



The Danger of Hidden Sin

The Story of Scripture – Part 11

We have just prayed for God to move in power in our midst on Easter Sunday and to bring many people to eternal life. I think about asking God to use us to multiply churches here and around the world, for God to use us to impact this city and nations for the glory of His name. Don't you want to be part of something great for the glory of God in the time you have on this earth? Not just as a church, but in your life and in your family. Don't you want to experience the blessing of God? Don't you want to see the power of God's presence and blessing in your life, in your relationships, in your family, in your marriage or children or grandchildren, if that applies to you?

I think God's blessing is something we all want and I hope we're seeing in our Bible reading that this is something God wants. God says over and over again to His people in the book of Deuteronomy, "I want to bless you. I want to bless you so much. I want to bless your family, your community, your land, the fruit of your land, your lives, in ways far beyond what you even thought of."

God wants to bless you, right where you're sitting. God wants you to live on a plain that is higher than you have imagined, a supernatural plain with supernatural joy, supernatural peace and supernatural hope—a supernatural life. He also wants you to live in a supernatural community, a supernatural church with supernatural power for God's purpose in the world. God wants this for us and He's making that clear through His Word.

Yet today I want us to consider what may be the biggest hindrance to you experiencing this kind of life, this kind of family. It may be the biggest hindrance to us experiencing together this kind of church. As I was praying about what text to camp out in today from our Bible reading, my mind and heart went to one passage in our reading this coming week—Joshua 7—where I believe God will show us what He wants us to see. This is what we must see in God's Word this week.

If we want to experience the fullness of God's power, presence and blessing, we must be seriously honest about hidden sin.

Another way to state this point is hidden sin may be the biggest hindrance to God's blessing in your life and God's blessing in this church. Hidden sin may keep what we just prayed for from actually

happening. Hidden sin may keep what we all want in our lives from happening. I'm going to show you this in Joshua 7.

In the first six chapters of Joshua, everything is going great. You've read some of this if you've been following along with the Bible Reading Plan. If not, this Bible book opens with the people of God on the brink of the Promised Land. Joshua has been installed as Moses' successor. God gives powerful promises to Joshua in chapter one. By chapter three, the people of God have miraculously crossed the Jordan River. In chapter six they experience their first triumph in the battle of Jericho. And if you look at the very last verse of Joshua 6, the Bible says, *"The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land."* Yet when you get to the first verse of chapter seven, what's the first word? "But." That's where I want us to pick up. We're going to read the whole chapter, so follow along closely.

^{7:1} But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.

² Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few." ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"

The Sin of Achan

¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel.'"

¹⁶ So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³ And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. ²⁴ And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

What a heavy story. What just happened? Go back to Joshua 6:18-19 and see what God had told the Israelites to do when they went into Jericho:

But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.

This picture of the "devoted things" is used 27 times in the book of Joshua. It's a reference to silver, gold, bronze, iron in the Promised Land that the people there had devoted to the worship of idols and false gods. God said, "These things are to be devoted to My worship, not the worship of idols. So don't keep them for yourselves or you will bring about your own destruction." God was extremely serious about His people displaying His glory as they went into a land full of false gods.

When we get to Joshua 6:24, we think the people have done exactly what God said. "*They burned the city with fire, and everything in it. Only the silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.*" But then we get to Joshua 7:1 and find out that one man named Achan had kept some of the devoted things. One man had hidden sin. One man. It's described in Joshua 7:20-21. He saw the beauty of a robe and money, and he wanted it. He coveted it. He desired it. He acted on it and he was hiding these things in his tent.

This is the pattern we see throughout the story of Scripture. It's the very first sin we saw in Genesis 3. Eve saw the fruit, she desired it, she acted. It's the sin we'll read about later regarding King David. He saw Bathsheba, another man's wife, he desired her and he took her to be with him. It's the pattern of sin that continues in every single one of our lives today. We see, we want, we act. We all do it. Right? And we do it often, without anyone noticing. No harm done, right?

Yet look at how God describes what happened in Joshua 7:11: *"Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings."* In original language in the Old Testament, this is like a slow build-up to a climax. It describes the multi-faceted levels of sin against God. It starts with a general description of sin: they have sinned. Then it describes how they have transgressed God's covenant. The term that's used there is the same term that's used in other places in the Bible to describe adultery. They have broken their marriage covenant with God. They have taken the devoted things, they have stolen, they have lied, then they have tried to cover it up.

There's a word in the Old Testament, also, that's actually not translated right here in this verse. What it literally says is, "They sinned. They have also transgressed My covenant. They have also taken some of the devoted things. They have also stolen. They have also lied. They have also put them among their own belongings."

All Achan did was take a robe and a little bit of silver and gold, then God said, "You have violated My covenant through spiritual adultery. You have stolen, lied and tried to cover it up." In this story, we must see the seriousness of hidden sin before God. I want to be clear. When I use this term "hidden," I'm referring to sin that we have not confessed, sin that we are trying to cover up, to pretend is not there, that we've not confessed before God or others. It's sin we try to ignore.

We're not talking here about sin that you've confessed before God and before others; sin that you're sorry for and you're working, by God's grace, to turn from. No, we're talking here about sin that no one else knows about, sin that you have not been honest with God about, sin that right now you are not being honest with God or others about. This is particularly dangerous, because we can so easily convince ourselves that sin like this is not a big deal—when it is.

Hidden sin harms us AND the people around us.

I have prayed that today, in the next few minutes, God would uncover sin in our hearts and lives that is hidden, that we have tried to hide, so that we might avoid the effects on us. God is saying in His Word very clearly today in this church, "The effects of hidden sin are serious." Hear what God is saying in His Word today: hidden sin harms us and the people around us. Hidden sin harms us and that reality couldn't be any clearer here as Achan loses his life at the end of Joshua 7 because of hidden sin. Do not

be deceived into thinking that your hidden sin is not harming and will not harm you. That is a lie. Don't believe it.

Hidden sin harms us and the people around us. This is where I want to camp out a bit, so we can soak this in. Think about this story. How many people took devoted things? One. One man. As the result of one man's sin, the entire Israelite army was routed at Ai and 36 men lost their lives. Not one man had died in the battle of Jericho, that massive city. But 36 men died at Ai, this small city.

As you're reading this story, if you didn't know exactly what had happened, you would think this is not a story about one person's sin. If you look in Joshua 7:1, where we started, it says, "*The people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things.*" At the end of that verse it says, "*The anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel*"—not just Achan. Let's skip over to verse 11. When that verse describes their sin, what does it say? "*Israel has sinned.*" And look how many times it mentions "they." "*They have...they have...they have stolen and lied....Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turned back... I will be with you no more,*" and the "you" there is plural.

So is this a story about one person's sin or the people's sin? The answer is: both. You can't divide the two. Your sin, my sin, always affects other people. This is the story we also see throughout Scripture. In 2 Samuel 21, as the result of one sin in Saul's life, the people of God experience a famine for three years. One sin—three years of famine for everybody. In 2 Samuel 24, one sin in David's life leads to the death of thousands of people.

Here in Joshua 7, 36 people die, God's judgment comes upon the entire nation because of one man's sin. Are you seeing this? Hidden sin in Achan's life affected people he didn't even know, as well as people he knew closely. Did you notice that the three times Achan is described—at the beginning of chapter seven when he's confronted in sin and then when he dies—all three times it lists his family, his relatives. Achan is tied to his family throughout this passage. When you get to the end of the passage, it's not just Achan who loses his life, it's his entire family. Achan's sin affected his whole family.

I think about my family sitting over here. I love my wife so much. I love my kids so much—four of them, and Lord willing, a fifth on the way through adoption. My favorite place to be is wherever my family is, whether it's date night with Heather, playing outside with my kids, pizza nights at home. I love my family so much. I long for them to experience God's goodness and blessing in each one of their lives. When I look in their faces, I long for them to experience God's goodness and blessing.

So the thought that my sin has a direct affect on their lives is overwhelming. I only want to pass on good to them. I don't want to pass on anything sinful to them. I don't want to sin and pull my wife or my kids into the effects of sin with me. I don't want them to suffer because of my sin, yet they will suffer if I hide sin.

This is undeniable in Scripture. Men, husbands, fathers—and even if you're not a husband or father—men, it is a lie that your sin only affects you. Your sin affects the people around you. The hidden

sins of men are affecting marriages and families and an entire generation in our nation. And not just men, women and children and singles, spouses, parents—that hidden sin that no one else knows about is not as hidden as you think. It affects people you don't even know. It affects the people who are closest to you. Don't think you can hide it under the ground in your tent. Its influence pervades your entire tent—and far beyond your tent.

We desperately need God to deliver us from the mindset that our sin only affects us. It's not true. Men, what sin is hidden in your life? Uncover it, if not for your sake, for the sake of those around you, those closest to you. Women, what sin is hidden in your life? Uncover it, for your sake and for others' sake. Just think—what if your sin that you are hiding and holding on to right now is not just keeping you from experiencing God's blessing, but it's keeping others around you from experiencing God's blessing? That's the picture we're seeing here which leads to the second reality.

Hidden sin forfeits the blessing of God's presence.

Hidden sin harms us and the people around us, and it also forfeits the blessing of God's presence. This is the contrast between everything in the book of Joshua up to this point and Joshua 7. The theme of Joshua's life and leadership was the presence of God with him. Just listen to these verses.

- Deuteronomy 31:23, when Moses was passing on leadership to Joshua, *“And the Lord commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.’”*
- Joshua 1:5, at the very beginning of this book, *“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.”*
- Joshua 1:9, our memory verse from this week, *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”* He said, “I'm with you.”
- Joshua 1:17, *“Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses!”*
- Joshua 3:7, *“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.’”*
- Joshua 6:27, *“The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.”*
- But then we get to Joshua 7:12 and God says, *“I will be with you no more.”* Why not? Because of hidden sin. Because of hidden sin, they would miss the blessing of God's presence.

Now, I phrased that intentionally, because the Bible teaches very clearly that God is omnipresent. He is present everywhere, but there's a difference in what this looks like when God is present to judge and when God is present to bless. There is a sense in which God is very present here in Joshua 7, but He's present to judge. He's showing judgment upon sin. He is saying, “You will not experience the

blessing of My presence while you are hiding sin in your midst.” This is evident in the very beginning of this chapter. Notice before Joshua sends his army out to Ai, he doesn’t even pray. He doesn’t consult God. Instead, he assumes the presence of God. But the blessing of God’s presence is not with them and they are struck down.

It wasn’t because the army at Ai was so great. The Israelites end up conquering Ai easily in Joshua 8. The difference between Joshua 7 and 8 is the blessing of God’s presence. The people of God were learning that they were destined to live defeated lives if they tried to live apart from the blessing of God’s presence.

This is the picture we must see today. In our church, we’re asking God to bring many people to new life in Christ, to cause many churches to be planted around Washington and the world for the glory of Christ. We want to be a part of something great for the glory of God. I’m not claiming a direct parallel between our church today and Joshua 7, but I can’t help but think that God will not go with us, God will not bless us, God will withhold His blessing among us as long as we are hiding sin in the tent.

We can try all day long to do this or that in our lives, in our families, as a church, but God will be saying, “Look in your tent. Stop playing games with Me. Get up and get rid of the sin in your tent.” See it in Joshua 7? It is entirely possible for a group of people to miss out on the blessing of God because of hidden sin in one person. I say to you and to myself today, hidden sin in one of our lives can rob the blessing of God from us all.

Do we realize the seriousness of hidden sin? Again, not just in the church broadly, but those closest to you. Don’t forfeit the blessing of God’s presence on people right around you, people you know and love, because you will not uncover sin in your tent.

Hidden sin forfeits the blessing of God’s presence.

Hidden sin dishonors the glory of God’s name.

Hidden sin also dishonors the glory of God’s name. When I say that, I’m not talking about the worth of God or Who God is. It can’t take away from His worth. I’m talking about the reputation of God, how He is seen in the world—His glory and fame and honor. Joshua knew what was at stake here. Look at his prayer in verse nine where he says, “*The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?*”

Joshua knew that God’s fame and the glory of His name was wrapped up in His work among His people. He knew why God saved His people from Egypt—to glorify His name among the nations. But here’s the problem. If God’s people go into the Promised Land and take things that are devoted to the worship of false gods and hold on to them, they will jeopardize God’s reputation in the Promised Land. God didn’t save them from Egypt to then worship idols. Joshua knew what was at stake, so as soon as he realized what had happened he knew how serious it was.

This is where I wonder if we realize what's at stake. We have talked about the tendency in the church in our day for people to say some words, pray a prayer, and call themselves a Christian—no matter what their life looks like. All kinds of people call themselves Christians, but in reality they have little to no desire for Christ. They're living for all kinds of idols in the world: money, possessions, success and the praise of people.

Do we realize what we're saying to a watching world? We are showing the world a cheapened view of the gospel, of a God Who apparently has no power to actually change lives and Who apparently is not worth our lives, a God Who is not that great after all compared with the gods of this world. People who claim to follow Him still run after all the same idols in the world that everybody else is running after. Christianity is a joke to many in our culture because many who call themselves Christians show very little evidence of love for Christ over and above the idols of this world.

We must uncover hidden sin, because God's glory and the fame of His name are intended to be put on display in our lives and in this church. Why uncover hidden sin? Because our holiness before God has a direct effect on God's honor before the world. We want God's name to be honored in our lives, in our families and in this church.

Hidden sin will inevitably be revealed in God's judgment.

Hidden sin dishonors the glory of God's name and hidden sin will inevitably be revealed in God's judgment. We must be honest with each other and with ourselves. We cannot hide sin before a holy God. I can't, you can't—it's not possible. Hidden sin will inevitably be revealed in God's judgment and His judgment will be serious.

This passage is pretty disturbing, isn't it? One guy keeps a robe, some silver and some gold, and his whole family loses their lives in addition to 36 other men. It almost seems a bit extreme, doesn't it? This is a question we find ourselves asking throughout the story of Scripture. Think about it. Genesis 19—the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are completely destroyed. All Lot's wife does is look back and she is dead on the spot. One simple glance back leads to the death penalty.

In Leviticus 10, Aaron's sons—Nadab and Abihu—offer unauthorized fire one time before the Lord and all of a sudden fire comes out from the presence of God and consumes them both. Their father Aaron is stunned into silence. The penalty for careless worship is death.

In Numbers 15, a guy is caught picking up sticks on the Sabbath and all of a sudden he finds himself dead. Just for picking up sticks? And it's not just in the Old Testament. You might think, "Well, it's different in the New Testament." While there are many things that are different in the New Testament, think about Acts 5. Ananias and Sapphira lie during offering time in the church and they both fall dead.

We read these stories and we immediately think, "Isn't God overdoing it here? Isn't this overly severe?" I think it's a valid question, because it leads to understanding this picture in Joshua 7. We think

this kind of punishment is severe—even unjust or not right—because we have a man-centered perspective of sin. Follow this. If people lie to us, disobey us, speak against us, would we say they are worthy of death? Of course not.

But this is the key. The key is not how serious we think a sin is. The key is the One Who is sinned against. God is infinitely holy and infinitely honorable. As a result, one sin against Him is an infinite offense, an infinite dishonor deserving infinite punishment. If you sin against a rock, you're not very guilty. If you sin against a person, you're guilty. If you sin against an infinitely holy God, you are infinitely guilty.

This is what God said in Genesis 3: "If you eat of this fruit—just eat it—you will surely die." We look at that through man-centered eyes and think, "That's a little extreme." Even some people in this church might shake their fingers at God at this point and say, "I cannot worship a God Who judges like that."

Be careful. Be very, very careful. For as these words come out of your mouth, as this thought comes into your mind, you are only expressing the fallen sinful nature that deserves judgment before God in the first place. Pointing the finger to question God's justice, slandering the very character of God—as if you are more just than He—means you have assailed the Judge of all the earth, when you have no clue what sin is. Psalm 99:4 says God is just. He loves justice.

And that means your hidden sin will inevitably be revealed. The judgment of God upon your sin is coming. It will be brought to light. The question is will we bring it to light now or will God bring it to light later? Please hear this quote from John Piper: "To be caught in secret sin is a horrible thing. There is only one thing worse—not to be caught." There's only one thing worse than being caught in secret sin, and that's continuing in secret sin until it's too late.

Hidden sin will inevitably be revealed in God's judgment.

Hidden sin can ultimately be erased by God's mercy.

All of this leads to the last reality I want you to see here. Please don't miss this. Hidden sin can ultimately be erased by God's mercy. Ladies and gentlemen, God is just and God is merciful. His arms of mercy are open wide right now. In His mercy, He is bringing this word to us so that we might see His mercy.

This is where I want us to step back to see the big picture here. Think about this book of Joshua. This is the story of the Israelites going in to the Promised Land. Were they a sinful people? Absolutely they were. They were constantly complaining, grumbling and sinning to the point where they actually turned back from the Promised Land. An entire generation had died, wandering in the wilderness. Even their leader Moses, who had led them in so many good ways, died because of his sin against God in Numbers 20.

Moses handed off the leadership of God's people to another man, who just so happened to be named Joshua. Do you know what Joshua's name means? Joshua's name means "The Lord saves," or "The Lord is my salvation." God, in the very name of this book, is shouting to sinners like you and me, "God saves." God is your salvation. God will save you from your sin.

So we keep getting a little bigger picture of the story of Scripture. Do you know how Joshua's name just so happens to be translated when you get into the New Testament? Joshua's name is translated in the New Testament as Jesus. What does the name Jesus mean? Talking about Mary, Matthew 1:21 says, *"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

Joshua 7 is ultimately shouting to us today, "Hidden sin is serious, but Jesus saves." This is the good news for all of us today, particularly for every single person who is hiding sin before a holy God. God has made a way for you to be forgiven of that sin. God has sent Jesus to pay the price for that sin. You don't have to die for that sin, because Jesus has died on a cross for that sin. Jesus has taken the judgment you deserve. And when you confess that sin—when you bring it into the open before the holy God of the universe—and you ask for forgiveness through what Jesus did on the cross for you, your hidden sin can ultimately be erased by God's mercy.

I know this has been a heavy message today, but I want to leave you with hope. Your sin can be erased. God will erase it when you confess it; when you pray, "God, forgive me. God, cleanse me. Help me to turn from hidden sin." When you do that, God will shower you with His mercy. You don't have to walk away with the heavy guilt of sin today. God wants you to walk away celebrating the mercy of a Savior today. In the words of Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

When you confess your sin, when you trust in the mercy of God, the holy God of the universe says, "You are not guilty anymore." So please don't miss this picture. Hidden sin harms you and others and it forfeits the blessing of God's presence. It brings dishonor to the glory of God's name and will inevitably be revealed in God's judgment. But the beauty is that if you uncover hidden sin honestly before God, then your sin can ultimately be erased by the mercy of God.

How is that possible? Jesus. Jesus has made the way for us to experience the fullness of God's power, presence and blessing. I invite you to experience that today through honesty before God. Here's what I'm going to do. I just want us to go into a time of prayer right now. Let's bow our heads before God. I want to give you a few moments to be honest before God. I pray that God would right now bring about humility and conviction. This is your moment before God to say, "God, I confess this. I confess this."

Or maybe you just need to ask God, “Lord, what in my life am I not seeing that I need to see?” Just spend some time before Him. Let God uncover sin in your tent. Be honest with Him and receive His mercy.

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As I prepare to close in prayer, with your heads still bowed, what you have just confessed to God, I want to exhort you to confess to others. Find some people in your life who love you and say, “I need to share this with you.” Don’t let this stay hidden. You’ve brought it into the open before God. I plead with you to experience the full restoration, not just before God, but also before others.

God, I know this is not easy. We don’t want to see hidden sin in our lives. We try to pretend it’s not there. We try to ignore it. But God, we praise You for Your love for us that won’t let us ignore it, that won’t let us continue in it when it’s harming us and harming people around us, when it’s causing us to miss out on all You desire for us.

So God, for Your grace, for Your mercy, I pray that today would be a turning point in many people’s lives, who up until today have been hiding sin. But today they have brought it into the open in a way that might be hard in the days to come but will bring fruit and blessing far beyond what we can imagine. So please, O God, give us grace to confess sin to one another, to be honest with You and honest with others and receive Your mercy—not just directly from You, but from others, as they love us and forgive us.

God, make us a mercy-saturated church. Not one of us is perfect in this room. I put myself at the top of that list. I’m so far from where I want to be, struggling with sin in my own life. I know we are struggling with sin across this church. God, we pray, help us not to hide sin. Help us to receive mercy and live in the holiness You bought for us, Lord Jesus. Please, O God, may it be so. We want to experience the fullness of Your power and blessing and presence among us—in our lives, in our families and as a church.

So God, please uncover hidden sin continually among us. Purify us and bring us into the life You’ve created us to live by Your mercy. Jesus, thank You for making this mercy possible through Your death on the cross for our sin. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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