

Shechem Is Not Your Home

by Sonda Williams

Sonda Williams' sermon explores Dinah's story as a cautionary tale about straying from God's promises and the importance of maintaining one's identity in Christ.

Duration: 1:01:12

Scripture: Genesis 12:1

Topics: "Shechem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing their excitement about what God wants to speak to the audience. They share their experience of attending women's conferences where they were encouraged to open their hands and hearts to ask God for their deepest desires. The speaker emphasizes that God wants to provide abundantly and not just give us scraps or junk food. They also share a personal testimony of how God blessed them with a job as a flight attendant, despite their fear of flying and living in sin. The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of recognizing that even in seasons of emptiness, God still loves and cares for us as His children.

Transcript

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This recording cannot be posted on any website. However, written permission to link to the Times Square Church homepage may be requested by emailing info at [timessquarechurch.org](mailto:info@timessquarechurch.org). Other recordings are available by calling 1-800-488-0854 or by writing to Times Square Church Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, New York, 10019. It's a great honor for me this morning just to introduce our next speaker who is actually the Director of the Women's Ministry here at Times Square Church.

In the years that we have been here at Times Square Church, I've really grown to love and appreciate this woman of God. I've seen the many trials and difficulties that she's gone through. I've seen the disappointments that she's gone through.

But I've seen her allow God to just increase her faith and just her love for Him through the trials and difficulties that she's gone through. I've also seen a woman who has such a heart for the ladies here. I've seen her just want to minister to every single need, that the different women here, their unique needs.

I've seen her pray and intercede for each one of us here. And I really love and appreciate her. And you can safely open up your hearts this morning to receive the word that she's going to speak because I know it's not just a sermon that she has prepared, but it's something that she has received through prayer and just spending time in the presence of God.

And I know that as you open up your hearts, you're going to be ministered to through the word this morning. So let us welcome Sondra Williams this morning. Good morning, ladies.

God bless you. God is definitely in this place. He is, and we worship Him and we praise Him today.

And I tell you, my spirit is very full. I'm already weeping, and actually I'm very excited about what God wants to speak to us through His word today. But I want to do something first before we start.

Last year I went to a couple of women's conferences, last year, last May and last June. And before each of them, there were two different speakers, but before each of them started the conference, they had asked all the women to do something that I'm going to ask you to do this morning. They asked them to just stand if you want to stand and kneel if you want to kneel, but to open up your hands and your heart and to ask our Father in Heaven for our deepest heart's desire.

Because He's our Father. He's our Abba, and He wants to feed us. He wants to fill us.

He's not going to give us table scraps. He's not going to give us junk food. But He wants to give us the riches of His goodness and of His life.

And I remember at those women's conferences, just standing there, and I opened up my hand, and I asked God for a couple of things, and it was the same thing, actually. It was the deep heart cry. And I just want to take time to do that this morning before we get started, because God is here, and He hears our prayers, and He knows each and every one of our needs.

And we don't have to walk out of this place the same and say, OK, but we went to another women's function. OK, we heard a message, and we worship. We can believe that God's Word is life.

His Word is alive. It's a living Word, and it changes us. It pierces through our heart and marrow, and it changes us as we accept it by faith.

And I wanted to take the time for you to stand and open up your hands and heart and just be silent just for a few minutes and ask the Holy Spirit just to minister to you. And you just ask God during this time and shut everything down and just speak to Him before we get started. Father God, we thank you for your presence this morning.

And God, I thank you for every woman that is sitting here with her heart and her hands open. And God, you hear the desires of her heart. God, you know what it is that she so deeply longs for.

God, I pray, Lord Jesus, that all the lies of the enemy, Lord God, will be demolished, Lord, that they will be able to hear, Jesus, what you have prepared for them to hear. God, I pray, Lord, that you will speak very clearly and that I will hide just behind you, trusting you, Holy Spirit, for each word, for each direction and what you want to say. God, I pray, Lord God, that you will so minister to our hearts, God, and that you will do what only your Spirit can do at this time.

In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen. Hallelujah.

You may have a seat. Have a seat. You know, when the Lord had put on my heart about this women's conference, I was reminded that we needed to have another speaker.

And the way God works, He reminded me and then He told me that He wanted me to be the speaker. And He also told me what He wanted to speak on. And I love that He did that because then I knew that this is what He was calling me to do and that He was going to open up a story of word through His word for us for today.

And I'm drawn to this particular story about this woman, this woman of God, this woman who was born thousands of years ago, but she was born into a very prominent family. She had great promise upon her life, her family. And God had chosen and separated her great-grandfather.

He spoke to him. It's actually found in Genesis 12, to Abraham. And God decided that He wanted to separate a people unto Himself.

And He saw Abraham and He called him out of what was familiar to Him. And He told him, He gave him great promises and said that He was going to bless this man, that He was going to make him a great nation, that all the nations through him would be blessed. And God said that He was going to bless all the nations of the world after him.

And Galatians 3, 6, 9 says that Abraham believed what God had told him. Abraham believed that God was going to do this work in and through him. And the word of God says that for those of us who are in faith and that believe in Jesus Christ, that we are actually the seeds of the children, the spiritual seed of Abraham, that we also, these promises that God's spoken into Abraham are ours also.

And that there's something that God wants to do in a people that He wanted to do through Abraham and his descendants, and us who are the spiritual seed of Abraham through the faith of Jesus Christ. There's a work that He wanted to do in a place that He wanted to take Abraham and his people. And He wanted to give them a land, a land that was filled with milk and honey, a land of blessing.

But the land that God wants to give us, we know through His word, is Jesus Christ. He wants us to know Him and all of our fullness to be in Him. And God not only spoke this to Abraham, He spoke it to His son Isaac.

And He spoke it directly to Jacob as well, to this woman's father, which is Dinah. And the Lord said to Jacob, if you want to turn with me quickly to Genesis 28, God spoke this promise. He wanted to make sure that each of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, knew what He was planning to do.

And when Jacob had a dream, God had opened up heaven to him. We all know the story of Jacob's ladder. And the Lord had said to him, He said, I am the Lord, the God of your father, Abraham, and the God of Jacob.

I'm sorry, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the east and to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this land.

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. And Jacob, he woke up from his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place. And I was not aware of it.

And at that place, Jacob built an altar there, and he made a vow before God, saying, If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey I am taking and give me food to eat and clothes to wear, so I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God. He had a personal encounter with the living God, and God spoke those promises to him. And Jacob told those promises to his children, to his 12 sons, and he had a daughter named Dinah.

And Dinah is a part of this family and a part of this heritage and a part of this people that God said, I'm going to love you, and I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to make myself known to you. I'm going to bless you. And everyone who believes, like Abraham did, that we're going to be the spiritual seed, the descendants of Abraham.

And we're seeing here that Dinah came from a family of much promise. There were a lot of heathen nations around them. But she also came, even though this was a family with much promise.

It also was a family that, as we would say today, is dysfunctional. They had issues in their family. Even though God said to them that I have great promises for you, that I'm going to bless you and your descendants, they didn't believe God and embrace that fully.

The Scripture tells us later on that they had foreign gods in their home and idols that they worshipped. It was almost like they were saying, well, God, we know that these promises that you're speaking to us are true. Jacob heard them.

Jacob told them to his sons and to Dinah. But we're just not so sure that we don't see the fruition of it now. We can't totally grasp it.

So just in case, you know, I want this fertility God over here, just in case that you're truly not going to do all that you're going to do. And there's just some other idols that we see other nations worshipping. And so we're going to keep them in our home.

But they were still people that were called by God. And this is the family that Dinah lived in. And I kind of see this picture also as the modern-day Christian home, as us as believers.

We know who we are in Christ Jesus. We've accepted Christ as our Savior and we've been redeemed and set apart. And God has purpose to bless us through his spirit and through his son, Jesus Christ.

But there's just something in us that we just don't totally believe everything that God has for us. There's a little mixture there. We love God and we can worship, but we need some idols and some gods to worship.

We need our tarot cards and our Ouija boards. And we need to find out what our fortune is for the day. And if we're a little confused, maybe Dr. Phil or Oprah will have an answer for us.

But we love God and we're called of him and we worship him. But there's just a little mixture there. And that's what was going on with Dinah's family.

And in Genesis 33, it says that her father had bought a piece of land outside of a city called Shechem. Outside the city gates. And they were like desert dwellers.

They had sheep and animals and farms. And they were living on the outskirts of this city. And the city was in Canaan.

And the people that lived there, the Hivites, they were pagan people. They had other gods and they did their own thing. And it says in the beginning of Genesis 34, that's where we're going to spend most of our time, that this woman that we're going to spend time talking about, this woman who came from this awesome family that God chose to separate into himself and to bless, that she decided one day that she was going to take a visit to this city.

And we don't know, according to what the word of God said, if this was her first time, her second time. But it said that she was going to go out and she was going to intermingle with a group of people that weren't like her people. They says in Genesis 34, 1, that Nadina, the daughter Leah, had born to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land, the women of Canaan.

These are the same women that Abraham told his servant, I want you to go find a wife for my son Isaac, but don't choose one of the Canaanite women. These are also the same women that Jacob was also told not to choose a wife from amongst the Canaanite women. But Dinah was intrigued that day and she went out there.

And we can tell by Scripture that Scripture is telling us she also went alone. She went without a covering. There was no one with her.

She went on to enemy territory and she didn't even know it. And Scripture tells us that there was someone there, an enemy there, that saw her. He knew who she was.

She didn't look like any of the other Canaanite women. She dressed differently. Maybe she walked differently.

Maybe she didn't understand where everything was in the city. But Scripture says in the next verse that there was a man named Shechem who saw her. And then it says that he took her.

And one translation, it says that he laid with her and then defiled her or violated her. She had went out to see what was going on in the city. And Dinah got herself into a little trouble.

This woman of God stepped into enemy territory. And just like the enemy of every woman of God, he sees that we are God. We may not be perfect.

We may have issues and things that we're trusting God for, but we belong to Jesus. And he says that there's nothing that can separate us from his love. But the enemy sees that, that we have a call.

And he wants to take what belongs to God because he hates the things of God. He hates the work of God. And he wants to defile what God has purposed to bless.

He wants to come in and defile what God wants to do in and through us as women of God. And Scripture says that he went and he took her and he laid with her and he violated her. He took one of her most precious dowries for her marriage, which was her virginity, especially at that time.

He made her feel as if she wasn't anything but just someone that he could consume, but she didn't belong to him. And what's interesting is the word of God has a lot of things to say about this man Shechem and how he felt about what he did. It says after he took her and violated her, his heart was drawn to Dinah, the

daughter of Jacob, and that he loved her and that he spoke tenderly to her.

And in other parts of the Scripture, it talks about just how he was just drawn to, he wanted her as his wife. And I was listening, as I was praying and asking the Lord, I'm like, Father, I'm a little confused about this kind of love this man has for her. You know, I wonder what he was saying to her ear as she laid there and he violated her.

I wonder if he was telling her that, you know, I know that this wasn't right. But you see, I wanted you. And since you already did it and you're defiled and you don't have the thing that's most precious to any man, I'm just going to make it right for you.

And I want you to stay here with me. I want you to be mine because you're no longer any good because you've messed up the call of God upon your life. You were supposed to be a people set apart for him.

But so you can't go back amongst your people because I took what was most precious to you. And I just wonder when the scriptures say that he spoke tenderly to her, what was he saying to her heart? And what was Dinah feeling at that point? Dinah knew that she had went there alone and no one was with her. And maybe at the time, according to scripture, no one knew that she had even went.

Did she feel like, oh, God, here I am and I'm I'm worthless now. I messed up. You know, what about marrying? I'll never marry.

I'll never have a husband. No one will ever want me because now I'm dirty. And because this man, he came in and he ravished me and he defiled me.

Who else is going to want to be married to me? And scripture says that he spoke to her like that. And then he says, you know, I want you to be my wife. But see, there is a problem with this story is that Dinah belonged to God.

Dinah belonged to a people that God had promised that he was going to bless. And this incident that happened and her poor decision to walk into a place and not saying that her being there meant that she deserved to be raped, no more than a woman who wears, you know, when they say her skirts too tight or her tops too low, that that gives a man an excuse to come in and violate her. He hadn't a reason for doing this, but he wanted her to believe that you are with me now and you belong to me and you can't go back to your people.

You've messed up. You failed. And that is just the heart of the enemy.

He is a liar. He is a liar. But she embraced that.

He kept her in her home and he went and told his daddy, Hey, I want you to go back and tell them, get me this damsel for my wife. She's mine. Whatever God had planned for her life, you know what? She shouldn't have came on my territory.

She made a bad decision. Now it's over. We're going to pick up the story.

In verse 5, it says that Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been violated, but he didn't do anything about it. He waited until his sons had came back from the field. They were out on the field.

And it says that Jacob's father, we're going to start in verse 7. Now when Jacob's son had come in from the fields, as soon as they heard what had happened, they were filled with grief and fury because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing that should not have been done. But Hamar said to them, My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife.

Intermarry with us. Give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. You can settle among us.

The land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it. Let me find favor in your eyes, he said to her father, and I will give you whatever you ask.

Make the price for the bride and the gift, and I will bring you as great as you like, and I'll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife. So now we see Hamar coming wanting to make a deal, wanting to make a bargain with these people who already have the blessing of God upon their life.

And on the surface, it looks like in his mind, well, look, let's just work this out. She's here. My son really loves her.

Why don't you just come and live here with us and trade with us and intermarry with us, and we'll just make everything okay. We'll make everything, you know, that looks like it's a disaster. It looks like the call upon your life is a mess.

I know what my son, he didn't even say actually here that his son was wrong, but we're going to make it right. And I have to tell you, that's what the enemy is doing even now, because God wanted to set these people apart. If they had intermarried and intermingled with them, the identity of the Israelites would have been abolished.

It would have been mixed in with these people, and that's not what God had called them to do. He didn't call them to intermarry and to live with these people. And the land that he was saying that they were going to have, God was going to give them eventually anyway.

So it wasn't something that, it wasn't part of God's plan, but this man doesn't have the heart and mind of God. This was the enemy's attempt to want to take away from what God had purpose to do in these children of Israel. And it said, later on in the chapter, that her brother, Simeon of Levi, says, well no, we can't do that, we can't intermarry with you.

And this whole time we're not hearing anything from Jacob's father. And it makes me wonder if Jacob also feels that, oh, we've messed up, we've blown it. We don't see anywhere where Jacob is calling out for God.

We don't see anywhere where he's seeking to find out God's answer in this situation. But it says that her two brothers, Simeon and Levi, came up with a scheme. They came up with a plan to try to redeem their sister and her honor.

And it was a dishonest one. And they told the men in Shechem that they couldn't intermarry with them because they weren't like them. They said that they couldn't intermarry with them because the men of the city were not circumcised.

And so they came up with this plan where they said that all the men had to be circumcised. And the plan was that after all the men were circumcised, which they did agree to do, they were very excited to do this, they wanted to be a part of God's people. They were not the called people and the people separated, but once again, the enemy has an agenda.

But they wanted to be part of this people, and so they thought that was a good idea. They trusted, it says later in Scripture, that actually Shechem was one of the most honorable men in Shechem, the one who had raped Dinah. And so they decided to go ahead and be circumcised.

And it says after a few days later, they went back. I want to say this first. The Lord had just put on my heart in thinking about Simeon and Levi.

And seeing how this whole situation, as I was reading it, is like a group of Christians or us as Christians that don't know when we have mixture and we truly haven't embraced and grabbed on to the things of God. This is what we do in our flesh when we don't know how to pray. There's no one praying here.

There's no one seeking God. This is a tragedy that has happened. And Simeon and Levi only know what to do with men in the flesh only know what to do.

They know how to operate and work in the flesh. And the Word of God tells us that the works of the flesh cannot bring any glory or righteousness to God. Our flesh can't do that.

But they don't know that because even though they've been called, there's also been mixture. And now they feel like we have to work it out in our flesh and solve this problem. So they come up with this scheme.

They're trying to trick the enemy, not knowing that their enemy really wasn't flesh and blood, but it was the work of Satan himself trying to take away what God wanted to do. And it says in verse 25, three days later, after all the men were circumcised, when they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every man. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left.

So now we have this young girl, Dinah, who from the time she was raped and violated by this man, she's been in his house, and he's been speaking kind words to her heart about her situation. And now her brothers have gone in and they've massacred a whole city. They've killed every male and they took all the women in the cattle, and she's witnessed all of this.

And it says that their brothers took her out of Shechem's home and brought her back home, brought her back to her people, brought her back to the people that are called and set apart for God. But the only thing is, is that Dinah at this point in the story isn't the same woman. She may not be in Shechem's house or in his home, but Shechem is still with her.

Because that place in Shechem was more than just a physical place. It was a spiritual place. It was a place where the enemy comes in and he ravishes and he defiles and then he confuses our minds.

But we don't understand that when God has purpose to bless our lives, there is absolutely nothing. No weapon can come against us and take that away and prosper in our lives. But see, Dinah doesn't know that.

Her daddy doesn't know that. He's not praying. Her brothers don't know that.

But she was physically removed out of the situation, but spiritually she was still there living in Shechem. And I believe at this point, because also it says that they took the women and the children back with them to their land, that now everyone knows what happened to her. Everyone knows her story.

And so she's back there and she's living with her people, but she's not whole. And it's very much like us as Christians when we've gone through something and we've made some decisions and there's been a wounding. And we know that God forgives us because his word tells us that.

And we know that he can restore us and we come back to church, but there's still Shechem in us. You know, we're here and we're playing the religious game and we're clapping our hands and we're back in the right place where we should be, but we've been ravished. There's still some Shechem in us that's speaking to us, that's speaking kind words to us, that's saying that, you know, it's okay about that abortion you had.

No one has to know. And besides, it was just a little piece of tissue. We can make it okay.

You know, it's okay that, yeah, maybe you didn't wait until you were married, but then that's okay. That's okay. You know, everyone is doing it and, you know, you don't need to worry about that.

And the enemy comes in and he speaks kindly and tries to keep us in a place where God isn't. And God isn't in Shechem because in Shechem we don't hear the promises of God. We don't hear that those things can be redeemed.

We don't hear that those things can be restored when we're in that place. But that is where Dinah is right now with her family. And she probably feels that she has ruined the whole plan of God upon her people.

And maybe even her father, too, at this point, he hasn't said anything. And it says in verse 27, I'm sorry, after they carried off their wealth and all the women and children, taking a splendor, everything in the house, it says then that the father has something to say at that point. He says, You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and the Presorites, the people living in this land.

We are few in number, and they join forces against me and attack me. I and my household will be destroyed. At this point, Jacob believes that it's all over, too.

And I have to tell you, this is such a lie of the enemy. And this particular story ministered so much to me as I was praying and preparing for this particular message because I've lived a lot of places in my life, and I'm a former resident of Shechem. I've lived there.

And the Lord has also revealed to me that there's a lot of you as well who have lived there and is still living there. My family background is a little different than Dinah's. I did come to know the Lord at a very young age.

My parents weren't saved when I was growing up. I didn't grow in a Christian home, but my mother made sure that we went to Sunday school. And I didn't learn about Jesus in Sunday school, but I learned about him in this Bible club that I went to.

And I loved him. I tell you, when I got saved, he was just fun. I was 8, 9 years old, and I would have Bible studies in my basement and invite the kids, and I would have to give them cookies in order for them to come.

But I just loved having them come. And I remember at that time just being very confused, though, because I wasn't disciplined. I wasn't living in a home where people knew God and worshiped God.

And I wasn't properly disciplined, and I couldn't understand if I was saved, why I kept sinning. But I loved him, and I read my Bible, and I went to church. My mom didn't have to make me go to this Bible club anymore.

I looked forward to going. But as I got older, the things of God, even though I knew I was saved, and everything that the Word of God said, that he would come and live in me and give me life, and things would be different, and he would be joy and peace to me, that wasn't my reality. I didn't know God that way.

And everyone around me, all of the kids at school that got to party late and got to have boyfriends and got to do things that I couldn't do, looked very attractive to me. But, you know, I was a good girl. My family had to be a good girl.

My parents were very, very strict. And I conformed to that until I got to a certain age where they didn't have that kind of control over me. And I looked at the daughters of Canaan.

I looked at the daughters of this world, and I liked how they dressed. I liked the music that they listened to. I liked the things that they got to do, but I still went to church on Sunday.

Do you understand? You know, I could do all the things that they did, but I still had a sense of being religious and being a Christian. But God wasn't my all-in-all. I had my idols.

I had the things that I bowed down to, to fill in the gaps that I wouldn't let God fill, because I didn't think he could. I didn't believe that he could, even though his word promises that. And I remember I got to Shechem, and I made a lot of mistakes.

And when I got there, my first big mistake, it was like, well, you blew it. It really wasn't that bad. Everyone else is doing it.

And I stayed there. And he spoke very kindly to my heart. And it's like, well, it's really not that bad.

And, you know, you can do this and still go to church. No one will know. And not only that, but, you know, it feels good.

It looks good. And I went to places with believing that it was okay, for a season anyway. And I remember I was so miserable, and I was so empty.

And even in that time and that season, when I look back, I see that God still loved me, because I was his. I was his child. I might have been a prodigal, but I belonged to him.

And I remember he blessed me with a job that totally changed my life. I know I've shared this with you before. I became a flight attendant in 89.

And I hated to fly, scared to death of flying. I knew that my life was in a pit, that I was living in sin. And I remember for three years, before the plane took off, I would pray and confess every sin.

In case it crashed, I just knew that I was going to go to hell. And I would just, you know, and I'd pray every single time. And I lived in fear, in utter fear.

And I believe that God put me there to say, wake up, Sanda. Wake up, Paul. You know, because I was so fearful for three years of flying, and just the fear of death, and knowing that, you know, I could end up in hell.

And yet, that wasn't enough to change my heart, because, see, I had blown it. I had made some decisions. And, yeah, I knew the things of God, but I really didn't believe that I could ever go back there.

So I stayed where I was, and I got very comfortable. And I went through a season in my life. My mother, who had found the Lord, and was loving him and serving him.

And I was living in San Francisco, and I was going through a season where God was really calling me out. And I did not think I could leave this place that I was in. I was in a relationship that was very ungodly, living a lifestyle that was very glamorous.

And I liked it, but I was miserable. And I remember calling my mother for six months straight, like, Mommy, please, I can't get out of this. And she would just pray for me and encourage me, and it took six months.

But the Lord delivered me out of that situation. And he started showing me his love, and he started showing me his redeeming power. But I tell you something, I stopped doing all of the other things that I did, and I stopped living in a place of sin and compromise.

But there was still Shechem in my heart. And so then God decides that he's going to give me a husband later on in my life. And God gave me a very godly husband that didn't have the same kind of past that I had.

And so I'm coming to Times Square Church, and I've got my little mask on because I'm amongst the people. But I'm not filling it, but I'm going to play the part. And I'm dating this guy.

I remember the first time he asked me about having a prayer language, and I got angry with him. Because not only did I not have one, I just didn't believe that God would give me one. And I remember early on when the roads first came to Times Square Church, I had singled her out to pull her aside because, see, she didn't know me.

I'm not even sure if they were hired then full-time at the time. But I knew I couldn't go to Teresa or any of the elders' wives because I didn't want them to know that I didn't have a prayer language. And she sat and she talked to me and counseled me, and she says, Well, do you want me to pray for you now that you'll receive the gift of tongues? And I said no, because I didn't believe that even if she did, that God would bless me.

Because I had made so many mistakes. There was just a mentality that I had now that the enemy had just embedded that I would never be restored, that I would never be whole. And I have to tell you that that is the lie of the enemy.

And it has kept me for many years in a place of just utter bondage. And that's where the enemy wants us to be. He wants us to forget that God has called us, that we are saved and rooted in Jesus Christ, and there is absolutely nothing that can separate that call of God upon our lives.

Every single one of us has a purpose in God. Dinah didn't blow it. She didn't blow it.

She made mistakes like so many of us have, walked in places that she shouldn't have. But God had a purpose for her. And God has a purpose for you.

And God had a purpose for me. But I tell you, it has been a journey. It didn't stop with there.

And God used so many, even ministry, to deal with it, to show me that I had a place that I needed to come out of. And I didn't even realize that I lived there. I didn't understand why I was so fearful to do what I'm doing today.

And I sit up here today, and part of the fear was just being so transparent before you. But I didn't understand. It's because I felt so unworthy for so many times.

And not that there's anything in myself, but it's just that it's just Christ. He's restored, and it's because of him and his call upon my life and a call upon your life that you're able to do what he's asked you to do. But I want to go back to the story of Jacob, because I believe that that's where Dinah was.

She was amongst her people, and she's playing the game. But this woman wasn't whole. She needed to be ministered to.

She needed to be healed. But no one was seeking God at this time. No one, not even her daddy.

You know, not even Jacob. He's just scared now that all the nations are going to consume them. He just didn't believe or remember what God had told him in Genesis 28, when he said that I am going to be with you, and I'm going to bless you and your descendants.

I'm going to give you this land, Jacob. But he didn't believe that at that time. But what I love about this whole thing is that God is the one who speaks.

God is the one who just steps right in and says, look, I have the answer, and I'm going to tell you exactly what I want you to do. And in Genesis 35, it says, So Jacob said to his whole household and to all who were with him, get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes. It's almost like he finally got it.

It's like he finally realized that, wait a minute, God is reminding me what he said to me in Bethel, and I'm going to believe him this time. I want you to put away all of those other things that you have embraced because we said our God wasn't enough. All these other heathen gods that we looked and felt that we needed to fill us because the things of God wasn't enough.

I want you to pull them away and sanctify yourself. And then I want us to go up to Bethel where I'll build an altar to God who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone. So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears and Jacob buried them under the yoke at Shechem.

Then they set out and the terror of God fell upon all the towns all around them so that no one pursued them. God had a purpose to save these people and to redeem them. And when God told them exactly what to do, you go back to Bethel.

And Bethel means house of God. Bethel is a place where God dwells. And scripture tells us that God doesn't dwell anymore in buildings and tents.

That all of us who are in Christ Jesus are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Every single one of us and he dwells in us. And he is asking every single woman that I found her place, found herself in a place in Shechem where the enemy has lied and said that you know what? You've messed up the plan of God upon your life.

Yes, you're saved. But you know what? The anointing of God will never be upon your life. The word of God will never be open to you.

You will never know God in his fullness. God is saying, Jesus said, my father and I will come and we will abide in you if you will believe me. He promises to come and make us abode in us and to give us life and to give us power and to give us peace.

He promises to do that and he tells him to go to Bethel. And all of the people did that and it says in verse 7 that he built an altar and he called the place El Bethel because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. And when I was thinking this, I asked my husband, what does El Bethel mean? And I know that El means God and Bethel means house and El means God.

And as I was just sitting there thinking about it, God just gave me this visual picture of a stick figure and God before and God after and God inside. And that's what God is to us now. He's inside of us.

He's before us. He's behind us. He's beside us.

He's all around us. You know, he's a God that just surrounds us and he takes every part of us if we trust him and give it to him because he's dwelling with us. And I tell you, so many of us, so many women here today have been lied to the enemy and we aren't able to believe the promises of God upon our life because we made some decisions that we feel guilty about even today.

And the Lord wants to say no more. I have a plan and I have a purpose for your life. There might have been mistakes in the past, but it did not take away the call of God upon your life if you are in Christ Jesus.

He says if we sin, we confess our sins and he cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And we don't have to live with this cloak of guilt, but we wear a robe of righteousness, a white robe of righteousness that Christ clothes us with. And if any of you here today have found yourself living in a place where we hear so much about, I love last week's message Pastor Carter spoke about loving others and loving yourself, where you don't even love yourself because you know where you've been.

God promises that he will give us a new mind and a new understanding about who we are in Christ Jesus. And we don't have to walk in fear of what man is going to think. We don't have to walk in fear and wear masks because we have to be religious and look holy amongst the people that we're called to fellowship with, that we can be empowered to go into the neighborhoods and communities that we're called to be a light and salt to.

And that is what God has promised us. You know, the Bible doesn't say a whole lot about Dinah. She doesn't say anything in this passage.

All we know is what she did. It doesn't tell us what she felt. But God does tell us that when the children of Israel went into Egypt, Dinah was with them.

Dinah saw the blessings of God upon her generation, her descendants during that time. She wasn't left in Shechem because she didn't believe there. She went with her people.

And I believe today that for those who might have come here believing that there's just been some decisions and places I've gone, that God wants us to bring them to him, to this altar. What has the enemy been speaking to your heart, kindly to your heart today? God wants you to know that it's alive in the pits of hell. And for any of you who have felt like there is no hope and that you could never have any redeeming value and that this motto in your mind and your understanding is going to keep you from God, God wants us to lay it here at this altar today.

And I would like to pray with you for any of, if there are any other fellow residents in Shechem. I can tell you the rest of my story, my testimony and why Dinah has, her life speaks to me as tragic as it is, is that I've been here since 97 and like I said, the Lord had given me a husband and he gave me a husband that he was called to be in leadership here at the church. And I remember when he came home and asked me, when the pastors asked, do you think God is calling me to be an elder at this church? I said, sure.

But in my heart I thought, well, but look who you're married to. I don't know, maybe that will disqualify you. When I was asked to be part of women's ministry, I had offered actually to do the cookies and coffee.

I still don't know how I ended up here. I only offered to do coffee and cookies because that's all that I was willing to do. But even that offer was part of my good faith elder's wife thing.

I'm an elder's wife now and the pastor's wife needs help, so let me do cookies and coffee and here I am. And God has used this ministry to bring me to a place where I can see where I've been. And now I understand why I've been gripped by so much defeat and been so powerless in my thought life and so powerless in the ability to be able to love, even you, even the women here in this church.

The Lord wants us to know that the enemy is out to take everything that he wants to give us. And I'm not giving him any more than what I have. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. And you don't have to either. You don't have to live with that fear.

You can know when someone has asked you, well, what is God doing in your life? You can have an answer. I remember that happened to me one morning when Sunday I came to church and Elder Donovan dropped me off and I ran into the pastor's room and Pastor Carter was working on his message. And he looked up and he didn't say, good morning, Sanda.

He said, Sanda, what is God speaking to your heart? And, oh, my goodness. I'm thinking, well, first of all, God doesn't speak to me. I haven't had devotions today or yesterday.

And I remember just all the thoughts coming at the time. And I was just scrambling like, you know, because he's a very sharp, very sharp man. And I was trying to think of something holy and religious to say because God didn't speak to me.

At least I didn't believe that he did then. And I think, I don't know. I know I said something.

And I don't know what it was. But it wasn't truthful. It wasn't.

Because that's what happens. We start living a lie. And I really am so glad to be able to share this message as unpolished as it is.

But it's from my heart. And it was very hard to deliver because I didn't realize until last night how personal it was going to be. I didn't know that I was a former resident of Shechem.

I thought this was for someone out of you out there. And now I know. I would like you to stand with me, please.

This was a little difficult for me to share today. And I believe that God wanted me to share it because there are so many of you who are there that can't hear messages like we heard last week. That's struggling.

There's mixture. You know, just admit it. You love Oprah.

You know, you love Dr. Phil. And I'm going to say there's nothing. I'm not duly to say anything about the programming.

But there's just something there where God just isn't enough. So you need to hear the voices of the world to make life make sense. You have to pursue the things of the world to help God's call upon your life.

And I've been there. And I think God wanted me to share that with you today because, you know, sometimes things like this start from the top and go down. And as a women's ministry director, if I'm willing to take my mask off and to tell you that I lived in Shechem and it cost me a lot and it robbed me of a lot.

But our God, who is a restorer of all things. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Our God, who is a restorer of all things, has said, but there is a purpose upon your life. You lay it down and you leave it at Shechem and you come to me and I will give you life. I will give you a new mind and I will give you power that you've never known.

And I will love you and I will teach you how to love. And I will be powerful in your life. And you will make a difference in your generation.

And it may not be standing and speaking in front of a lot of ladies. And it may not be anything that other people see, but just the peace of God where you just see him just speaking to you in his word. And you know that he loves you.

And it gives you a burden for other people who are lost. God wants to do this work in our hearts so we can be pure and be used by him. And I know it's a hard thing, but this is between you and the Holy Spirit.

And I'd like to pray with you at this altar. And we're going to leave believing God that we don't need to have mixture. We don't need any idols.

We are called by God. He has great promises upon our life. He's going to do awesome things.

And he's going to see us through to the end. And we can leave the lives of Shechem, the kind words that he speaks to us. We can leave them where they belong, in the pits of hell.

Hallelujah, Lord God. We praise you, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah to our delivering God.

Hallelujah to our God that is powerful. Hallelujah to our God that has a purpose upon his people. Oh, God, we praise you, Lord God.

We praise you, Lord Jesus. Oh, God, we just lift our voices up to you, Lord God. And we just pray, Father God, we pray for these women that have come, Lord, to this altar.

That have come, Lord Jesus, with baggage, with memories, with situations, God, that have brought them to a place of unbelief. That, God, have brought them to a place of defeat, God. That brought them to a place, Lord, where they weren't able to hear you, Lord, because the enemy had a foothold and a stronghold upon their life.

But, God, today, in Jesus' name, we say no more, Lord God. We are no more residents of Shechem, Lord God. Father, we just declare freedom in Jesus' name, God, over the lives of these women.

And, God, we say that the enemy can't have them, God, because you have purpose and you have promised, Lord God, that you are going to see us through. That you are going to keep us. That you are going to clean us and restore us, Lord God, and fill us with your spirit.

So, God, by faith, Lord, we believe that you are taking every little bit of filth from the enemy, every lie that he's spoken to our hearts, every lie and every word of confusion, Jesus, that has come in. And, God, we believe that you are breaking it right now in Jesus' name. That, God, we don't have to go back to our homes wondering if you love us, wondering if you're going to talk to us, wondering if you're going to fill us, God, but we can believe that you are our God and that you love us and you dwell on us, Lord God.

And, Father, I just pray, Lord, that the enemy will loosen his stronghold, God, among the hearts and lives of these people. Oh, God, the enemy doesn't even want just them but their families, Lord God. But we're saying not in Jesus' name, God.

We're believing you to do this, Lord. We belong to you, Father, and you in us are going to see us to the end. Jesus, we thank you and we praise you, Lord.

We praise you, Jesus. Hallelujah. You praise him today.

Hallelujah. We glorify you, God. When you go back home and the enemy wants to remind you, and you're sitting there and you're looking at maybe the child, the gift that God gave you but it was done in a relationship that wasn't pleasing to him, you call the devil a liar.

The child is a gift and it hasn't taken anything away from you. When the enemy wants you to believe that you're not who God has called you to be, you call him a liar. You are a child of God.

You have been bought. You have been redeemed. And the Lord cannot take away what he has done in your life.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. The Lord God loves you.

He loves you and he's merciful. He is a merciful God. You haven't messed up the call of God upon your life.

You haven't. And, dear sister, you go believing God that he's going to do this in you, and when the memories come in Jesus' name, you cast them down. They're not coming from God.

You go in the love of God. And I tell you for your sisters that maybe you just haven't been there. Praise God.

And we need you and we love you. I have a dear friend that I love dearly. Her testimony is not my testimony, and she heard about a little bit of it when we were in Zambia together.

We went to this church and I spoke. And I remember thinking, this friend of mine doesn't know me. She's never been there.

But you know what? We need people like her because she loves me. I know that I can tell her anything and she doesn't judge me. She encourages me.

She reminds me that I'm a child of God and that I'm her sister. And we need to not condemn one another. When we see each other messed up, don't judge one another.

But encourage that sister. We need one another in the body of Christ. And when we come to church and the skirt's too short and the top's too low, I've done it.

Come on, we've all done it. You know, you wear something at home and you get here and the Holy Spirit gives you Holy Spirit eyes and you realize that, okay, well, maybe let's not judge each other. Let's love one another and encourage one another here in the body of Christ.

Hallelujah. We need one another as a body. And I just know that he's going to do this.

He's going to do this. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Jesus. God bless you. We bless you.

We bless you. Glory, glory, glory. My sisters, God rolls back the shame of Shechem.

We don't live in shame. He takes it away. He nailed it to his cross.

He says he brings light where there was darkness and shame. And he sets us free. And then we have this anointing oil because we're honest with people and say, this is what I was, but that's not who I am.

You see, the power of God is in me. God has changed me. And you can make a mighty declaration, he is all around me.

And we have to let Shechem fall off our mind and not oppress us. We can live in Shechem and the reason why Shechem happened, because there was idols in the household. And if we say, God, cleanse my house, this house first, of all those idols, oh God, and judge it, Lord.

And I'm willing to give you everything, the obsessions that I have, the dream world, the fantasies, where I go in my mind, where I find comfort outside of you, Jesus. Lord, I'm going to believe you to make me a holy woman, a different woman, a woman that's not bitter, a woman that's not oppressed in her mind, a woman who is lazy, who knows better, but won't get up and do the things you're asking us to do. Shechem is many things, but in our God, he's before us and he's behind us.

And we're hearing from our sister that he loves us. And he says, that's not you because the call on your life is still there. You get up and you move to me because I cleanse you and I love you.

And sisters, step out boldly and don't let the shame of Shechem push you back and have stupid relationships. Step out into the freedom we have in Christ. I have to tell you that when God said to me when I was praying with Lord, who is to lead women's ministry in this church? This was when this lady still lived in Shechem.

I didn't know it, you didn't know it, but God knew it. And he said, because you see, I'm taking her out and I'm going to so transform her. And that is going to be the testimony to women of this church.

It's going to be, God will use you if you'll be honest. And God said, I'm going to take a woman who used to live in Shechem to lead the army. And because she's going to declare what I do in a life, she's going to lead.

And beloved, God's calling you to lead. Don't back up. God is calling you to lead in this place.

There are some of you, there's a call of God on your life. There's some of you, you're called to be Esther, and you can't believe it because you look in the mirror. And you don't believe it because you know who you are.

But God is saying, you see, I have called you. It doesn't change where you have been. You see, if you just open your spirit and ask me to come in, I will be God to you and I will recreate my life in you.

Believe me. And I will take you out of Shechem. And thank God that we who have been to Shechem, we can say it honestly and say, but that's not my story.

There's a new story written. There's a new me here. I don't live there anymore.

And there's power in our testimony reached to the women who live there. And I'll tell you something, there's freedom and we never go back. We never go back.

But we sure take a lot of people out. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

One more thing. You've received very costly ministry today. When you prayed, you received something very costly.

You didn't get a sermon. You didn't get just this prepared little message to make you laugh and make you like her. You didn't get something that tickled your ears.

You got Jesus. You got the real story. You got the life-changing ministry.

That's how loved you are. That's how powerful when we move in the spirit ministry is. And Sonda, thank you so much.

You have done an eternal work here today. Please continue to pray for women's ministry and for Sonda. I'm going to get real honest here.

If you've had a grievance in your heart against women, if you've had a grievance in your heart against women's ministry or against Sonda, you've got to make it right. We've got to be women of unity and solidarity. We need to embrace.

We need to get behind. There's a power. There's an army here.

And for most of the time, the church, half of the army has been out of commission. The women of the church, in the sense of standing in their place and being mighty women of God. A mighty woman of God is a woman who believes God, looks away from the mirror and believes Him.

And we have a captain here. You love her. You pray for her, support her.

God's going to do a mighty thing. This is just the beginning of something awesome. This is the conclusion of the message.

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