

I love celebration services. I love them because we have the opportunity to hear story after story and see story after story of life change. And I hope that those things encourage your heart. I hope that when you see your brothers and sisters up there, and I trust that you do based on your reaction, that you're celebrating what God has done in their lives. You see, it's no small matter that people come to faith; it's absolutely miraculous. It's always miraculous when dead people come back to life or come to life. Because dead people don't do anything. They stay dead, but God intervened in such a way in their lives that He quickened them to life and breathed the life of the gospel into them and absolutely changed them. And I know that many of you, most of you have that same story. And so, what I want to do tonight is this. I just want to walk through a couple more stories of life change. It's not so much a sermon as it is just a discussion as we continue this theme of story and life change. Let me tell you how it got to this point. Last Saturday, I was doing a little cardio, I had the iPod in and I'm listening to a sermon by a guy named Dr. Tim Keller. And he's phenomenal and has a phenomenal church in New York called Redeemer Presbyterian Church. And the Lord is really using that church to do a great work for the kingdom in New York. And I'm listening to Dr. Keller, who's an older gentleman. He's kind of an old sage. He's full of wisdom. And I'm listening to the sermon, and I think, "Man, that's a phenomenal sermon. That is absolutely phenomenal. He just unpacks the gospel." Well, a couple of hours later, just before I go to a wedding with my wife, something in me breaks. And hopefully you can identify with this. There becomes this disconnect in me where I started thinking about my past in such a way that I felt like my past had just come over me again like a wave where I felt deviant again.

I felt like a bit of a sham where I wasn't quite the guy I thought I was but really, the guy that I've always been is the guy who I am now. I felt a bit hypocritical. And I'm not quite sure why? I didn't engage in any sin, I didn't do anything that was off the wall crazy, it was just though the course of the afternoon. Something unpacked in me in such a way that I just felt very discouraged. I felt unsafe, and I wasn't quite sure what to do with it. Maybe you can identify with that and maybe you can't. Maybe once you got saved, you just skyrocketed and are still going up. I just have some of these moments where I just kind of step back and go, "Who the heck am I? What is going on with me?" And I get to that wedding and that pastor there is doing the ceremony and he starts talking about the bride and the groom. And then he parallels it to the bride of Christ and the gospel. And I just had that moment, "(Snap) Yeah, the gospel." I don't want to get too far from thinking about it often. I just don't want that to be something on the side, something over here. It has to be central in my life. And as I sat there and listened to him recount what Christ had done and who He is, I just had that "ah ha" moment that I've had a thousand times of "I am saved! There is something that Christ has affected in me. I am no longer the same guy. And that deviant, crazy, sordid past that I have has been redeemed and those shackles have been set free and I am a new creation in Christ." I hope and pray that you have found that moment in your life, where that burden is just lifted and you just have the scales removed, even as a believer having the scales removed to see, just to see what Christ has done, that you would just believe the gospel, where you could actually believe that you're changed and that He has done what He says He has done. I mean, it was just significant, but it was just kind of one of those ordinary days.

And then on Sunday in Denton, I'm hanging out in the Denton church, and I hear from across the room, Matt say this, "Oh don't worry. Patterson will take care of it." And usually when I hear that, I think, "What has just been added to my job description that is not normally there?" So I just kind of mosey my way over, and I'm like, "So, what do I need to do?" And he's like, "You're up next weekend." I'm like, "Like preaching next weekend at the church?" He's like, "Yeah, why don't you just take the celebration services?" And so I thought, "Okay, I'm going to do this." And I just asked the Lord, "What

do You want me to say? What do You want me to talk about, Lord?" And I went back to that sermon by Keller, and it's a phenomenal sermon. You're going to hear it right now. I've completely hijacked the whole thing. It was just good. I have no shame in that, and hopefully the Lord will use it in your life. But I want you to see some things out of Acts 16. I don't know that I'll preach as much as I hope to point out some things, and I want to continue celebrating. We are going to end the night in worship. Acts 16, let's start in verse 13:

"And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God."

Here's what I want to talk about. Here's the question: What in the world are we celebrating tonight? And you probably know we're celebrating life change, but are we celebrating a certain type of person? Are we celebrating a certain advantage that some people have that others don't? And I just want to look at this story in the book of Acts, and I want to see what the Scriptures are telling us about the commonalities that these three have and maybe look at some of their differences. Let's look at them. You've got Lydia. She is a worshiper of God, a seller of purple goods, she's from the city of Thyatira. So Lydia is a successful businesswoman. She's engaged in commerce and trade. She's made a great career for herself. She's successful. Apparently, she has enough money to buy her own home, enough to house servants. It's big enough for her to invite Paul and Silas and Luke and the others in the missionary entourage to come, after she professes her faith in Christ. So let's look at her economically. Economically, she's wealthy, she's advantaged. She seems to have power and influence. And compare her with the slave girl, who economically is exploited. She's

powerless, she has no advantage. She is under the direction of an evil and wicked spirit, who then on top of that, is being exploited by two men who are using her for their own profit and gain. So this little slave girl economically is in a terrible place. And then you've got the jailer. And he's just middle of the road, kind of like most of us. He's got a decent job at the jail, he just makes some money and he just does his thing. He's just middle of the road.

And you've got some differences racially. You've got Lydia who's from Thyatira, which is in Asia. And so you have an Asian woman. You've got this slave girl who is most likely Greek. And then you've got the jailer who is Roman. So racially you've got an Asian, a Greek and a Roman. Economically they're different, racially they're different. And so spiritually, where are they? As best we can tell from the text, Lydia is described as a worshiper of God. She has left Asia, come to the city of Philippi to a place of prayer. And a place of prayer was a situation or a place where if there were not enough Jewish men to establish a synagogue. It took 10 men to establish a synagogue and apparently there weren't 10 men there. And so these women had gathered to pray. And she had apparently left her roots of paganism from Asia and had come to seek out and find out who the God of the Hebrews is. And so, she's involved in the rituals and the cleansings and the learning about the sacrifices and the laws of Moses. She's probably a very moral and straight laced woman. She's successful; she's got her stuff together. But she's seeking something out, spiritually, religiously. She's trying to find out who this God of the Hebrews is. And then you've got the slave girl. And what she knows about religion or spirituality is simply the oppression of a wicked master, that she is under the power of a demon. It says that she is under the spirit of "a Python" in the Greek. She's under the spirit or control of a wicked, wicked demonic power. And it's given her some advantage, but that advantage is being exploited by others. So spiritually, she's under the control and the oppression of another. She's not in a good place. And then you've got the jailer who seems to care less. I mean, he just kind of does his job and he does his deal, does his routine and then just kind of moves on. That's just what he does. He locks them up; he does the deal.

So what are we celebrating? Are we celebrating a race of people? A class of people? Some kind of socio-economic that some have that others don't? You see, these people are polar opposites in every single area of life. And yet the one commonality that they have is that none of them knew Christ. And so, Paul came and proclaimed the gospel to them. It says Lydia's heart was opened and she believed. And it doesn't say that the slave girl came to a place of faith. It doesn't say that she believed in the Lord Jesus, but she's sandwiched right in between Lydia and the jailer. And the jailer says this, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Then they unpack the Scriptures for him and his household and they repent and turn toward the Lord. So it seems like this girl would fit in line with the way the story is being told. But whether or not she came to faith, she could not deny that there was a power greater than the one oppressing her and that the name of Jesus is the strongest name that she had ever heard, because it banished the wickedness and oppression that she could not get rid of. This is just such refreshing news to know this, that there are not types of people who come to Christ. You didn't come to Christ because you were born in the Bible Belt and that's what Southern type people do. You didn't come to Christ because you got to the Bible Belt as fast as you could. You didn't come to Christ because you were born to a certain family or because you were born a certain color or you had a certain crisis or didn't have a certain crisis. Do you realize that the playing field is leveled at the cross? The invitation is simply this, "Come." It doesn't matter what your color is or what your status is or what your lack of status is. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from. You see, we are all dead without Him and He says this, "Come." It's the best news in the world. Because I wasn't the type of guy who was supposed to come to faith at a certain time. He just intervenes. And He comes in, and we heard seven stories of it. It's just phenomenal.

I want you to hear somebody's story, and you hear from this guy all the time. He just sings to us and with us and leads us, but you don't know his story and you don't know what God has done in his life and why the Scripture of Psalm 40 just absolutely fits his life. It says, "You have brought me out of the muck and the mire and put a new song in my mouth." And

so, I want you to hear from Bleecker. And like I said, the theme tonight is story. I want you to hear the story of life change. So hey Bleeck. Tell us a little bit about your life.

Bleecker: Alright. Well, I was born in Memphis in 1978 and moved to Toledo, Ohio when I was two. There my brother was born, Phillip. He leads worship for Kid's Village on the weekends. And I woke up three years later as a five year old to my mother and my grandfather standing over me. And the whole house was empty. It was just my bed that was left. And they picked me up and took me out to a U-Haul, and we headed back to Memphis. My dad had been cheating on my mom all her life. And so, it was one of those deals where she pleaded with him to get counseling and to be restored, and it just never happened. And so, when I was five, they packed us up, and we moved back to Memphis. And we get back to Memphis and I start my first year in school at Holy Rosary Catholic Church. And I can remember driving up and seeing this huge statue of Mary; it's all I remember. And I know she had a sweet face, but all I can see is this angry face. Scary Mary is what I call her. And that's all I have in my head. I don't know why.

And so, I did that for nine years. And the weird thing is that I grew up Catholic, I was going to a Catholic school, going to a Catholic church, but when I was with my grandmother, she was Assembly of God. And so, I would go to her church. It was such a crazy difference in different churches. It was a lot of fun. Just to go back and who my dad was, and there may be a lot of stories in here that resonate with mine, but my dad was kind of the root of a lot of evil in my life, a lot of sin in my life, a lot of who I was becoming, not who I became but I was becoming. And so at age 13, he introduced me to marijuana for the first time. We smoked together, and it started me on this cycle of getting with other people and smoking and doing different drugs. About the same age, he offered me a prostitute that he had just previously slept with. And about that same age, he showed me pornographic videos and magazines. All of this at age 13, which was just devastating. And I can remember thinking, "There is something very evil about all of this," even at that age. And so, this is my father. This is who I'm looking up to as my guidance and for wisdom, but what he became was a buddy, not much of a father but a buddy. So what happened from that time, from 13 on, we're in Memphis and I'm getting involved in these drugs. And I'm on my soccer team there in Memphis, and we're diving into the drugs.

My mom gets remarried and my step-dad gets a job in Tupelo, Mississippi, and we move my sophomore year in high school. And so, I'm there and I get involved in the soccer team there and dive right back into the drugs. I can remember partying at Mississippi State and I passed out and I woke up. I was already supposed to be home, so I'm flying down the interstate an hour and a half away, trying to get home. There are no lights along this two-lane interstate; it's just telephone poles. And so, I have the windows rolled down and I've got the radio blasting and I'm trying to stay awake. With all my might, I'm just trying to keep my eyes open, but they're starting to close. And this bright white light falls from the sky and goes into the horizon. It was just this huge falling star. And the first thing I thought was, "God wants me alive." And I didn't know why and I didn't know who God was, but I knew He wanted me alive. And so, that was my first bent, my first idea of God.

Patterson: So the situation growing up, not good, not good. We could say that your situation was bleak. So it's just not good. You've got no inclination towards God, you've got no one steering you that way, teaching you that. And it sounds like the Lord just gave you something just to hang on to, something as crazy as a falling star. But that's not salvation. And so, when did you hear the gospel?

Bleecker: Well, it's kind of a weird deal. We're in Tupelo, Mississippi. And my step-dad grew up Presbyterian and so he decided one morning, we're all going to the Presbyterian church. And so, I went kicking and screaming. I can remember, I mean, I would go to church high. It was just so ridiculous and just so funny that I find myself here now doing this, not being high but doing this. And so at that church, the pastor invited my step-dad to Promise Keepers. He said, "I want you and your oldest son to come to Promise Keepers." And I was forced onto this bus with a bunch of men going to

Indianapolis, Indiana to some conference that I did not want to be at. To add on to it, I didn't even really know my step-dad. We didn't have a relationship. I mean, we lived in the same house together for years. So it was just awkward. He's like, "So what's your name?" And I was like, "Oh gosh. This is so stupid." So, we're heading to Indianapolis and we're in this huge stadium and there's sixty-thousand men. And I can remember, I'm holding hands with this chain of sixty-thousand men singing songs, and I'm like, "What is this? These people are crazy." But I also thought, "This is amazing." As we're singing and holding hands and sixty-thousand men are chanting, my affections were stirred. And we sat down and the session began, and a guy named Tony Evans got up to speak from Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. And he just brought the word and the gospel was spoken that night. And he said, "If you are being stirred, if the Holy Spirit is speaking, come down." And I just ran. I mean, I was down on the floor and I was talking with a counselor and I prayed. And that night, I gave my life to the Lord and was like, "Take me."

And so, it began that night, and so much happened from that moment on. I went back to Tupelo, but I didn't have any friends that were believers. And I didn't know what to do. And so, I went right back into the soccer team and right back into drugs and right back into partying, but for the first time, I felt conviction. So it was a weird time in my life where I'm just riding that fence, trying to figure out what the Christian life looks like, but I still want all this on this side. At that moment, the Lord moved us. So the second semester of my senior year in high school, we moved to McKinney, Texas. My step-dad just had another job that transferred up here. And so, I am moving boxes into the house, into my new home, and this girl three doors down walks up and says, "Hi, my name is Jodie, and I am going tonight with a bunch of people to downtown Dallas. We're going to watch a show. Would you like to come?" And I was like, "Sweet, a party. Sure." Only to find out when I get ready and I go down to that house and it's like half the youth group of First Baptist Church of McKinney, and we're going to see Jars of Clay. So it was not what I expected at all. God knew what He was doing. And so, it was an amazing night. I can remember just going, "Wow, I feel encouraged by these people." I've never been encouraged by friends before, truly encouraged and edified. I didn't know what that word meant, but I know now I was edified then. It was just amazing. Being in Mississippi that whole time, I planned on going to Ole Miss. I had partied at Ole Miss., and I was already in with the Sigma Nus. I mean, that was going to be my college career: drinking. That was about it. I graduated that year, and that June, the Lord was like, "No, you're not going there." And I visited Ouachita Baptist University. Any OBU'ers here? None at all? That's about right. It's an unbelievable school, but the Lord took me there and I was just so encouraged.

Patterson: Here's something that I think is cool about his story, like I said about Psalm 40, that the Lord's put a new song in his mouth. And Bleecker had never played the guitar before. In 7th and 8th grade, you were part of a band called the "Blue Dazzlers." I don't know that we have a lot of time to talk about that, but I do think it involved tights and singing. But anyway, tell us about how you picked up a guitar and then just briefly, how you got here.

Blecker: Thanks Josh. That's really embarrassing. Two months before Christmas, my roommate walks down the hall with a guitar. And he walks into the room and goes, "Hey, you've got to check this out." And so, he plays this song for me. And I was like, "Let me try." So he put my fingers where they're supposed to go, and it just fit. I mean, I would go to the science lab and I'd be printing off chords and songs. I would skip lunch, I would skip class, just lock myself in the room and play. This passion for music and leading people in worship actually began to grow even though I didn't have a venue and this opportunity to lead. Two months later, I'm at the first Passion in 1997. The session just ended and I'm in the bookstore looking around when this guy from First Baptist Hot Springs walks up to me. I had done something previously with him, and he said, "Michael, it's good to see you. We're about to do our Disciple Now, and I'd love you to be a part. I'd love for you to hang out with our 7th grade boys in the house." And I was like, "Oh, I'd love to. Hey, can I bring my guitar? Because I've been playing a little bit, and I would love to lead the 7th grade boys in worship." And he was like, "Well actually, the pastor and I have been praying for a year and a half for a youth worship leader." And I was like, "This is it! I've landed." This was just it for me. I could just die and go to heaven. And so, he was like, "Pray about it." And

I was like, "Okay...I'm ready." Man, I was just so ready. And so, they tried me out and I did the deal, and for four years, I led worship for 30-40 kids and absolutely loved it, loved every Wednesday, every Sunday that I drove down there. It was just a blessing. And with that, I started playing more and got a band together and started playing on campus. We did a ministry called "Refuge at Ouachita," and I started traveling a little bit. And Ouachita happened and I graduated and I'm all encouraged and I'm leading worship.

And then my family had moved to Tucson, Arizona. And so, I'd hop on a plane and get out to Tucson, Arizona, and for the next few months, my life just started to crash. I stopped reading, I stopped praying, I was by myself, I had no encouragement. I can remember previously, just months before, ordering the Passion One Day DVD. And I don't know if anybody was there, but Matt Redman is singing "The Wonderful Cross," and they're bringing this cross down the aisle with 50,000 kids. And they set the cross in the front, and I can remember this kid running and jumping and grabbing the base of that cross. And I'm vacuuming, and I'm in this dark time in my life and I see this. I just have it playing in the background, and this is the scene that I see. And I stop and I slide down the vacuum and I just weep. It was one of those moments where God's going, "See? I am good, I am good. And your life is not your own."

And so, that was good for me for a time, and then I abandoned God again. And you know how Matt always talks about how He'll let you run to your sin for a while, but you'll come running back once you hit the wall. And that's what He did. So, I'm going to Nashville, and I'm going to make a name for myself and get famous. And so, I forced it; I knew I wasn't supposed to be there. I forced the issue, and I put myself in Nashville. And I have a horrible job; I'm in the back of a Sprint PCS store in a shopping mall, in the back, not even with people. And I'm fixing phones, like phones people have dropped in the toilet. It was awful. And so, that was my job for three and a half months. And it became another one of those dark, dark times in my life, where I'm living by myself in an apartment and all the sins of my father started to visit me. I found myself into pornography again and just living that life of darkness.

So three and a half months go by, and one of our mutual friends Jarret Stephens calls me from Prestonwood. And he's like, "Hey man, I want to fly you down and do worship for this new ministry I'm starting." And I was like, "Man, you don't want me." And he said, "Yeah, I do want you. I want to fly you down." And so that week later, I flew down to Dallas and led worship, and that flame was ignited again in my heart. We're sitting there after the whole deal, and he said, "We've got to get you here." And I'm like, "I'm sorry, man. I've been training for two months with Sprint. They've been paying me to train." And he's like, "Alright, we've still got to get you here." I was like, "There's no way." So I fly back to Nashville, I'm sitting in my apartment and the Lord was like, "You're going to Dallas. This is what I've created you to do." And so, I just knew at that moment. So I pulled out my laptop and I started writing my letter of resignation to Sprint. A week later, I hand my resignation letter to my boss, and he smiles and says, "Michael, we were going to have to fire you next week."

I was just amazed. It was one of those things where God's going, "See, I've got you. I've got you." And so, I'm driving home that night and I call Jarret. He's not there, but my other buddy answers. He calls his boss and ends up getting another job for me here in Dallas. I get to Dallas and I start at Prestonwood, leading for college and singles on the weekend, and I'm working at the annuity board at Southern Baptist Convention downtown, using my business degree. And life just seems really good for me. I'm starting to travel a little bit, and I've got all this stuff going on. And so, I find myself in this place again where I'm where I was in Nashville. I found myself in this place where I'm going, "I want to make a name for myself. I want to get big. I want to get famous. I want to write that song that's going to get my name out there." And so, I bought this Trailblazer, I was going to take a band, I was going to buy a trailer and a sound system and just do the whole deal.

And about that time is when I met my wife, Faith. It's also when I met Matt and Lauren. I was doing a ministry called "Metro" at Prestonwood, and Matt came on and started speaking. That's how we met. And so, Faith and I had Matt and

Lauren over one night for dinner. We're sitting talking after dinner and I said, "Man, what do you have for the next few years? What's going on in your life?" And he said, "Well, actually I'm being called to this little church in Highland Village, First Baptist Church Highland Village." And I was just like, "What!?!!" I knew he had the next two years completely booked out. I knew how much he was making. He was doing very well. The Lord was blessing his ministry. And I'm just going, "You're crazy." He's talking and I'm going, "uh huh," but I'm thinking, "You're crazy." And so, as I'm sitting there, I'm just thinking that. And in an instant, the Lord changed my whole life and the pattern of my life. And Matt said, "Well the cool thing is I get to pick my own staff." And in that moment, from all the other stuff that I really wasn't listening to, that line stood out right there and the Holy Spirit said, "This is what I have for you." And so, in an instant, everything that I held onto, everything that I wanted for my life was flipped 180°. And I found myself passionately pursuing community and a local body and knowing that I was called to this place. And so Matt, as he calls it "dating," took me out on lunches and dinners, and it's really kind of awkward. But he kind of got to know me and what my future was and what I wanted for my life. And I just told him, "Man, I want to be with a local church, and the Lord is calling me there." And so, his first Sunday, I led at Prestonwood, and I jetted here and my wife and I were sitting in the back. We were here for the first Sunday, 168 people, one service. It's just beautiful seeing what the Lord has done over the last four years. And I just want to tell you, I love you and I thank you for the opportunity to be your worship pastor. I've loved every minute of it. So thank you so much.

Patterson: I love Bleecker. He's one of my best friends, and I love what the Lord has done in his heart and in his life. And I do know that he sings out of a full heart. He sings because of what the Lord has done in his life. And you would just never think that he'd come from something like that. Here's what I want to do. I just want to pray. I want to ask that the Lord would just quiet us down before we engage Him in worship. And I want you to reflect, I want you to think on the Lord. And so, "Father in heaven, I do give You thanks for my good friend, Michael Bleecker. I thank You that the story of his life is still being written. And I thank you that, as a high school senior, You stepped in and You intervened and You changed him, God. It's just phenomenal. And not just him, but You saved his brother and You put a new song in his heart. And so, he leads worship for our 1st through 5th graders here at the church. And I thank You that You saved and redeemed his mom and that You've just done a work in their family. I pray for his dad, that You would just change his heart, that You'd save him and rescue him. Because there are no types of people that become believers; there are those whom You quicken their hearts. And so, that's what we ask, that You would do that for him. And Father, I know that there are some in here who kind of identify with Lydia in the story, that their life is put together, they've got a great job and maybe a really good home, maybe a good spouse, a good neighborhood, a good car, a good future, a good 401k, a good lawn. But honestly Father, how good is good enough? And Lydia, who seemed to have all of that came to a real place of seeking and emptiness. And I pray for those in here tonight who have kind of tried to piece their lives together through morality and a religion based on ritual, that You would free them, that You would open their hearts like You did Lydia. I know that here are some in here, God, that are like that little girl who are oppressed and exploited, that they're enslaved to wicked, wicked masters, that there are those in here who are enslaved to pornography or eating disorders, that they're enslaved to a certain image or a certain size, that there are those who are enslaved to comparison and their whole life is directed by this wicked master who absolutely has rulership over them. And God, there are some in here who are just like the jailer, just indifferent. Their god is duty and routine. And they get up or they go to class or they go to work and they come home and they go to bed and they just get up and do the deed the next day. And they know nothing of Your greatness, nothing of Your splendor and nothing of Your majesty. And so my prayer for these in here tonight, if there are those in here like Lydia who are trying to do this through white knuckled morality, that You would free them from the ritual, that You would free them from being enslaved to what is empty and altogether hollow and shallow, that they're chasing after the shadow instead of the reality. Open their hearts, God. I pray for those who are enslaved to the oppressive master of pornography, homosexuality, adultery, lying, cheating, stealing, image, materialism. God help us. Would You free them and let them know that Your name is the greatest name, it is the name above all names, there is no power greater. Give them the hope of freedom. Give them the hope of liberty. And Father, I pray that You would shake

the walls of the hearts of those who are just so stuck in a rut and routine. Show them, demonstrate to them Your power. If there are men and women here tonight who are like Bleecker's dad, may they know that You can forgive and change, that there's no past that's too sordid, there's no present reality that's too wicked, there's no deed that's been done that cannot be cleansed and covered by Your blood. And so, what are we celebrating tonight? We're celebrating You and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray for those who do not believe, that You would quicken and open their hearts. And we pray for those who do believe, if they're enslaved to guilt and shame, that You would free them from that, that they would run into Your marvelous light out of darkness and out of shame. So encourage the body, redeem the lost. We will give You every bit of the glory. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen."

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