

# Kingdom Matriarchs

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[ 0 : 00 ] How many of you watch movies for the credits?

It's your favorite part. You skip to the end and watch the credits before you watch anything else!

Nobody? How many of you have seen a Marvel Comics movie?

Like the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the Iron Mans, the Spider-Mans, all that stuff. What do they have? Now, I'm going to test how many of you are really fans of Marvel here. What do they have after the movie ends?

Extra scenes, right? Usually a mid-credits scene and then a post-credits scene. And so, if you're watching it in the theater, do you get up and leave when the movie ends?

No, you got to stick it out. You can always see the people who leave when a Marvel movie ends. It's like, y'all don't really know how this works, do you? Otherwise, now what I do whenever I, we just went and watched the Sheep Detective movie.

[ 1 : 12 ] That was funny, by the way. Sheep solving a murder mystery, if you're wondering. They're scraping the bottom of the barrel for what to make movies about nowadays. But look, it was a good time.

And I was Googling, is there a post-credits scene to this movie? There wasn't. So, we got up and left. Why? Because nobody wants to stick around for the credits, right? It's just kind of...

Now, they should. All those people worked really hard on that movie. And you see their names scrolling by and you're like, forget it. I don't care who made this thing. It's over. We're going to start the book of Romans with the credits.

So, take your Bibles, if you would, and go to Romans chapter 16. It's the end. It's the credits. He is recognizing the people he needs to acknowledge.

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. We're going to get into more of the background of the letter, the purpose behind it. We're going to get into more of that next week. So, come back next week if you want to know what this whole thing is about.

[ 2 : 13 ] But today, we're going to focus on some very interesting things that Paul focused on as he ended this letter to the church in Rome. This was arguably the most important, or if you look up at the slides, the most influential letter that Paul ever wrote.

We don't need to skip over the credits. So, let's see what he has to say in Romans chapter 16. You say, why are we starting with the credits? Why are we starting with the end?

Well, I have read Romans front to back my whole life, and only recently I was challenged by a book and a teaching series called Reading Romans Backwards, more of a lecture series, from one of my favorite Bible scholars and theologians out there.

And he got into this thing called Reading Romans Backwards. And it's kind of starting toward the end of the book because we get to get the whole picture, the context of why he was writing this letter.

And it serves us well to start back then. The people to whom he was writing, they already knew the context. They knew the whole situation. They were living it. So, they didn't need that context. They were the context.

[ 3 : 21 ] So, they got to start at the beginning and understand exactly what he was talking about in context. We have to go kind of get the picture. So, we're going toward the end where he shares some of the context. And then we'll work our way back toward the beginning of Paul's letter to the churches in Rome.

So, let's look at verse 1 of Romans 16. Paul writes, By the way, Asia, not the continent you're thinking of.

Asia was one of the provinces of Rome and about in modern day Turkey. So, that's what he's talking about when he says the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles. They were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend of the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. [ 5 : 02 ] Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodian, my fellow Jews. We have different names nowadays, don't we? They're a little different, aren't they? They're a mouthful.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Was Narcissus narcissistic? I don't know. We can move on. We don't need rabbit trails right now. Here we go, verse 12.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa. Watch this. Those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis. Another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

And then in verse 13, we finish. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me too. Quite some time ago, I felt like the Lord laid this epistle, this letter from Paul to the churches in Rome that we call Romans.

We all have it in our New Testaments. Laid this book of the Bible in on my heart to preach through. And this has been probably the last couple months. I've been praying through and working through what sermon series to start next for our church.

[ 6 : 08 ] And he confirmed to me, yeah, Romans is the way we need to go right now. So I was thinking, well, we've got Mother's Day coming up. I kind of want to go from Romans backwards to the front.

So I'm looking through, how is this going to work? And then that verse 13 stood out to me. Rufus's mother, who has been a mother to me too. Thinking, huh, that's interesting that Paul talks about mothering.

And this lines up to start this series in Romans on Mother's Day. Then I went back through the rest of that chapter and I saw how many women Paul was highlighting in his credits, in his acknowledgements at the end of his letter.

So I worked through this and the Holy Spirit guided me into seeing how valuable a role these women played in not only Paul's life in ministry, but the work of the early church of Jesus Christ. Jesus had died. He was risen from the dead. He had given his marching orders to his people, his followers, to spread around the known world at the time and carry the message, the gospel message of Jesus, the good news.

[ 7 : 22 ] Jesus was here. Jesus had come. Jesus had risen. He was alive. And all could be forgiven of their sins and have a place in God's kingdom through Jesus Christ.

This was the message. So his followers started preaching that message. They started going everywhere they could. And Paul was one of the early fathers of this movement.

He was one of the people that God used in the most instrumental ways to help this catch on. And there were people all around Paul that were helping him in this ministry. And he acknowledges them in each one of his letters.

And in this one, women are featured prominently. So I think it's appropriate on this Mother's Day to look at these women that Jesus valued, that Paul valued, and that God used mightily in the early days of this church.

Churches are gathered all across this world, all across America celebrating Mother's Day. Let's look and see what role they played in the life of Paul. So, number one, we're going to look at the planters.

[ 8 : 27 ] We've been in Romans 16. We're going to jump around a little bit to a couple other places. But if you want to keep your Bible open to Romans 16, that'll work because we'll keep referring back to that.

So let's start back at the beginning with Priscilla and Phoebe. Phoebe and Priscilla. What does he call them? He calls Phoebe our sister, a deacon, a benefactor.

It's safe to say that Phoebe was instrumental in the life of Paul and the early church. Now, what do we mean by a sister? We call somebody a sister in Christ.

What are we talking about? Come on, y'all. This isn't a hard one. Somebody's got this. Fellow believer, right? A fellow Christ follower. We believe the same thing about Jesus.

So you're a woman. We believe the same thing about Jesus. So I can call you my sister in the faith, following Jesus together. I'm married to my wife, but she's also my sister in Christ, right?

[ 9 : 30 ] So let's move on to the next part. He calls her a deacon. This was a diakonos. That is the Greek word that was used. It's talking about a servant of the church.

Usually would have some kind of ordination coupled with that, based on Paul's other teachings. So Phoebe was a sister in Christ. She was a deacon, and she was a prosthesis.

That is a benefactor. That means she had means. She had income. She had some measure of wealth and was able to help support, both probably by opening her home and also giving financially to the work of the ministry.

So she was an instrumental key player in Paul's ministry and in the church. So when Paul was writing this letter to the church at Rome, he wasn't in Rome.

He had to send this letter by hand. They had to travel over a thousand miles to get to Rome to share this letter with the churches in Rome. We'll give you more background next Sunday on the churches in Rome. I'm not going to spend too much time diving into that.

[ 10 : 30 ] So come back next week, and you'll find out what was going on in Rome. But Paul needed somebody reliable. He needed somebody who could speak well. He needed somebody who could expound on what he was writing.

When they went and read his letter multiple times to the different churches meeting in Rome, they weren't all gathering in a building like we enjoy today.

There were many house churches that had sprang up throughout Rome. They were filled with a mixture of Gentile Roman believers, and they were filled with a mixture of traditional Jewish believers, all trying to follow Jesus in the days after his resurrection.

And Paul needed somebody to go on his behalf and preach this letter to these churches. The most reliable person he had was Phoebe.

So she played a powerful, dynamic, vital role in the early church. And God used her in this arguably most important, most influential letter that Paul wrote that we call Romans.

[ 11 : 40 ] One of the early church fathers, Origen. Noted this about Phoebe. He said there were women ordained in the church's ministry by the apostles' authority.

So we see this Phoebe being called a deacon. And that would have been, like we said, coupled with some ordination. Well, that wasn't something the church would take lightly. They would identify who are the best equipped, who are the most qualified, who are the people who are going to serve the church well in this servant role of deacons.

God has blessed us with some wonderful deacons here in our church. We've got nearly 20 deacons who have set themselves apart to serve the church. And they do so every week.

They meet every month. They'll take meals to those who can't get here. They will pray. They'll serve. They meet together. They pray for each other. They pray over needs that you have.

They serve the church well. The church has had that. The church at large, the universal church scattered around the world and identified in local individual assemblies just like ours here in Henrietta.

[ 12 : 49 ] They have had deacons throughout from the very beginning. And Phoebe was one of these. So we recognize and celebrate that a woman like Phoebe, the church believed she ought to be ordained into the ministry because she helped in many ways.

There was precedent for this. Think back of Luke chapter 8 when Mary Magdalene and Joanna provided for Jesus' ministry out of their own means.

Jesus was the first one to normalize women as the financial and logistical backbone of his ministry. So Paul was picking up the torch of what Jesus did.

The early church was saying, yes, we see the value that women brought to Jesus' ministry, and we're going to continue that today. Back in Luke chapter 8 and verses 1 through 3, the 12 were with him, were with Jesus.

And also some women, Mary, called Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chusa, the manager of Herod's household, Susanna, and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

[ 13 : 56 ] So this is Phoebe. Then we move on to Priscilla. Along with her husband Aquila, Paul says she risked her neck or risked her very life.

He called her his co-worker in Christ. She laid it all on the line for the ministry. So on this Mother's Day, we recognize these women that were instrumental in Paul's life and in his ministry. By the way, Paul's son in the ministry. We're going to test your Bible knowledge here. Does anybody know or want to guess who Paul's son in the ministry was? Timothy. We got it. Timothy. He wrote two letters to Timothy. First Timothy, second Timothy. We've got them in our New Testament. He uses the same word for Timothy that he uses for Priscilla and Aquila. This co-worker means somebody who carried the burden with them. Somebody who shared in the load. Priscilla was identified as a church planter. [14:59] They would open their home, Priscilla and Aquila, and help get churches off the ground. They were the early version of a church starter, a church planter.

And they were teachers, Priscilla and Aquila both. Funny thing is, in Acts chapter 18, there were two great teachers in the church in the day of Paul. One was Paul. Does anybody remember who the other one was? Apollos. It was Apollos. It was Paul and Apollos. These two great teachers of the Christian faith. Apollos was out there teaching. And you know what Priscilla and Aquila did? They invited him into their home and they corrected his teaching. They corrected his theology. In Acts chapter 18, you can read about this. They set him straight on some things. Said, Apollos, you're doing great. You're a little bit off on a few things. So they brought him in and set him straight according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. So these women had powerful ability in ministry.

[16:09] A deep understanding of the faith and the scriptures. And Paul gives them credit here at the end of Romans chapter 16. So Phoebe carried the letter. Preached it to the churches in Rome. Priscilla explained the teaching of the scriptures. Without them, Paul's teachings, Paul's ministry look a lot different. So we're thankful for them. Moving on. There we go. Number two. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. Who were these women? These were the ordinary laborers. Paul calls them hard workers. Mary. And then there were seemingly the twins, Tryphena and Tryphosa. Do you know what those names meant back in that world? Tryphena meant dainty and Tryphosa meant delicate. So whatever vision their parents had for these ladies, maybe they were dainty and delicate in some ways, but they knew how to work. Paul specifically calls them out for their hard work. [17:15] Look back in chapter 16 of Romans, verse 6. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. And then jump down, if you would, to verse 12.

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who worked hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Here's what I want to leave you with. Ordinary work is the invisible strength of God's kingdom. So on this Mother's Day, I think it's appropriate to highlight how hard these women work. How many of you would say mothers work as hard or harder than anybody else? You better have your hand up right now. It's Mother's Day, y'all. Of course they do. The role of motherhood demands hard work. These women worked very hard. Paul noted them for their work. [18:12] There were plenty of other people who worked hard. Listen, it wasn't easy being a Jesus follower. And starting point this morning, we talked a little bit about that. In today's world, it's different.

You get up. Sometimes you fulfill a societal expectation of going to church on Sunday. Sometimes it's more than that. But sometimes it's just, well, it's Sunday. I guess we're going to church. Church, we've got Christian radio. We've got Christian bookstores. We've got Christian music. We've got Christian insurance. We've got Christian everything, man. That was not so in their world. It was a very pagan world. It was a very anti-Christ world, anti-Christian world. And this church was trying to get its feet under it. And it was hard being a follower of Jesus. You know what Christian means, right? Like Christ. So when we call ourselves Christian, as just a side note, what we're telling people is, I'm like Christ. [19:16] I'm like Jesus. I'm like the one who called himself the Christ. Well, that's a lot to live up to. So by God's power, by his spirit, we can reach that. We can become more and more like him with each passing day.

But man, being a Christian back then, it was dangerous. It required a lot of hard work. You didn't have a beautiful building to come in and have your service and go off to your classroom and all that. We didn't have any of that back in the early church. We, as a church, as a universal church, were just trying to get our feet under us. We were trying to get going. We were trying to stay out of prison, trying to stay off the government's radar, and still propagate or spread the gospel message of Jesus.

And it did spread. It spread like wildfire because of the hard work of the men and the women of the early church. And Paul notes four of them here specifically.

Mary, Tryphena, and Tryphos of the twins, and Persis. And you know what he uses when he says work? He uses the word *copiao*. *Copiao* means we're not just working a job.

[ 20 : 29 ] It means laboring to the point of exhaustion. It means working until you're ready to drop. Working your fingers to the bone. Now think back on your own mom.

How many of you would say, I remember seeing my mom work to the point of exhaustion. I remember seeing her work, laboring, hard.

She's exhausted. She's tired. And she kept working. Kept a smile on her face. God has given mothers this unique gift, this unique ability to sometimes, often set themselves aside and prioritize those whom they love and work their fingers to the bone for those people.

And Paul's calling out these women for doing that on behalf of the Lord and his work and his church. So we should value our moms.

Value the women in our midst who work tirelessly, who work to the point of exhaustion for their families, for their church family, for their community.

[ 21 : 45 ] And I've seen it in this church. I've seen it in our school system. I've seen it in your families. I've seen so many examples sitting in this room of women who tirelessly are used by God to work, to labor for the faith, for their families.

This is the same word that Jesus used in John 4 when he was tired. He had worked himself to the point of exhaustion. And he sat at a well.

And a Samaritan woman came up to draw water from the well. And while he's recovering from the point of exhaustion, he shares Jesus. He shares himself. He shares the way, the truth, and the life with this woman.

But that's the word. It's what Jesus needed. He needed to do the work that his father had sent him to do. And so many of you, specifically, I'm looking at you moms today, work yourselves tirelessly for the same work that Jesus did that we're all called to do as his church.

So Paul noted these women for that. These women represent the invisible strength of God's church, the invisible strength of God's kingdom. I'm thinking of, man, I'll start calling out examples and then we're gonna leave out way too many people.

[ 23 : 02 ] But one specifically, I'm thinking of Jaquita Graves, who has taught her class for so many years. And so many people have been used, have been, she's been used in their lives.

She's taught them so much. Their knowledge has expanded. Their faith has grown. Their walk with God has been cemented. Roots have dug down deep because of the ministry that God has done through her.

Not only that, but she's chairman of the committee on committees. And listen, y'all, we could do a dozen other examples off the top of my head from this church. So we're only gonna take time for one. And if you got mad that it was Jaquita, I can't help you, all right?

But she's one that comes to mind immediately. But there are so many other women in this church that we could highlight and just thank God for their faithful service, tireless service.

But you know they do get tired. But they continue on. And we thank God for that. They aren't always in the spotlight. Sometimes they might be in the scullery.

[ 24 : 01 ] Sometimes they might be in the background. Sometimes they might be in a seemingly low level position. Sometimes they might be taking care of a screaming baby in the nursery. Who else wants to do that?

I don't. I don't want to take it. I don't covet their role in the nursery. No, thank you. But they are making sure that the hungry are fed.

They are making sure that the babies are comforted. They're making sure that the ministry gets done. They're making sure that people get taught the word of God. They're making sure that prayers are continually being prayed on behalf of those in need.

In the kingdom of God, there is no menial work. It is all missionary work. It is all important work for God's kingdom. Ordinary, what we might call ordinary work, is the invisible strength of God's kingdom.

When we're lacking that ordinary work, something breaks. we're weaker. So, I was supposed to take you to this slide when I read that word out, kopio.

[ 25 : 07 ] But that's the Greek word that Paul was using there. Then we go to number three, verse seven. Would you go back with me to verse seven, Romans chapter 16. There's a married couple here, Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me.

They are outstanding among the apostles. They were in Christ before I was. Now, if you want to dive deep on Junia, there's some controversy over whether or not she was an official apostle, whether she and her husband were called official apostles, or were just recognized by the apostles. But it seems like most Bible scholars who seem to do the best work and really pour themselves into the study of the scriptures and exegete correctly, they seem to agree that this title was given to this married couple, Andronicus and Junia, that they were recognized as apostles.

Now, that could only come from the apostles themselves saying, we recognize you to be an apostle. That had to be given by the apostles. Each church couldn't just vote and say, we're going to vote on an apostle.

It was different than a pastor, okay? Very different. So this was a very special role, a very special title. John Chrysostom, another early church father who's long been dead, but whose work was valuable in the early church, wrote this about Junia.

[ 26 : 29 ] He said, how great is the devotion to the work of God that this woman had, that she should be worthy of the title, the appellation, the title of apostle. This was rare.

Somebody would be given this title, that they would be recognized by the apostles themselves in this way. So we should pay close attention to this.

What was so special about this woman? Well, when we study, Junia and her husband, Andronicus, they had been in prison with Paul.

How many of y'all know what Paul got put in prison for? You're thinking through it? You don't have to raise your hand. You can just say it out. What did Paul go to prison for?

Yes, he did. Preaching the gospel. He would run afoul of the local government. He'd run afoul of the Roman government. He would get put in local prison. He'd get put on prison transport ships and get transported to another island.

[ 27 : 30 ] And then he would get shipwrecked along the way. And crazy things would happen in the life of Paul. Somebody's got to make a movie at some point about the life of Paul. It would be amazing cinema. But clearly, these women, this man and his wife, were out there preaching the gospel with Paul because they got jailed too.

So these people had a side-by-side laboring role in the ministry of Paul. Think of the resurrection in John chapter 20.

Jesus chose someone to be called the apostle to the apostles. You know who that was? Mary Magdalene. He entrusted the most important news in human history to a woman first.

Junia, being called an apostle by the apostles of the early church, reminds us that God does not call the qualified. He qualifies the cult.

Regardless of your gender, regardless of your status, God can use you in powerful ways. Just like he used these women.

[ 28 : 38 ] So, we have the planters, Phoebe and Priscilla. We have the ordinary laborers, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis.

We have the apostle, Junia. And now we're going to bring it back to the heart of the home. And this is the mother of Rufus. Paul said of the mother of Rufus back in verse 13, the last verse we read, Greet Rufus chosen in the Lord and his mother who has been a mother to me too.

This woman was not seemingly related to Paul. She was the mother of Rufus and Alexander. Rufus is mentioned here. Alexander is mentioned in Mark 15.

Let's go over to Mark 15. Look at verse 21. A certain man from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus was passing by on his way from in from the country and they forced him to carry the cross.

Now y'all, I wasn't there. So I can't say with absolute certainty. But the vast consensus among those historians and Bible scholars who have done the work of piecing the scriptures and historical documents together believe that the Rufus mentioned right here in Romans 16 is the same Rufus

who was the son of Simon from Cyrene who carried the cross of Jesus.

[ 30 : 13 ] And his wife became like a mother to Paul who God used arguably more powerfully with greater impact than anybody else we've seen in the early church history.

So we thank God for the letters of Paul that he used so powerfully and is still using today to teach churches like ours. But then we've also got to thank Simon's wife who God used so powerfully in his life.

She wasn't his mother. His mother likely was not a follower of Christ. but Simon's wife was. And because God allowed Simon to be picked from the crowd that day Simon from Cyrene Cyrene was a country in Africa a region in Africa about where Libya is today seemingly he was a Hellenistic or Greek Jew who was probably living there at the time and he came back during the Passover week to celebrate the Passover back in his homeland and the Roman soldiers plucked him from the crowd well I think God allowed that to happen.

God directed their choice to the right man for the job because then when Simon carried the cross for Jesus seemingly if he hadn't yet he converted his whole family to the way of Christ and then Rufus was chosen in the Lord his son because Simon had been chosen by the Lord even though those Roman soldiers thought they were doing the choosing God directed their choice to the person you see how it all fits together because then Rufus was chosen in the Lord his whole family turned his wife became a mother figure to Paul father of the early church so let me say this to the moms in the room God has given you your children to have an impact to but you can have so much of an impact even beyond your own children Rufus' mom was not content just to be a mother to Alexander and Rufus God used her as a matriarch of the early church to fill that role of support encouragement love teaching to Paul himself so it's appropriate on Mother's Day to recognize who Paul looked at as a mother in his life

Paul was a giant of the faith he was a Pharisee he knew the scriptures knew them inside and out his teaching often revealed that but he had a spiritual mother that God brought into his life and he felt that it would not be complete this letter to Rome would not be complete without recognizing her and the impact she had and then he goes on and greets more there are a few more women that he greets but this is all the time we have to highlight today so let me conclude with this the most important credential in God's kingdom is answering his call you might not have all the Pharisee training like Paul had you might not have all the seminary degrees you might not have all the history of serving in particular roles in the church etc etc the most important credential that every single one of these women answered in God's kingdom is answering his call if you say yes to Jesus there's no limit on what Jesus can do through you whether you're a husband or a wife a father or a mother a sister or a brother a woman or a man a child or an adult a teenager or college age regardless of your age your gender your wealth your abilities if you say yes to Jesus he can use you in ways that you will never dream

[ 34 : 28 ] Galatians chapter three verse twenty eight Paul affirms this he says in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile there is neither slave nor free man there is neither male nor female we are all one under Christ so Phoebe shows us that the gospel is authoritative she carried the authority of and Junia as well but she carried the authority of the ordination into the the deaconhood from the early church and the apostles Junia carried that authority of the apostles that they had bestowed upon her collaborative the gospel is collaborative this letter was collaborative and Priscilla shows us that as they were co-workers co-laborers with Christ it is transformational we see what happened in the lives of all these women but Junia specifically having been in prison and then God transformed what seemed to be a terrible thing a setback into a powerful thing that God used to spread the gospel message every time the Romans or the Jewish traditionalists tried to stamp out this way of Christ

God would use it to transform more lives and more hearts and the mother of Rufus shows us that it is relational that is one of the most important aspects all are important aspects but that relational part is maybe the part we feel the most that warmth that dependability that steadiness so we thank you moms we thank you ladies for your service back in the day of Jesus back in the day of Paul and all throughout the history of the church to today right here in First Baptist Church Henrietta, Texas we thank you for your giftings in the spirit we thank you for your willingness to serve us to serve the Lord to serve our church to serve your families to serve your community the gospel came to Rome in the hands of a woman the gospel has come to your heart so many of you through the hands through the love of those who have labored for you may we be a church that honors the women the

mothers in our lives not just with flowers today in just a moment but with the dignity the respect and the appreciation that both Paul and Christ showed to mothers and women would you join me in praying

God you took time out of your ministry for everyone for the great for the small for the old for the young for men and women alike those who wrote the records of your ministry on this earth knew that it would be important to highlight the women the mothers who you used powerfully in your kingdom work and Paul did the same thing so we would be wrong to not recognize the impact they had and on this Mother's Day I pray that we would not only just say thank you to mom and say happy Mother's Day hand them a flower or maybe a card or whatever else we have planned maybe give them a call if they're not here but God

I pray that we would take it a step further and say we recognize the impact you've had on us we've recognized the impact that God has had through you that we would give them the dignity the honor the respect that you showed them that we would not stifle when you want to use them in your work that we would celebrate that that we would support it God however you choose to work through the lives of women in your church I pray that we would not stand in the way but just like the early church did that we would say yes God is working through them we celebrate that we honor it we make room for it God work through every one of us if there's somebody here who doesn't know you today I pray that they would see that you are a God who values every one of them everyone equally that there is no one who would say I'm too far gone I'm out of the reach of God's love every one of us regardless of status regardless of identity you love us all and you died for us all you rose for us all and you offer each one of us eternal life through

Christ with our heads bowed and our eyes closed I'll just ask this question church there's someone today maybe a guest or maybe someone who's been coming here for a long time and you would say I know today is the day that I need to surrender to Jesus I need to open my heart to Jesus and say I want to follow you I believe I believe that you are God I believe that you died on the cross to take the burden of my sin to forgive me I believe that you rose from the dead by the power of God and I believe you're alive today and I want to follow you through the rest of my life if that's you today would you slip your hand up and I'd love to pray for you thank you how many of you would say God is working on my heart about something else and I need prayer would you slip your hand up and I'd love to pray for you as well I need prayer thank you thank you thank you how many of you well I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand right now but I'll just throw this out there if anyone would like to join us in membership in this church if you've been maybe attending for a little while and you say [ 40 : 14 ] I'd like to commit I'd like to make this my home church and be a part of this body of Jesus followers please come down front after the service is over or meet me in the back I would love to set up a time to talk with you and discuss what it looks like to join us as we follow Jesus we want to welcome you into our number God thank you for meeting with us today we love you we want to do our best to follow you and to honor you as we also honor the moms in our lives in Jesus name we pray amen