you have to get into it. You can't just ignore it.

You can't avoid it. You can try sweeping it underneath the rug and you can pretend like everything's okay. And maybe you've got some of those relationships that you just know. Boy, we don't bring that topic up when this person is in the room, but it doesn't actually solve anything. We know that this is true.

If you really want to get out of it, you have to get into it. Check engine lights don't just turn themselves off. Typically, you have to do something about it. And we know that avoiding conversations and uncomfortable topics, it might be the easier pathway to go, but it doesn't lead us anywhere productive. You have to deal with reality.

You have to deal with the pain. You have to come face to face with the very thing that we oftentimes spend a lot of time trying to avoid because we just don't want it to come up. But true healing can only happen when we go into those places and we begin to tinker around. Which is why step four in recovery programs is so critical. Step four is we make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

And this isn't just a step of recovery. This is an important part of following Jesus. This is a discipleship step. As we follow Jesus, he is inviting us to be open and honest about our faults, our failures, our flaws, to bring these before him so that he can transform us into his image, so that he can not just cover over those things with his grace, but he can remove them. He can transform us from the inside out.

And this step is typically where people bail on their recovery

journey, because this is the step where it becomes real. You can't just kind of sugarcoat things anymore. You can't just skim the surface. This step requires you to go a little bit deeper than that. And that can be scary.

And maybe it's scary for you to think about doing this searching and fearless moral inventory on yourself, to kind of point out some of those sinful patterns and behaviors, those faults and those flaws. Maybe it's scary for you because you grew up in a home with an overly critical parent and you hear their voice every time you feel like you mess up. And you're like, yeah, I don't need God's voice to be added to that. You take that voice of your parent and you apply it to him and you just think he's gonna treat you that same way and so you just wanna avoid it. Or maybe you had an over critical sibling who never missed an opportunity to point out something that you did wrong.

Maybe you opened yourself up one time to someone only to be rejected and, and met with shame. And this step is hard because it makes us go into deeper waters. But this is when we really start to find healing and hope in the midst of our hurts, our hangups, and our habits. Remember, healing begins where pretending ends. And so if you want to get out of it, you have to get into it.

And what I found is that more often than not, Jesus wants to grab our hand and actually take us into those things that we spend a lot of time trying to avoid. Because he knows that if we want to truly get out of it, we have to go into it. And he wants to go into it with us. That's what we see in our text today. If you have your Bibles or Bible app open, we're in John chapter four and Beth read it to give us some context, but just to kind of catch us up here, Jesus is Traveling through Samaria, his disciples peel off.

They go into town to grab some food. Jesus goes to the well to get some water. It's about noon. The day is starting to warm up. We don't know how long that they've been traveling.

Jesus goes there, and a Samaritan woman starts to come towards him. And one of the things that I love about Jesus is that he is never afraid of crossing over the lines that divide people. And so he strikes up this conversation with this woman that crosses every social and ethnic and religious lines that people had put up. And he starts this conversation with a simple question. Will you give me a drink?

Verse 9. The Samaritan woman said to him, you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans, and men oftentimes didn't associate with women. And Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, he would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

And sir, the woman said, you have nothing to draw with, and this well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did all of his sons and livestock? And Jesus answered, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.

Jesus is talking about these deep spiritual things. He's talking about living water and thirsty souls and eternal life. And there's something that resonates in this woman. And she imagine that Jesus sees this look of desperation wash over her, this desire for what Jesus has to offer. And he picks up on that.

And because he loves her, he goes. He's already taken the conversation from shallow conversation about wanting water into spiritual things. And now he goes just a little bit deeper and takes it into some issues and struggles that she's dealing with in her own life. He takes her into it so that he can help her work through it. In verse 16, he told her, go call your husband and come back.

I have no husband, she replied. And Jesus said to her, you are right when you say that you have no husband. The fact is, is that you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.

And every time I read this, I think, isn't this just like a little cruel of Jesus?

Is Jesus like baiting her into this thing to shame her? He probably knows that this is a source of pain in her life. And so why does Jesus go there? I think it's because he knows that they have to go there. We don't know her entire story, but we can piece together from some clues.

She's had five husbands. We don't know, maybe some of them died, maybe some of them left and abandoned her. And she was probably only with the man that she was currently with because in that day widows were kind of outcast. And so, and so she, she needed a place to stay, she needed food, otherwise she was just going to be trying to survive out on the streets. And I imagine that this woman that meets Jesus at the well that day walks around with this low grade sense of God, guilt and grief and shame, which is what leads her to work really hard to avoid having to come face to face with.

That's probably why she's at the well at noon when nobody else is

there. And yet Jesus, filled with compassion and mercy and tenderness, takes her into these places that she has spent a lot of her life trying to avoid because of the pain. And he does it not to shame her. He does it because he knows that healing begins where pretending ends. And that if she is truly going to find that refreshing living water that she desires, they have to go through this pain together.

They have to unpack some of these things together.

And if we allow him. And I think that Jesus wants to do the same thing in our life too.

Jesus wants to be a little intrusive and get into those places that we want to avoid and we want to hide and we want to sweep underneath the rug.

But I think that we resist going there. And maybe I'll use I language here. I resist going there because there are two different emotions that compete inside of me. I wonder if they compete inside of you too. There's this emotion where I desire deeply, so deeply to be fully known and fully loved.

But there is this fear that if I expose those dark places, then I'm going to be rejected. I want to be. We want to be fully known and fully loved. But that desire is oftentimes overcome by our fear of being exposed and rejected. So when it comes to our sinful patterns and behaviors, we hide them.

We avoid bringing them up or dealing with them, or we gloss over and sugarcoat them. If you're a fan of the office like I am. As I was writing this week, I kept having Michael Scott in my head. When David Wallace asked him, so, what are your weaknesses? And he says, well, my weaknesses are I work too hard, I care too much.

I can be too invested in my job. He's like, well, what are your strengths? He's like, my weaknesses are my strengths. We want to do this with our sin. Like, we, we.

We sugarcoat, or we gloss over, or we. Or we, we. We go just deep enough into our confession that people are like, oh, man, look. Wow, that was so brave. But we.

But we don't go underneath the surface where we really need to go. Or. Or the second quote that I couldn't get out of my head all week, do. So guess what? I. I have flaws, right?

Maybe we get defensive about those flaws. What are they? Oh, I don't know. I sing in the shower sometimes. I spend too much time volunteering.

Occasionally I hit somebody with my car.

I think when it comes to our sinful patterns and behaviors, man, we are afraid that if people truly knew us, they wouldn't love us. So we hide them, we avoid them, we get defensive if anybody brings them up. At best, we play it safe. We keep our confession pretty generic. But safe confession only takes us so far.

In his book on the 12 steps, John Orberg writes this. He says, bland confession is like taking a shower with your clothes on. You avoid the embarrassment of nakedness, but it's hard to get clean.

And we do this. We do this with others. And for some reason, we find ourselves doing it with God too.

And again, this is especially the case if you grew up in a home with an overly critical parent where you felt like their love was conditional based on your performance. And we take that and we project it onto God. But. But God knows us better than we even know ourselves. He loves us more than we can even imagine.

Oh, while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you. Nothing, nothing you do can change the way that God feels about you. Just like Jesus knew the woman at the well and still loved her. Our heavenly Father knows us and he loves us.

So we can make a searching and fearless moral inventory of our lives and not be afraid that we're going to tell God something that he doesn't already know, that we're going to uncover something that makes God go, ooh, I'm out.

No. In fact, he meets us with an abundant amount of mercy and grace. So how do we do this? We could spend another 30 minutes talking about how to do an inventory on Your life. We're not going to do that.

Our regeneration ministry that we're starting in the fall, our leaders are currently going through it. There's an entirely separate book just on doing an inventory. And it's intense.

This is not a quick and easy process, but every journey has to begin somewhere. And so maybe for you, it's just identifying what your struggle is. And regen has a tool on their website that can help you do this. It's a survey. It takes about 15 minutes or so.

You can go to this website, scan the code, do it here later on today. It just helps you find that struggle. I did this earlier this week, and it showed me three struggles, one of which I was like, oh, yeah, that's probably true. I don't really think of it like that, but it exposed something. And then on the other side of that survey, it will give you some resources.

And so I've said it now a couple of times, but one of my struggles really is people pleasing and surprise to nobody, including myself and my wife. That one popped up on this survey. And so I printed off the little handout for it. And it gives me a little bit more understanding about what it is and why maybe I have a propensity towards it. It gives me some biblical insight and some next steps to take.

So if you're ready to maybe identify that struggle, this could be a first step for you to take. And I think here's why this is so important. It's because you cannot tame what you cannot name. This recovery statement that is so true. You cannot tame what you cannot name.

If you can't openly and honestly name the struggle that is causing your pain or the pain that is causing your struggle, then you're never going to be able to truly work through it. So you have to name that resentment, name that fear, name that addiction, name your hurts, your habits, your hangups, name it. And then bring it to Jesus and work through it with him, and you will find his mercy and grace as you do, and then work through those things with somebody else. Take them to a friend, take them to a counselor, take them to a loved one. And that's when you begin to really start uncovering the root behind that issue.

Because the truth is, is that the issue, more often than not, is not the issue. Like the presenting problem is not the problem. People pleasing is not my problem. There's some underlying stuff that I need to deal with that causes that problem in my life. Like the addiction might be the presenting problem, but the real struggle that Jesus wants to heal Is what that addiction is helping you escape from.

He wants to heal the underlying reason why you turn to drinking, to pornography, to overeating, to shopping. Working on your explosive outbursts and anger might require addressing an insecurity that you feel that causes it, or addressing why you always feel like you need to be in control.

And when you really start to get to the root issue of these struggles, man, that's when Jesus pours out the living water on your soul and you begin to find hope. Healing.

Speaking from experience, it takes courage to do this. It's not easy, but it is worth it.

I'll close with this this morning. I think one of the reasons why.

One of the reasons why we are so hesitant to do this and why this is so hard is because we have a very real enemy who is constantly bringing up all of our faults, all of our flaws, all of our sinful behaviors and patterns. And he is really, really good at condemning us

for them. Satan, our accuser, is really good at beating us down, reminding us of our faults and failures. And those things get etched into our minds and into our hearts to where we think, that's who I am. And meanwhile, God's word just goes in one ear and right out the other.

It reminds me of this meme that a friend sent me a few weeks ago. My brain recording good memories, My brain recording cringe memories, like those good memories, we write them in the sand and it seems like one wave and we forget them. But those cringe memories, those faults, those failures, those sins, man, Satan just wants to etch those into our heart so that those become the things that define us.

And so it's so important for us to remind ourselves of who God says that we are. And so, as we close this morning, I want to take us through an inventory. Not of our sin, not of our pain, not of our addictions and our struggles. I want to take us through an inventory of grace, of who God. God says that you are through Jesus Christ.

And so I want you to repeat and say with me the first line of this. And then I'll read the scripture. Let's say this first one together. Ready? I am forgiven.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Next one. I am not defined by my past. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old is gone, the new is here.

I am deeply loved. See what great love the Father has lavished on us. That we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. I am fully known and fully loved.

And God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. I am washed clean. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. I am not abandoned. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you.

He will never leave you nor forsake you. I am at peace with God. Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I am healed by his wounds. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. I am being made holy for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever. Those who are being made holy. I belong to Jesus. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

If you are in Christ, this is who you are. We have this printed off if you want. It's on one page. You can grab it out in the lobby as you go. And maybe this week you.

Yeah, you need to do an inventory of those hurts and those hangups and habits in your life. But alongside of it, you need to do an inventory to remind yourself of who God says that you are, that your identity is in Christ. The enemy wants to chisel your sin into stone and condemn you for it, but Jesus wants to wash it clean and make you whole. Some of you came in here today knowing exactly what your struggle is, and you are tired of carrying the weight and the burden of it. And I think Jesus wants to meet you right the midst of it, to take you into it so that you can get through it.

And he is gently reaching out his hand. He's saying, you don't have to do it alone. If you're here today and you're ready to maybe start this relationship with Christ and start this transformation process of being made new. And we're gonna have some baptisms today and we're love for you to join them. There'll be people around the room to pray with, to bring your cares, your concerns to.

To maybe say, I'm ready to lay down my life and follow him during this time response. Go find one of them. They'll help you take your next step. We're going to come to a time of communion. We've got some tables here in the front and in the back.

And communion is a reminder that Jesus is not afraid of our sin. He's already dealt with it. He's already done everything that's needed to do to cleanse us of it. This moment is not for people who feel like they have it all together. It is for people who are ready to stop pretending, start healing, stop pretending, and just be honest with themselves and God and say, Jesus, thank you for your grace that has made me perfect forever, even while I'm being made holy.

So let's take this time to respond. Jesus, thank you for getting into the mess with us. Not to shame us, not to embarrass us, that you get into it with us because you love us and you know that in you is joy, in you is life, in you is freedom.

So as we take an inventory of our lives, maybe this week, as your word just kind of wrestles around in our heart doing what it wants to do, may we be honest about our struggles bringing those to you, and may we experience your grace and your mercy in ways we never have before.

I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.