

# The Original Line in the Sand

Sunday AM

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I have an old friend of mine that says that if that doesn't light your fire, your wood might be wet. You know, this past week I had an incredible privilege. I was on the other side of the globe with over a thousand men and women who have given their life to go to the darkest places in the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They don't have the privilege of worshiping like we just worshiped. Many of them don't have the privilege of gathering in a group this large in a place this beautiful without fear of some type of retribution. In fact, many of the hallway conversations that I had with them wasn't if persecution would occur but when and how. And you and I today, let's just be honest, it's easy to take it for granted. It's easy to just check off a box, but it is the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, the cross of Jesus Christ, that lives in us. And may we not take this time for granted, may we realize what an opportunity, we are about to open the word of God and it can transform and it can change us and we are privileged to do so in this environment. Today, let's not take it for granted, church.

*Lord, as we come to this time, we know you are going to challenge us. Lord, we hope your Holy Spirit convicts us. God, I pray for those who are on the other side who didn't have fabulous music and don't have hundreds of people surrounding them, and they are lonely. But God, we understand that the power of the cross of Jesus is no less there than it is here and no more there than it is here. So God, as we gather in a beautiful facility among wonderful people, Lord, I pray that this would be one of those times where you would pull away the layers and you would allow us not to just read words but you would allow us to see ourselves in the words that we are about to read. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 8 as well as the book of Jeremiah 17. Now today, we're going to spend about 99 percent of our time in John 8 but there is that 1 percentage point in Jeremiah 17 that I believe you're going to want to be a part of and want to possibly see with your own eyes.

If you are a guest or a visitor with us, I want to welcome you. We are strategically and, yes, somewhat methodically walking through the Gospel of John with this intended purpose, to get to John 15 where Jesus makes this statement, he said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. He that abides in me, he and I, he shall bear much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing." That's where we are headed and so we are very

strategically walking through the Gospel of John to get to that point and today we come to chapter 8 and chapter 8 is one of those stories in Scripture that is so familiar to us, it is this woman who is "caught in adultery," and there are some statements that come out of this passage that we know very well in our culture, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." Or, "Go and sin no more." And yet there are many, in fact, as you look at your Bible, there are many in the academic circle who call to question this story. Maybe it's in a footnote of your Bible, maybe it's in the margin, maybe it's on the side where they will question the authenticity of this account of Jesus. You know, it's interesting when you begin to go and study the critics and those who want to dispel the authenticity of this story, they don't question whether the story happened, they only question where it should be placed in the life and the ministry of Jesus.

Today, we find ourselves in John 8, one of the most memorable and famous stories in all of the Bible. A group has gathered around for this intended purpose: to tempt Jesus, to paint him in the proverbial corner; what is he going to do with the situation that has been brought before him? And what you're going to discover today is that you and your life looks a whole lot more like this situation than you may think.

John 8, beginning in verse 1. It says,

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what do you say? 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the first stone. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are your accusers? has no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

One of the most famous accounts in the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ, and as we begin to look at this passage and what does this mean for us and how do we see ourselves in this passage, we discover that Jesus is the original line in the sand. How many times have you heard that statement, "They drew a line in the sand"? In other words, this is one of those times where you've got to make a decision which side are you on, and when Jesus stoops down and he begins to write, we discover that there are two sides of the line: the side of which the scribes and the Pharisees were on, and the side of which he and the

woman were on. As we begin to look at this passage and peel away the layers, I think one of the things we notice about this "line" is there is a reputation at stake, there is a reputation on the line for several items and the first one is the persons that were there.

Now, let's think about the characters that are present in this account. Let's begin with the woman. We don't know a whole lot about her but we can speculate either one of two things: either she was a woman who was very commonly known to participate in such endeavors, or she was a woman who was at the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong person, doing the wrong thing. But nonetheless, however this story ends up, who she is and her reputation and the perception of her is going to change forever.

Then there are the men that have gathered, the scribes, the Pharisees, those who would claim to hold the high moral ground. These are those who have the education, they have the networking, they have the politics, they are the movers, they are the shakers of their community and they believe they hold the moral ground. They believe they are God's standard and here is this rogue rabbi by the name of Jesus and the Bible says that they come actually tempting him. You know, their reputation is at stake as well. In fact, notice what it says in verse 4, it says they caught her "in the very act," which tells me that they were a part of a conspiracy. There was collusion taking place there. This was a setup from the beginning. So here are these men who claim to have the high moral ground but what we are going to see in just a moment, their reputation may change because it's going to discover that they have aided and abetted a sinful condemning act.

Then there is the man. You say, "What do you mean, the man? You mean the men?" No, no, the man. It says that she was caught in the very act and I'm not the brightest bulb in the chandelier but based on what she is accused of, it had to have two people there, right? And so where is he? Where is the man who was a part of the situation? And what is going to be said of him?

You see, the persons that are there, their reputations are on the line and what people will think of them, more importantly, Jesus, will be determined in just the next few moments. Ah, but there is also a precedent on the line. Notice what these men say to Jesus, "For Moses commanded that we have her stoned." You know, there is nothing quite like someone who pulls, what I call, the God card, right? You know what I mean by that. In other words, "Hey, we can discuss this all day long but this is what the Bible says. What are you going to do with that, Jesus?"

You see there was precedent. In fact, if you go all the way back in the book of Leviticus, now I know all of us do our daily quiet time in the book of Leviticus and Numbers. I know that, that's a regular part of our lives, but in the book of Leviticus 20:10, it makes this statement: that when someone commits the sin of adultery, that the man and the woman, hence the man that is missing in the story, were to be condemned to and stoned to death. It's also duplicated in Deuteronomy 22:22, it says the same thing. If there is an individual who finds himself in the situation that is described in John 8, that they should be condemned to death and they should be stoned. So here's the precedent that is at stake:

the law according to Moses, this woman should stand condemned, the rock should be brought out and people should start flinging across the street.

And the question is, as they attempted him, what will Jesus do? Which leads to this concept of proof. You see, we've got to have proof here. What is the real story? Now, what's interesting is the same law that they cite from the mouth and the hand of Moses, stated that nothing should be done and no person should be condemned to death unless there are at least two or three witnesses to the act. How many witnesses do we have? Most likely a dozen or more because this entire group, shall I say this mob of men, caught her in the very act and what we have is eyewitness testimony, we have the precedence of the law of Moses that is written down, and the question or the reputation at stake is what is the proof and how is it going to be proven and who is going to be the guilty party and who is going to be the innocent. But as we see in just a moment, as Jesus so eloquently does so often, he flips the script. He takes those who are pointing the finger and we discover that they've got three fingers pointing right back at them. So the question is going to become at the end of this day, how will this woman be seen? How will these men be seen? But more importantly, how will Jesus be viewed? You see, everybody's reputation is on the line.

So then we get a response. We get the response of Jesus to the situation. He does something very famous, he stoops down on the ground and he begins to write in the dirt. Now, I want to talk about the instrument that was used here. You see, when Jesus begins to write in the dirt and, by the way, feel free to correct me if I'm wrong but I think I've got this one right, it's the only time I can find in the Gospels where Jesus actually writes something down. Now, he speaks a lot and he says a lot and does a lot, and in his hands, I mean, he touches a blind man's eyes and they are healed, but I don't know of any other occasion where he actually writes something down.

You say, "Well, why is the instrument so significant?" Well, if you think back to the Old Testament, in fact the book of Exodus 32 and 34, we have the story of Moses. You know the story well. They have come out of Egypt, the famous 10 plagues. They have gone through the Red Sea. They have been set free and what we know as the wilderness experience has begun. There is this time period where the Lord calls Moses up on the Mount, for 40 days and 40 nights, Moses goes on the mountain to hear from God. He comes down with what we now know as the famous 10 Commandments, except when he comes down, he hears a sound in the background and Aaron, his brother, has been left in charge and when he gets down there, there is one serious "party" taking place. The music is loud. The debauchery is in abundance and idolatry is the name of the game. Moses gets so frustrated with what he sees, he takes what we know as the original 10 Commandments and he breaks them before the Israelites. After a time of repentance, we know that Moses goes back up and he receives a second "edition" of the 10 Commandments. You say, "Well, why is this so significant?" Because in Exodus 32:16 and in Exodus 34:1, Moses says this about the 10 Commandments: it was written with the hand of God. You see, when God writes it down, it changes everything.

You go fast forward to the book of Daniel 5, we find ourselves in a situation with the Israelites, again because of their rebellion much like in Exodus, now they are at the hands of the Babylonians. They have been taken captive. Nebuchadnezzar has come in and Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, these guys have gone to the area that we know as Babylon, and eventually Medo-Persia. They make their way over there and a leader succeeds Nebuchadnezzar by the name of Belshazzar. Now Belshazzar got arrogant and he got cocky and he decided that he almost was a god himself so he decided to throw a party in his honor and to his false god's honor, and in that party, he decided to take the vessels, he decided to take the items from the temple in Jerusalem that had been ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar and offer an offering to his false gods. Do you remember what happened? The Bible says in chapter 5, verse 5, that a finger wrote on the wall. How many times have you heard this statement: the handwriting on the wall? From Daniel 5, the finger of God writes on the wall. Nobody can understand what it means. Nobody grasps its meaning until Daniel is called the forth and he declares that the Babylonian reign has come to an end and someone soon will follow thereafter. That night, according to Daniel 5, Belshazzar without a shot being fired, is replaced by the Medes and the Persians. You see, whether it is writing on the stone tablets of Exodus 32 or on the wall of Daniel 5, we discover that when God involves writing or placing his finger on something, it changes everything.

You know, some years ago there was a very famous movie that came out entitled "Twister." It was the story of these individuals who chased storms and tornadoes. Now, I'm going to go ahead and confess when it comes to that type of stuff, I'm not a storm chaser, I'm a storm fleer. Does that make sense? I understand and I appreciate animals, particularly my two dogs, when the barometric pressure drops and the storms come, they go under the bed and I join them. I'm going to be honest. I grew up in Texas. I grew up in what we call tornado alley, now the only difference there it was so flat you could see it three counties away coming at you. But nonetheless, I grew up in an environment that when we heard about tornadoes, we took off. We didn't run to it. But there are people and if that's what you enjoy doing, God bless you. I'll do a great job at your funeral. I promise you. But if that's what you want to do...

So these guys in this movie are chasing tornadoes. They find themselves in the Midwest and the primary character started doing this with his former wife, and as the context of the story goes on, he now has a new love in his life but still works for this former wife as a part of the team that is chasing these tornadoes. They find themselves kind of locked up in this house after they have been through one of these experiences and they are talking about what they have just seen and they are debating, was that an F2, was that an F3, and they are giving all this insight, jargon and language, to which this primary character's new girlfriend looks at them like a calf at a new gate, not knowing what's going on here, and she says, "I don't understand, what is this?" And they began to explain to her that they rate and rank tornadoes by their strengths, and as they say in the movie, by the ability to how much they eat, so to speak, or destroy. They say, "What you just experienced was probably a good F2, probably not an F3, but if you ever experience an F4, it will relocate your house decently well." To which in her naïveté, she makes the statement, actually she asks this question, "What's an F5?" To which there is this holy

hush in the room in that movie and one of them speaks up and says, "That is the finger of God."

You see, we recognize that all it takes is the simple finger of God and everything changes. Whether it was the 10 Commandments, whether it was the writing on the wall, and look what happens here, when the finger of God, Jesus Christ, God in flesh, when he stoops on the ground and he actually begins to write, we're going to see in just a moment, it changes everything. It changes how these men respond to him. It changes how this woman can go forth from this place. It changes everything.

But there is not just an instrument that is used, there is an interruption that takes place. Notice in this passage in verse 7, "So they continued asking him and he lifted up himself and he said unto them." Now, when we hear this story or we know this story well, let me share with you how we normally share this story. A group of people come to Jesus one day, they throw a woman at his feet and say she was caught in adultery, Moses said stone her, what do you think we ought to do? Jesus stooped down, wrote on the ground and said, "He who is without sin cast the first stone." They walked off from the oldest to the youngest. You say, "Well, that's exactly how I learned it. I got it. That's it." However, there is one small detail missing: when Jesus stoops and writes on the ground, the men actually engage with him, they retorted back and they actually ask him another question while he is writing.

So we have to ask ourselves why this interruption, what's going on? And let's just go ahead and ask the question: what was Jesus writing? Guess what? You don't know and neither do I and neither does anybody, but if you have Jeremiah 17 marked, I would like to encourage you to go over there because I think if you had to ask me what do you think he wrote, I personally believe, this is just my opinion, and by the way, my opinion is just as good as yours, I think chapter 17, verse 13 of Jeremiah, may be what Jesus wrote on the ground. Let me explain my rationale. 1. These men came to Jesus. They were tempting him. They were trying to get him to "sin." Every time Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, what did he do? He replied by quoting the word of God. Every time Jesus is tempted, he doesn't use human rationalization or explanation, he quotes the word of God.

Secondly, as we are about to see in Jeremiah 17, there is a statement that is made that just pictures the scene in John 8. Verse 13 of Jeremiah 17 says, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters." Isn't that interesting? This prophetic passage in Jeremiah 17 says those who forsake the Lord, those who rebel against the Lord, those who sin against God, they shall actually be written in the earth. Is it possible that Jesus actually wrote this verse on the ground? I don't know but allow me to speculate. It explains to me if this is what he did, their response to him because they don't disagree with him. They say, "Are you going to do what Moses said to do?" Now you have quoted Jeremiah 17 that just encourages this, that she is the one who has rebelled, she is the one that has forsaken the Lord. You see, in this interruption, I think what we're seeing is a group of men saying, "That's right, Jesus, let's get her. Pick up the rocks, let's go!" But what are we discovering in the interpretation? If Jeremiah 17

is what Jesus wrote on the ground, was he speaking just of the woman who lay at his feet, or was he speaking of all of those who stood in the midst?

You see, if you study this passage, there are those that speculate that he actually began to write the names of other individuals. He actually began to name the sins of those that were present. And we don't know. All we know is this, was his interpretation. By the way, this happens all the time in the Gospels. The disciples come to Jesus and say, "Hey, we need to learn something." Jesus says, "Here's a parable." Then they pull him aside and say, "We didn't understand that. What did that mean?" So Jesus has written, they have asked for clarification and what does he say? "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." Not quite the interpretation that they were expecting. Not quite the response. Here is God in flesh writing in the ground, the only time we have recorded, possibly writing a verse of Scripture that in their eyes would condemn the one to the stoning that lay before him, and Jesus' response isn't about the woman, it's about the men who have gathered. And he makes it very clear, his interpretation of the situation isn't the one necessarily who has been caught in the very act but the fact that all of us have done a great job of pretending we've never been caught in various acts. You see, they had a standard of piety, they had a standard of morality that did well on the exterior but not so much when investigated.

So what is the result? What happens when Jesus begins to write? What happens when he interprets possibly this Scripture? Well, the first thing we see is there is a departure. Now the Bible makes it very clear that from the oldest to the youngest, they took off. Now here is what's interesting about that: not only is this the only time that Jesus writes on the ground or communicates in written text, it's the only time that his "enemies," the scribes, the Pharisees, those who were always trying to trap him, it's the only time we see them convicted. It's the only time we see them respond appropriately. In fact, in just a few verses, he is going to call them children of the devil himself. Later on in Matthew 23, he says their converts are twice the children of hell than they are. The dialogue between these guys and Jesus is rarely positive because they were obstinate, they were stubborn, they wouldn't admit they had sinned. But yet here in this passage, verse 9, "And when they heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the oldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone."

You know, in the past few days, I've had an incredible privilege and opportunity. I've been on the other side of the globe with over a thousand individuals called to share the Gospel in some of the most remote, what we would call spiritually dark places in all the world. Now, many missionaries were there but there were a few of us pastors that were gathered together and they had a special curriculum, they had a special track for us and one of the things that they did is they would bring us aside and they would bring very strategic people in to share their story, to share their testimony, to share what was happening in the places that they were serving. There was one young man who shared his story about going into these places where refugees have gathered where they are fleeing all over the world. And he was in one of those refugee camps and he had the privilege in a place where Christianity is very much condemned and another major world religion is very much edified, in the midst of that spiritual darkness, he had the privilege of leading a

young lady to the Lord. Then he shared with us that over the next six months, this woman, actually the Lord working through her, but this woman produced six generations of believers in six months.

Now, let me unpack that for you and tell you what that means. That means she as a new believer in Jesus Christ, she shared with somebody, and that person became a believer in Jesus Christ, then that person shared with somebody else to six generations. Not that she led six people, but she led people who led people who led people for six generations in six months. Can I be honest? That's not even common in this land. How many people can say they have led somebody to the Lord who has led somebody who has led somebody who has led somebody six generations down the road in a matter of six months in a place where Christianity is not encouraged and in a place where the name of Jesus is considered a curse word at times?

Now, a presentation was made and you're in a room of pastors, and unfortunately we default in this mechanism of programs and doing things that lay on spreadsheets and such, and one of the men in the room and, by the way, I'm not picking on this guy because I probably would have asked the same question, one of the men in the room, he put his hand in the air and he said, "How did you do it?" He said, "What do you mean how did we do it?" He said, "How did you coach her?" Isn't that an American term? "How did you coach her? How did you lead her? How did you disciple her? What did you do in this lady's life that allowed her to do what she did?" And he looked at us, he looked at us just almost bewildered and he said, "What do you mean what did I do?" "What did you do? What program?" Do you know what he said? He said, "It was real simple, we gave her the Bible, told her to read it, she read it, she led people to the Lord. They read it, they led people to the Lord." He said, "All we did was give her the Bible."

Do you see the power that is in that? That when God writes it with his finger, listen, it changes everything. The only time we see these Pharisees get convicted of their sin is when God writes something down. The power of the 10 Commandments, the power on Belshazzar's wall, the power when Jesus wrote in the dirt, and listen to me, the only thing that will convict us of our sin, and by the way, one of the great statements that came out of this last week was simply this: we will not solve any of humanity's problems until we solve humanity's heart problem, which is exactly what Jesus was addressing. These guys had a heart problem. This woman had a heart problem. I've got news for you: we have all got a heart problem and only the word of God is the only thing that is going to convict us that we are the problem and he is the answer.

So they departed. Then there is this declaration, what does Jesus say? He says, "Neither do I condemn you." Can you imagine what that would have felt like for this young lady? Most likely a woman who had a very interesting reputation. Most likely someone who had been somewhat marginalized by her family, most likely condemned by her community, and particularly those who caught her in the very act who claimed to have the high moral ground here. This is not a woman who was used to these words. Can you imagine the freedom that would have brought, "Neither do I condemn you." You see, when we come under conviction, when we realize the truth of our heart problem, when



we realize the truth of our sin problem and realize the goodness and the grace of Jesus Christ who loved us and was willing to go to the cross in spite of us, who was willing to take the spikes in spite of us, who was willing to take the thorns in spite of us, we realize that we can hear those words, "Neither do I condemn you."

You see, back in John 5:20, these words are spoken that only Jesus has the ability to judge. Ultimately those Pharisees would not be her judge. The man who she had been with just a few moments earlier, would not be her judge. Her family would not be her judge. It would be Jesus Christ alone. One day each and every one of us is going to stand before Jesus. Oh, what words to hear, "Neither do I condemn thee."

But then he gives her some direction. Notice the last statement of this famous passage, "Go and sin no more." You know, years ago there was an individual, in fact he was a Russian monk that came up with what I'm about to communicate with you, in fact, kind of a statement I have adhered to over the years is what we know as theology is discovered on the mission field and it is messed up in the classroom. Let me tell you what that means. Until we are out there beating the bushes in people's lives and discovering what they're struggling with, we don't know what we need to study, we don't know what we need to learn, we don't know how we need to approach things, but when we get in a sterile environment where you have nothing but believers becoming critical of that which they believe, that's how we kind of mess some things up. Several hundred years ago, there was this guy, this Russian monk, who came to this very erroneous conclusion. He came up with this idea that because we all want to experience the grace of God, we should all go and sin more so we can experience more of God's grace. Boy, if that's not man-made theology, I don't know what it is. But yet, what did the Apostle Paul say in Romans 6? "What? Shall we continue to sin that grace may abound? But God forbid that those of us who have been set free should continue to sin any longer."

Listen to this directive, he says, "I don't condemn you. They don't condemn you. Go. Sin no more." In fact, the lesson I think we need to learn continues in the book of Romans 7. The Apostle Paul says, "Here's the problem though, I struggle with this thing called sin. The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. I'm perplexed. I'm bothered." And yet you get to Romans 8:1 and he makes the statement, "Therefore there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And what direction does he give this woman? He says, "I have declared that I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more."

You see, Jesus doesn't give us an excuse to sin, Jesus gives us the ability to be free from sin because when we have been set free and when we have been forgiven, his directive is very clear, "Go and sin no more." You see, when we study this story, I think one of the difficulties of the story is not when did it happen in the life of the ministry of Jesus, the real difficulty of the story is that we are the person in the story. We are the woman. We are the one who has gotten caught in sin. We are the one who has lived lasciviously. We are the ones who have been places we shouldn't have been, with people we shouldn't have been with, doing things we shouldn't have done. And yet the question is have we allowed

the only person who can set us free, set us free, the person of Jesus? It says whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Maybe you're that person today and in just a moment we're going to talk about this, maybe you're that person that needs to make that decision today but maybe you made that decision years ago, let me ask you a very honest question, Christian: have you listened to the direction, "Go and sin no more"? He has given us very explicit directions that our lives should be lived for his sake and his honor, not for ourselves and our own.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that person today and maybe you're here for the very first time, you've never actually been on these grounds before, or maybe you are here for the thousandth time, but maybe it just dawned on you, maybe you just realized that the story you read today is your story, and maybe you're at that place in your life where you need to quit doing it the world's way and you need to just do it Jesus' way. I've got great news for you, you don't have to sign up for a bunch of religious classes, you don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops, you don't even have to check off a bunch of boxes, really all you need to do is to have a real serious conversation with God. I know technically we call it prayer, you don't have to pray out loud, you don't even have to say the same words that I would say, but maybe your conversation with God would go a little something like this. "God, today I just want you to know what you already know about me. I have justified my behavior. I have excused my perspective. God, I understand today that I'm the problem and you are the answer. I understand I'm the one who has sinned. I am the one who has rebelled. But I believe that Jesus loves me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I understand today that Jesus loves me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I understand today that Jesus loves me so much that he was willing to go to the cross and to pay the price for my sin and my rebellion and three days later he rose again so I could be forgiven and saved. God, today I don't know all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads bowed and ours still closed, maybe you are that person today. If so, we would love to have a conversation with you. We would love to celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life. But maybe that conversation with the Lord, maybe that happened years ago. Maybe for some of you it happened decades ago, and it's that last resonating statement, "Go and sin no more," that is really gripping your heart today. Maybe this would be the day that you would take that seriously. Maybe this would be the day that you would be willing to walk away from some things that you know you need to walk away from. Or maybe today is a day you need to walk toward some things you know you need to walk toward. Whatever that is, we would just love the opportunity to converse with you and to celebrate with you.

*Lord, as we come to this time, Lord, how refreshing, how good it is to know that you are a God of second chances. You gave this woman in John 8 a second chance and this day we recognize you have given us a second chance, in fact, some of us might say you have given us a third chance, a fourth chance, that some of us may admit we've lost count of*

*how many chances you have given us. But Lord, we recognize that today is one of those opportunities. You have spoken and we need to respond and I pray that we would do so appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. If there is a decision that we can celebrate today, I'll be here at the front.