

# Theology of Sex – Redemption

## By Mike Erre

Mike Erre:

We looked at the descent kind of downward from ingratitude, the posture that says, "Okay, God, I don't want to focus on all the yes's You give me. I just want to focus on the one thing I can't do," and how that leads to making our desires our gods, and how that leads then to denying all the consequences for stepping outside of His boundaries. And ultimately, that leads to prison, we don't like it, but we can't stop it. Now, who among us can stand before a holy God and boast about our righteousness sexually? Lost. Who among us hasn't wanted to go there, immorality, who among us hasn't wanted to take--it's not just an action thing, it's a heart thing. We want to step outside. We want to taste what is seemingly forbidden. And so we just recognize that even though we're forgiven and we have all of this majestic position in Christ, there is a reality and a consequence to our brokenness, to our addiction, to our sin. And how do we find our way out of that? We suggested one step towards freedom: confession. Not just towards God, who is faithful and just to forgive us and to purify us, but to recognize that there's a healing that comes from sharing this with other believers and hearing them give voice to forgiveness, and acceptance, love.

But that's not the only part to play, God forgives us, but I believe He also seeks to bring healing and restoration, not because we send our money in, not because we're working hard for it, but simply because He is that kind of God. He doesn't just want to forgive us. He wants to restore us. He wants to allow us to taste. But His original intention was for sexuality. How do we get there? So we're going to take a little detour throughout the Old Testament. We're going to hear from my

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sweetie, who you will see is just far better and should be invited back next year in my place, and is just cuter than anything.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

And um, and you'll see, I mean, I had-I made sure she wore kind of, not her best clothes. I just didn't want anyone to stumble this morning.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

Besides me.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

So we're going to go through the Old Testament. And if you're-if you're a note taker, hallelujah for notetaking, could you not write any of this down? In fact, I'd almost challenge you just to take everything out of your lap, and could you just listen? And I would just love--I'm a huge fan of the scriptures and I love it when you flip with me. But I just love for you to receive this. And if you're really desperate for notes, I can email you mine because I have like half of Biola's email addresses now in my inbox.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

Yeah. So but I would just invite you just to participate today, not to spectate, not to watch, to step in. In the Book of Exodus, God does this really amazing thing through Men. Moses, right, Moses wasn't exactly this giant of faith when we first meet him. He's very resistant to the idea of being used by God. And God says, no, no, no, you're My chosen instrument. I'm going to deliver My people from slavery through you. And so the first part of Exodus is this incredible encounter really between the one true God warring against the Egyptian gods. Each of the plagues is an attack on a specific Egyptian god showing that those guys were devoid of power. It's fascinating stuff. It's not just Charlton Heston leading the people, but there's God declaring Himself sovereign over Egypt and He delivers His people and sends them into the wilderness. And the wilderness was so much fun. The people wanted to go right back into slavery. Right? And we can relate to that. Sometimes dependence is so foreign to the sinful natures within us, we'd rather go back to the illusion of our control, even though it just destroys us from the inside.

Mike Erre:

And all of a sudden in the middle of this, God takes them to Sinai and then leads them out to the wilderness and then makes this promise in the Book of Exodus, twenty-five, he says. Then Moses have them make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them. Now, to this point, think about how they knew God. He parted the Red Sea at Mount Sinai, thunder and lightning and fire on top of the mountain in smoke. And God said, don't even touch the mountain or you will die. They knew they were God's chosen people, but yet God was distant and unapproachable, and there's this huge promise in Exodus that we get a taste that God now wants to dwell among His people. That's a huge deal. And He says, I want you to build Me a tabernacle, a traveling temple. And we read chapter after chapter after chapter in the Book of

Exodus. I want the furnishings this way. I want this kind of fabric. It's this design. And we think all of that stuff is irrelevant. It is all symbolic of stuff that will happen later through the Old Testament in Jesus and now in the church, it's unbelievable stuff. It all matters. But for our purposes, I just want us to get a taste of what it must have been like to be in the middle of the wilderness. To have a God who you knew, loved you, protected you, but was completely unapproachable, say to you, now I want to dwell among you, you will build Me a home.

Now, this happens in Exodus 40. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, Moses had finished building the exact specifications, then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and all the travels of the Israelites. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out. If the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day and the fire was in the cloud by night inside of the house of Israel, so they built the tent. And God's glory fills it.

The Hebrews have this deep theology of something called the Shekinah, Glory of God. It was His manifest presence. God, of course, exists everywhere. Right. The Psalmist will say the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, of course. But when He reveals His presence, often He did it through something called the Shekinah Glory. It was the light, the presence, the holiness, the majesty of what God was. And it signified not only His presence, but His protection, His blessing, His provision for Israel. And you can only imagine what it would have been like to actually see God's presence. Pretty cool.

So God would lead them. When He did not lift up from the Tabernacle, they would stay, but you could always see that He was present among you. The sheer kind of glory was one of the most important things to these early Israelites that God not just promised, but did dwell within their midst. We see this every now and again through the Old Testament in the temple. God does the same thing. They build the temple, when the priests withdrew from the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord and the priest could not perform their service because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord for this temple. Every time there was something gigantic that happened in Jewish life, right? Now they're in the land, Solomon builds the temple again. This kind of glory comes and dwells. It was so intense that the priest could not perform their service. This idea that this kind of glory was not only something that represented God's presence, but the fulfillment of His promise that He would dwell among His people, protecting them, providing for them, blessing and delighting in them.

If you're wondering where this is going, I'm sure you are not alone. Go to Isaiah. The prophet foresees a day, then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day, does that sound familiar? And the glow of flaming fire by night, right, that's straight out of Exodus, overall, the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day. And a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. No, I know I'm flyin, but here's what I want you to see in Exodus and Kings, the Shekinah Glory rested on places. The tabernacle in Temple Isaiah talks of a time when the kind of glory will rest over God's people and it will take the form of a canopy. So what the Jewish folks did with that is they would invoke a canopy at the most sacred moments of their lives. This is called a hoopa. Hoopa. Even today, some Jews will get married under one of these, the canopy represents that

kind of glory of God, His presence, His protection, His blessing, His provision, nothing sacred, of course, about the canopy. All that's sacred is what it represents. That God now rested over people, not just places. And the Jewish wedding ceremony, at least from what I've studied, is a pretty fascinating thing. I mean, we do weddings, I think well, they did them--they did much better. I mean, think about it, men. After you got married, you got a year off just to please your wife. Can I get an Amen?

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

Wives, how about an amen on that one, too, right?

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

That's the deep theology of marriage. And so what would happen is that a bride's family and a groom's family, they would agree on a bride price, they'd negotiate. Right? It kind of seems foreign to us, but that's how it worked back then. And then they would throw betrothal party, a ceremony, and the groom-to-be would offer the bride-to-be a cup. And if she accepted the cup, she said yes to the marriage, if she took the cup and smashed it, an obvious, no, right, the bad, that would be bad. What happens then? Is that there are many things that the groom-to-be would say to the bride-to-be. One of them is that he would go now to his father's house to prepare a room for her. He would literally go to his dad's house and build on a room. So, Jesus, when--when he starts using this language in the book of John, I mean, all of this is betrothal imagery, He literally--and the betrothal period, we think was about a year. The man goes, builds

the house, he can only go claim his bride when the father gives his okay. So when Jesus says no one knows the day or the hour except the father, I mean, that's bridal imagery.

When the father gives the groom-to-be his blessing, he gathers his friends and they parade through the streets of the city. Usually this took place at night or early evening. There were making all sorts of noise. They'd be marching to the bride-to-be's house, looking for a candle-candle in her window. When Jesus tells a story about 10 virgins, five of whom had oil for their candle, the other five did not, I mean, again, bridal imagery.

They go, they claim the bride, they exchange vows. The groom would take the bride back to the room he'd built on, the bridal chamber, it was now called. The best man would trail along and stand outside the room. In Jewish thought, you weren't married until you had sex. It's not just Jewish thought, that's biblical thought, to becoming one flesh. So even though you've done the vow thing, you weren't really married in God's sight, so the best men would stand outside of the room in an appropriate way. The bride and groom would consummate the marriage in the bridal chamber. They believed that when two people made love the first night of their wedding that God hovered over them. Delighting with them, rejoicing with them, blessing them. How far away are we from that understanding of sexuality? It was a very open. Once they were done, they would come out, the best man would announce to the assembled gathering that the two would become one flesh. They were now married. And then typically, if you had the resources, you would have a seven day feast. Yeah, three hour reception with a chicken dance is what we settle for, got nothing against the chicken dance, but they knew how to party, right?

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

For seven days, the bride, the groom, their whole city would celebrate. And what would happen, gentlemen, if you would grab this? What would happen? My burly crew. Honey, let's pretend that we were newlyweds. What would happen is that as we danced, and ate, and talked, and sweated, thank you.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

And where we were with our friends, we would have a crew, let's go stand under them. Who would hold this over us for the entire seven day period.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

You know, you had-you had to have a lot of help, right, doing this thing, but do you see the significance of what this communicated, not only to the couple, but to the entire community? God's blessing was on them. He was delighting in them, He was taking a central place, and not only the knitting of their hearts together, but now as a new extension of His family, knitting their hearts to the community, God was centermost in the marriage celebration. And this was just symbolic of the fact that He was delighting, and resting, and blessing. You can sit down now.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

Right? You guys could go ahead and not track around with me anymore. That would be probably a little awkward.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

We need to see the significance of this, this stood for the glory of God resting over you in the form of a canopy, okay? And that your sexuality was intimately tied. It wasn't just you and your spouse having sex, God was present. It was that holy. It was that sacred to profane. Something that means to take it out of the temple to make it common. When we say our cultures profaned sex, that's what they've done. They've taken the mystery out of it. It's not just about body parts and positions, "It's just about how great you are and how well you can perform." I mean, it's ridiculous what our culture has done to it. The Hebrew understanding is that God would rest over you, delighting with you, as you would enjoy this great gift you've been given. Brothers and sisters, I recognize from much of what you've emailed and much of what you've said, that there are so many of us who not only have trouble feeling forgiven, I mean, that was Dr. Tunney's, right, the deep theology of what it is to be redeemed and forgiven. But you wonder if now you're damaged goods. You wonder if I can ever escape the addiction to masturbation or pornography, I wonder if I can ever forgive the person who molested me or date raped me. You wonder if I'll ever be free from the struggles of body image that caused me to starve myself or to purge when I eat. You wonder if my boyfriend and I could ever stop. You wonder if the shame will ever go away or the guilt.

And so, brothers and sisters, we not only want to talk about forgiveness, but we want to talk about restoration. One of the deep parts of restoration is our repentance. God forgives us. God cleanses us. He changes our desires, He renews our minds. But we, of course, have a part to play. And repentance isn't really a popular word today. I think we'd all agree, it certainly is a biblical one, and you know the word, you know the concept. You're heading this way, to repent means to turn around, right? We know what repentance is. It's to do a 180. It's to change your mind. It's to redirect and reorient yourself in light of something new. It's the it's the college kid who sits in my office and says, I'm so sick of porn, I'm trashing my computer. That's repentance, it's our part in restoration. Again, God's glory, His power, that's the only thing that can save us. That's the only thing that redeems us. But we do have a part to play. It's the go and sin no more, peace when we live under grace. It's the yearning for freedom to the point where you're willing to do anything that Jesus would tell you to do just to gasp fresh air. It's the-it's the divorced couple that went to counseling together and got remarried after they'd been divorced.

That's repentance. Or the couple living together that moves apart, to the couple that was sexually active, that just ceases and now only meets together in public. It's not convenient. It's not comfortable. But that's the path of freedom not to not only confess, we talked about that yesterday, to shine light into those dark places, not only God's light with the light of the community of believers. But even further than that, to take a step. My favorite definition of repentance, some of you have heard me use this before, it's called an autobiography in five short chapters. I walked down the street, there's a hole in the sidewalk. I fall in, I don't know where I am, it's not my fault and it takes a long time to get out. Chapter two, I walk down the street, there's a hole in the sidewalk. I fall in, I know where I am, but it's still not my fault. It takes a

long time to get out. Chapter three. There's a hole--or, I'm walking down the street, there's a hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I know where I am, my eyes are open, it is my fault. This is now a habit and I get out immediately. Chapter number four, I walk down the street, there's a hole in the sidewalk and I walk around it. Chapter five, I walk down another street. That's repentance.

It's an embracing an entirely different way of living. For me, I told you about my struggles. My sweetie has the password to our computer software, my computer that protects me, I don't have a video card membership and I have accountability. Will that stop me from sinning? It will not. My evil heart can devise ways to sin, regardless of how much accountability I have. All that does is just make it harder for me to do so, and at some point I will just simply think that's too much work. And when that happens, when you hold what tempts you far away, you start seeing the work of God in your heart. And men and women, I can just tell you in terms of is there hope for pornography? Yes. I just don't - don't want to live that way anymore. I just don't. I'll still be accountability, but the battle just isn't the same. And it all changed with going before brothers in Christ and telling them of the struggle. They, of course, brought me into repentance. Trash your computer, give your password away, and as I did that, I saw the power of God just unleash my soul. My wife and I have lived this together, this idea of restoration, so sweetie? You wanna come up? This is my wife, Justina, and this is our journey.

[Shuffling sounds]

Mike Erre:

He turned this one on.

Justina Erre:

Okay.

Mike Erre:

Check, one, oh, we got a hot mic. In more ways than one.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Erre:

Okay, I'm sorry.

Justina Erre:

Alright. Yeah, so I'm going to go ahead and share my testimony. It was eight years ago this month that I became a Christian. Nine months later, I met Mike. And the year after that, we were married at the age of twenty-nine. And if you had asked me prior to that if I would someday be a pastor's wife, I would have laughed at you, because not only did I think I would not be a pastor's wife, I never thought I would marry a Christian man. I never thought that that was in my cards. I didn't think they'd want to marry me. I grew up in what I thought was a Christian home. We celebrated Christmas and Easter. So from my understanding, that meant you were a Christian. I honestly didn't know that Easter had anything to do with more than an Easter Bunny until I was about 12. I was a good girl. I was the good girl in the family, and I did well in school. I stayed away from drugs, I stayed away from drinking and boys, I always sensed God's presence. But because we didn't go to church, no one in my family was a Christian. I really didn't understand what it meant to be a Christian, I had no concept of that.

In high school, I started going to a small church in my small town. Everybody knew everyone, and I knew the kids in my youth group. I knew that they were out partying, and drinking, and having sex with their boyfriends and girlfriends. So again, I just had no concept of what it was to be a Christ follower. But I was still a good kid. And when I was a senior, right before senior year of high school, kind of the bottom dropped out from under me. My parents separated months before my senior year. My mom the next month moved in with her boyfriend, leaving me with a very depressed dad and a younger brother. And I essentially became the caretaker of the family. And so I began to rebel just a little bit. I started lying. I started going to parties. I started drinking a little bit, started kissing boys here and there. And kind of this numbing of my soul took its toll my senior year spring break when I went out one night with a bunch of friends, and we went partying and was drinking a little bit, and I actually wound up getting date raped and um.

The next month, my parents divorced and any sort of relationship I had with God at that point, I just said essentially, to hell with it. You obviously don't--I just, I remember even thinking this. You obviously don't care about me, so I'm not going to care about You. So, I was essentially on my own. I went off to college, which is the absolute worst place for someone with absolutely no self-esteem to go, I really hadn't been approached by many guys in high school. I wasn't found attractive, I guess, or whatever.

Mike Erre:

Idiots.

[Audience laughs and applauds]

[Mike and Justina Erre laugh]

Justina Erre:

You're breaking my stride!

Mike Erre:

Sorry!

[Justina Erre laughs]

Justina Erre:

Um, so here I was, this hurting girl that boys really had never paid attention to, and all the sudden in college I was getting a lot of it and boys were just paying a lot of attention. I wasn't used to it. And I figured since I thought in my head I've already lost my virginity, which I came to understand later, is not really what happened, I chose to give it away. Later on, I figured, heck, what does it matter? So six years later, at the age of 24, I found myself completely broken. I was engaged to a guy who claimed to be Christian. He read the Bible through two times. So he was a Christian, and um, but he had-he bore no fruit of it. And I just was, I didn't really understand things, and I just hated myself. I was at the point where I absolutely hated myself and I felt completely alone and God started to softly back--whoa. And I understand that-I understand now that He never left me at that time. But I certainly didn't feel Him, because I didn't give Him any attention whatsoever. So I finally started listening, this guy and I broke up, thank the Lord. And for four years I began a quest of finding God. I-but I became very religious. I started reading my

Bible, and tithing, and-and going to church. I even taught Sunday school. So I was really, okay, I'm really doing this.

But the problem was, I was still having sex. Essentially, I felt like I was standing on the edge of the cliff. I-I jumped all these hurdles, and God was saying, just trust Me, trust Me, I'll catch you. But I was holding on to this one rope and it was having sex. I felt--not that I was dating anyone at the time or even having sex at the time. I felt I needed to hold on to that just in case. Because what if I start dating someone? He'll never stay with me if I don't have sex. This is how I'd grown up. I-that was my understanding. And so I just couldn't give God my arm. And I moved to California in June of '98 and I found Mariners' Church a couple of months later. And that October I went on a retreat and I was really feeling that I was never going to be good enough to be a Christian. That's, the depths of my heart felt that. I was never going to be good enough. And that night, the speaker. He basically said, face it, you never will be good enough. That's why you need Jesus. And I broke, because I just I gave my whole life to Christ that day and I never turned back. But that wasn't it for me. So 10 months later, I found myself on a mission trip and I felt like since I was one of the older people, I could kind of get out of giving my testimony.

And we were told that we had to give it and I thought I could get out of it. And one day he came, the leader of the trip, said, It's your turn. I said, I can't do it. I can't. So I spent the whole day praying about it, and God made it completely clear that I had to give it 100 percent. I couldn't use the catchphrase I made mistakes. You know, he-he made it clear I had to give it a 100 percent. So there I stood in front of four hundred Ukrainians and the 20 people that I came on the trip with, and one of them actually was a student at the school. I taught and I was petrified. I had-I

had made my resolution with God, I felt that. But I hadn't told anyone. And I gave it. And I thought once they know they're not going to accept me, that's going to be it. And it was the complete opposite. They poured their love out on me and it was just amazing. But then the final hurdle came. I came home from the trip. I had met Mike a couple of months earlier, but about a month after I came home, we started dating. And I don't recommend, girls, if you ever have to do this, that you do this. But about three weeks into dating, I basically decided I have to tell him everything because I don't want to start liking this guy and months down the road and find out the truth and then just decide he doesn't want to be with me. If he doesn't want to be with me, I don't wanna be with him now.

So I gave him a huge responsibility that night. I told him everything. And in one moment he could have made or broke me, I mean, he really could. And I've heard from so many girls that they tell their boyfriends and the boyfriends reject them, basically saying I deserve to be with a virgin. And he didn't say that. He just simply said, I've made my own mistakes and it's not my place to judge you, and I love you.

[Justina Erre begins crying]

Justina Erre:

But honestly, in that one moment, he healed the last huge tear in my heart. He understood God's love and he showed it to me. So, no, I never thought I'd be a pastor's wife. But I proudly am, and I don't-I don't know that person anymore, God's taking all that away from me. It doesn't define me, and I totally have a new identity in Him. Thank you.

[Audience applauds]

Mike Erre:

Told ya. Told ya. Over my head. The reason we've chosen to be real honest with you guys, besides the fact that it's true about us, uh, is that we want to hold out the possibility that there are many of you who are feeling like you are damaged goods, and the idea of forgiveness is a hard enough one to swallow, but the idea of restoration seems impossible. And we, through our own understanding of the scriptures and through the work of Jesus in us and through us, have tasted the fact that there is hope. And we there's this passage in Joel that's been of particular benefit to us, where God tells Israel He's just going to send a plague of locusts to devour the bounty that He provided. And then as Israel is weeping and wailing and mourning, God is whispering through His prophet, I can restore what the locusts have taken. And there's some of you here who need to be reminded of that this morning, you know, there's nothing exceptional about today except that today can just be a day of new beginnings, of crossing lines in the sand, of just deciding that you are sick of prison and you want freedom.

And what we're going to do is we're just going to ask you to do that tangibly, we, as easy as it is right now, just to spectate and to watch, we want you to become active participants in what God is doing in you. So here's what we're going to do. We've made these little hoopas around the room, handcrafted with you in mind. And if God is calling you to respond in some way, we're just going to invite you. We're just going to take the next however long and just worship together. And we want to invite you as an act of Thanksgiving, or an act of confession, or an act of repentance to come and pray or stand underneath one of these. And I will tell you, I don't know why, but God just seems to be very pleased and very active when His people engage Him in these ways. And so here's the deal. And let's just let's just be honest for a little bit. All the

scripture we've talked about, all the points we've looked at, really all lead to this simple idea. What will you do? None of us are righteous, no, not one of us. None of us can stand before a holy God. We're invited into a certain kind of heart posture before Him that strips away all the rationalizations.

All of the denials, all of the justifications for our sin, and this simply says, yeah. I don't like it, I can't stop it. Yeah, I've made an idol of my desires. Yeah, I'm entitled and ungrateful before You. Whatever it is. And that there is the next step, not only of confession, but of saying I'm going to turn away from that, not because I'm religious, because I go to the school, not out of duty, not out of obligation, not out of emotion, but out of a hunger and thirst for Christ and the kind of life that He offers for you, that He not only forgives you, but He wants to restore what's been taken from you or that you've given away. Men and women, we just invite you under these, no one's watching and no one's judging. No-no rocks here will be thrown. We all just admit from the outset that none of us can stand before God. For some of you who've been deeply, deeply broken, my wife is one of these folks that had to come to grips with the fact she'd been raped. How do you forgive? How do you get past? Some of you have been abused or molested. Some of you had horrible things done to you. Maybe for you standing under the hoopa, it's just saying, God, I need Your grace to forgive, a teacher said forgiveness is setting somebody free and finding out that somebody was you.

Maybe you're here with your boyfriend or your girlfriend, and maybe you fought the battle, maybe standing under the hoopa for you is just thanking God for His mercy and the great gift of sexuality. Maybe you're with your boyfriend or girlfriend and maybe you've blown it huge.

Maybe standing under the hoopa for you is simply saying we will not give in to this any longer. Maybe there are some of you here who are addicted to porn. For struggling masturbation, that just isn't that just isn't a male issue anymore. Maybe there's such shame and such disgust built up in you. Maybe standing under the hoopa is daring to hope that God cannot only set you free, but delight in you. Not only forgive you, but restore you to freedom. Maybe you're here and you're married, and maybe the passion that once characterized your relationship has fizzled a little bit. Kids do that. Mortgages do that. Bills do that. Maybe standing under the hoopa for you is just saying, you know what, I'm not-this is worth fighting for. Maybe you're single and all this talk of sexuality has just increased your loneliness. Maybe standing under the hoopa for you, just crying out to God, God give, Your grace is sufficient. Your grace is enough. I want to focus on the yes's and not the no's.

Maybe you're here and you hate the way that you look. And maybe you spend so much time worrying about how others perceive you physically and you're just tired of that prison. Maybe for you standing under the hoopa is just saying, God, would you remind me that I'm delightful and that I'm beautiful and that I'm lovely regardless of what I look like? Who knows? We've got some folks who are willing to pray for you if you'd like, but if you want to go by yourself, if you want to go with groups, if you want to go as couples, if you want to go back alone, doesn't matter. We're just going to open it up. And we believe that God's just been working. And I know it takes courage to get up in a setting like this and actually do something. That's why we want you to do it. And those steps to wherever you go, there are two back here and three up here, maybe those steps are just past the freedom for you. So do you understand what we're saying, you are forgiven. This isn't about forgiveness. This isn't about impressing God right now. Not at

all. But it's about claiming your inheritance, like Dr. Thomas talked about. How does that work?

Well, right now we just stand as a community of faith and simply say we want God's best.

Lord Jesus, I just, I-I am brokenhearted for the amount of pain that I see in the eyes of Your people and Lord, I know this is a Bible conference and we certainly have studied Your word, but now I pray You turn this into church, and that Your Holy Spirit would do what only Your Holy Spirit can do. And that is something powerful would happen as we stand under this canopy symbolizing Your blessing over us. Lord, they would just be a day for new beginnings and lines in the sand being crossed. And Lord, for those of us that are praying, would You just give us words to pray? Would you receive our prayers? And most of all, Jesus, would You in Your name set captives free here, Jesus, for Your name's sake. We're just going to take time now just to worship. Feel free to stay there. Feel free to receive prayer. Feel free to come up and stand under one of the canopies.

[Worship band sings songs]