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## JONAH 3 REPENTANCE

Jonah Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we're coming before you now recognizing our own personal needs and our own weaknesses. We struggle with things inside of our hearts that make us feel sometimes weak or insignificant and those things sometimes hinder our self-confidence. We know, Lord, that we can be whole people with you. We just need to integrate that better. We just need to know what it means to be humble and be able to recognize our weaknesses and to be able to entrust our lives to you and to rely on your strength. Lord, we know that provide strength in weakness and it's through the foolish things often in life that you are proved wise. So we want to be used by you and we want you to do a deeper work in our hearts. I ask that during this particular session of our teaching that you would move us to the next level of our personal development, that you would teach us a little bit more about what it means to trust you in some of those very personal areas of our lives. We look forward to looking at your word today and ask that you would speak to us through it. In Jesus' name, amen.

In our study in the book of Jonah we've learned quite a bit. In fact we have one more session in the book of Jonah next week, Lord willing, and in that we're going to be studying more about the response that Jonah has in the picture. But one of the things that I want to talk to you today about is a life skill. So, young people, I want you to be in here because I want to speak to you because if you get this one idea, this will help you dramatically in your life.

This is going to deal with the particular part of your heart, my heart, for all of us, that area where we have problems. Four areas where we have sins and we need to know how to respond. Sins, but not just sins. Sins, offenses, foolishness, and mistakes. Whether that's pulling the milk out of the refrigerator and the grape juice falls on the floor and smashes, that's a mistake. Or whether it's you've offended someone, whether you did something wrong or not, the other person might be offended. So it's not always about sin. But we need to know how to deal with those things because if we don't know how to deal with them then we end up resorting to some negative things.

For example, sometimes when people make mistakes or they sin or something, they have a tendency to blame other people for their problem. It's never my fault; it's always somebody else's fault. So they continually blame the problem on someone else or on something else. There's the other person who blames themselves. "I'm such an idiot. I'm never going to get it right." So they blame themselves for the problem. They don't know how to process what's going on inside, and so bad things happen. There are other people who defend, they rationalize, they justify. They end up doing some things when those four things take place that cause them to not handle that situation well. What that does then is it starts to affect their self-concept, how they

view themselves. It hinders confidence in a person's life because they end up with these regrets and they feel bad about them. They don't know how to process these things. Furthermore, some of us have made mistakes in our lives that we have regrets about and we need to know how to process those so they don't hinder us going on forward.

In order to deal with that, I want to take you into some theology here and I want to apply that to our lives so that you understand that. So it's inspired by the book of Jonah, but I've decided to take a step out of the book of Jonah, take you to other places in the Bible to show you about what change looks like and how to deal with these problems that we experience in those four areas.

I'm a professor at Concordia University Wisconsin and they came to me and asked me to design their online course for parenting so that all the master level students who are in family life education have to take a parenting course. I designed the course and I teach it. In that course as my students are going through, they each have to be working with a parent and they bring the problems of that parent into the classroom online environment and we troubleshoot them and we work with them. What we do is we take theology, biblical truth, and we try to work it down for a three year old, or a ten year old, or a fifteen year old, or a twenty year old so that we know how to solve the problems of life, whatever they are, using the Bible, using theology to understand that.

I want to share with you today a theology of repentance. As soon as I say 'repentance' people start thinking about the kind of repentance that we have that you need to repent in order to get saved. That is a form of repentance, and probably the grandest form of repentance, when we give up our old ways. We decide we're going to make Christ the center of our lives so that we give up other things and we make Christ number one in our life. That's the grandest form of repentance, but that's not the only way that this idea of repentance is used in the Bible. It's also used in this idea to make a turn. I think that every day we make changes in our lives, a form of this repentance and change that's very important.

So I'm going to talk about correcting children today, but I'm only doing it by example because parents who get this training from us end up saying, "Wow, this is important for me as well. If I will learn to correct myself the way I'm correcting my children, the way you're talking about, I'll be a much healthier person." And yes, that's true. So that's why I'm going to take an opportunity to teach us a few ideas, even those of you who aren't parents. It applies to all of us, whether we're working with children or not.

I want to talk to you about four aspects about repentance first of all and I want you to see as we look up the word repent or any of its forms in the Bible then we're going to come to a bunch of ideas. I've tried to formulate some of those ideas into four aspects of repentance that are going to guide us into some techniques and strategies. I'll give you those techniques and strategies in a moment, but I don't like to give parents or young people just techniques and say, "Here. Do this and you'll be better." I like to tie it into this grander picture of a theology of change. If we can tie it into our theology then we can understand how God made us.

I tell young people regularly, my job is to help young people be successful. I'm often working through parents to do that, but I just have a passion to help young people catch the life skills that

they need now in order to be successful in life. So let's look at repentance and I want to share with you four aspects of repentance.

If a person needs to repent, the very first thing that needs to take place is they must settle down and be willing to work on the problem. If you spill something and it breaks and you're upset about it, it's hard to even dialogue about it. It's hard to do anything about it.

I'm just going to show you one of the verses that uses the word repent. Notice the principles I'm getting come from the Bible and I want you to see where they come for the most part today. This is just a glimpse of what's taking place in this whole concept of repentance and what it looks like.

*I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. None of them repent of their wickedness, saying, "What have I done?" Each pursues their own course like a horse charging into battle.*

Now you can imagine the horse. The horse's head is reared, nostrils flared, steam coming out of the mouth. That's how some kids are sometimes. When they do the wrong thing and you want to correct them and they're just so upset they can't handle it at the moment. Not just kids, right? Husbands and wives get that way sometimes too. So one piece of advice, when we're going to correct someone is we don't do it until they settle down. We may require that they settle down. I'll show you how we do that parenting and how we do that as adults, but the idea is that I want you to see that part of the aspect of repentance is you've got to settle down.

So the child who goes and takes a break and sits down and starts yelling, "That's unfair. You always treat me this way. You never discipline my brother. I hate you," or all those other things kids tend to say, there's heart work going on while that child is settling down. When they finally settle down and come back then we can start working through the other aspects of repentance. We must settle down first.

So I would suggest that we get upset when something happens in life – an offense, a sin, foolishness, or a mistake. When those things take place we sometimes get so upset we can't work on it. So the first step is we must settle down and be willing to work on the problem.

The next aspect of repentance is to be willing to admit that you've done something wrong. The Bible uses the term 'confession' to describe this. We don't just see this in God's word. Even if you go to an AA meeting, Alcoholics Anonymous, you introduce yourself by saying, "Hi, I'm Bill. I'm an alcoholic." You have to admit you have a problem before you can get well. So if we're going to repent, which really means to change your mind or change your heart, then you're going to have to admit that you've done something wrong. It's very important.

Let's look at the scripture that illustrates that. In 1 Kings 8:47 (I'm just taking a phrase out of a whole passage, you can look up the rest of this later if you like), it says *–if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent (so you've got change of heart and repent there) and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, "We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly."*

So kind of the definition of repentance. There is a change of heart and admitting that you've done something wrong. We've got to come to that place where we do that. The tendency is to not want to address what we've done wrong because what we feel inside is guilt, a God-given emotion that is present in our lives. So sometimes when that emotion is present we want to get rid of it by off-loading it, by blaming someone else. We can always find the factors that other people have played in this particular problem I have. So we start complaining about what other people have done instead of saying, "I could have done this differently." We have to admit that we've done the wrong thing. That would be the second aspect of repentance.

The third aspect of repentance is strategic. Realize there is something different you could have done. This is so important. Young people, I want you to understand this. There are things you know in life. There are some things you know you don't know, right? But there is a whole other category of things and I would call them the things you don't know you don't know that are out there.

Here's what happens. You tell them, "What you did was wrong. I'm going to discipline you," or whatever, and here's their response: "I did the best I could." Well sometimes the best you could isn't good enough. You've got to learn something new. You've got to try something different. And you don't know you don't know it. So you have to come to this place where you realize there is something different that I could have done here that maybe would have been more effective.

Look at the passage of scripture here where John the Baptist is approached by the Pharisees. He's baptizing these people in the Jordan River. And the Pharisees want to get baptized. John the Baptist knows that they don't understand repentance. They don't understand what this means. They don't understand that there's this spirituality that involves more than behavior. Because the Pharisees were all about behavior. So John says to them – *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*. He stops them in his message and wouldn't baptize them because he said, "You guys don't know what you don't know yet."

If you would learn a different approach to spirituality, which isn't about looking good on the outside, but it's something deeper inside of your heart, then you'll be able to go to the next step. So we must acknowledge that there's something different that I could have done. It's a very important part of the correction process in that we do some teaching usually with children in that, but even with us as adults we come to this place where we say, "Wow. I wonder if there's something different that I could have done." That's part of repentance. It opens the door so that we can get it a little bit better.

And then the fourth aspect of repentance is this. You commit to doing the right thing. Repentance is often described as this 180-degree turn. You're going this way and you run into a roadblock, or realize something is wrong, and I'm doing the wrong thing, or I made a mistake, or I hit a consequence of some kind, and I make a 180-degree turn and now I start doing the right thing. So we make changes in our lives regularly, embracing all of these ideas.

In Jeremiah 34:15 it says - *Recently you repented* (another use of our word) *and did what is right in my sight*. So I want you to see that repentant isn't only about stopping the wrong thing. Repentant is always replaced with something different or better.

So we can't just say to children when we're disciplining them, "Stop it. I can't believe you're doing that. Cut it out." We must teach them how to do the right thing that will replace the wrong thing. But the same thing is true for all of us. Young people I would suggest as you discipline yourself (because self-discipline is the goal, right?), you want to not just stop something, you want to choose something different and move in that direction.

Now having said that, let's just take those four aspects of repentance. There are more. Let me just give you a couple other things that you're going to find if you do a study of repentance. You're going to find sorrow or regret, *a godly sorrow leads to repentance* is the verse that says that. But the sorrow that comes isn't always present. Nor is the desire to do what's right always present when you repent. Those are two other things you're going to see with the word repentance – the desire to do what's right and a sorrow or a regret for doing what's wrong.

Now those things might prompt the change, these four things in your life so that you make the change. They're not always there. You might punch your brother and then realize that was the wrong thing to do, but you still would like to do it. But you decide I'm not going to punch my brother any more because I'm going to make a change. You might not regret you punched him, but you know it's the wrong thing. So that kind of thing happens in our lives where we choose to do what's right, not because we often feel like doing the right thing, but we know it's the right thing, so we make the choice to do it.

Let's take these four aspects of repentance and I want to walk you through some correction strategies that we use at the National Center of Biblical Parenting for children, but they're the same strategies that God uses for His children, so we'll be able to apply them to our lives. As we look at all of correction in the Bible and what it looks like, we come to a strategy for correction and it has a broad categories of three parts.

The first part is to start with words. So we tell parents you want to start correction with words. Words that are going to say something like this, and you can say this to a three year old, or a ten year old, or a fifteen year old. You can say, "I'm going to start with words. Is that going to work? Or do I need to go to the next step?"

Words are a valuable part of our training and God does this with us. Notice His word in 2 Timothy 3:16 – *All scripture* (God's word) *is God-breathed and is useful* (for what?) *for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*. So God uses His word to correct us. If we listen to His word He doesn't have to go to the next step. Unfortunately some children do need to go to the next step.

Now if you look at our story in the book of Jonah that we've been pursuing verse by verse, we see that the Ninevites last week responded just with words. Jonah came in, shared the word, and they changed. They repented from their ways and they followed God. There was a conversion

experience in their lives because they saw what was wrong and they decided to do the right thing. All they needed was words.

I needed to be that kind of person that just needs words. If I'm driving down the road going too fast and the policeman pulls me over, just use words. I don't need anything else, okay? That's what I wish. So as adults we want words. That's the way we want to be disciplined. So we start with words with children.

If that doesn't work then we're going to go with this next model that we created called a triangle of repentance. We use this as the most common form of discipline in the home because it's a model for the way God works with us. So I want to take you through this triangle of discipline. Obviously a triangle has three points, three parts to it, and I want to show you what those parts look like.

The first thing is you've done the wrong thing. So you can take yourself through this triangle of repentance. You think, "Oh. I did the wrong thing here. That didn't work in that relationship or in that job. I did something wrong there. What am I going to do about it?"

The first thing we do is we go to what we call a break. Now a break is not like a timeout. We don't use timeout. We don't think timeout is in the Bible, we don't see even the concept there. Timeout is a sentence you give to a child for a crime they've committed and you've got to be like a policeman to keep them there. Five minutes for a five year old, ten minutes for a ten year old, and so on. The break is different because a child is sent to a break and they're sent there, they help determine the length of time. Settle down, change your heart, come back and see me when you're ready. We transfer responsibility to the child because that's what God does with us. God says I want you to come back to me. And so He transfers responsibility to us for that change of heart. This is that first part of repentance where you need to settle down and be willing to work on the problem. That's the break part that we're talking about here.

I think sometimes we just need to take a break. We messed up, we know it, we need to pull back from life, we just need to re-orient our hearts so that God can speak to us because we're just so upset about the situation. And so that break is not just a three year old tool or thirteen year old tool; it is a tool for adults that we've broken down developmentally for children. But all of us at points need to pull back.

I encourage you turn off the electronics for a little bit. If you've messed up in your life, you want to pull back for a little bit and figure out what did I do wrong here and how can I settle down about this so that God can use this in my life in some positive ways. That's what the break does.

Next thing we do is we take people to a positive conclusion. Now the positive conclusion we designed has three questions and a statement. These three questions and a statement take a person through the process of repentance we already talked about. You're going to recognize them as I take you through the questions.

These are the questions that when a child comes back from break we say, "Okay. Here's question number one. What did you do wrong?" Why? Because confession is important. We don't ask

who started it. We don't say, "Why did you do that?" When you ask those questions of children, you teach them to be defensive. Rather God has a plan, it's called confessions. So we come before them and we say, "Okay, here's what I did wrong."

Let's look at these questions. The first one, "What did you do wrong?" really ties into the confession element of the repentance process. It's great for three year olds because it helps them, but it's also great for twenty-three year olds as we're trying to process life. "What did you do wrong?" helps us deal with our part of the problem. Even if our part is only 10%, we take responsibility for our part of the offense.

The second thing we do is we ask the question, "Why was that wrong?" because we want to explore this area of the things we don't know that we don't know. So for children of course it's an opportunity for us to train those children. Let me expand your thinking about kindness or being organized or being respectful so you understand some things you don't know that you don't know. So that becomes a very important question, often a teaching question for children. "Why was that wrong?"

The third question is, "What are you going to do differently next time?" The reason we ask that question is because you remember repentance isn't just about stopping something, but it's about doing a 180-degree turn and doing the right thing. I think we need to ask ourselves when we make a mistake or we sin or we have an offense or foolishness (those are the four things) then we need to ask ourselves, "What could I do differently next time? What would have been a better way to handle that interaction with that person? How could I have kept that job? Or what could I have done so that that person wouldn't have been upset with me?" or something like that. What are you going to do differently next time is a key question and the Holy Spirit speaks to us and teaches us in the midst of that as we as adults ask that question.

And then we come to the response, the three questions and a statement, and this statement is "go ahead and try again," modeled after the words that Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery. Do you remember what the words were? *Go and sin no more*. I don't encourage you to say that to your kids. But the idea is that you're saying to yourself, "Okay, I'm going to go and I'm going to do the right thing." That's the idea here.

"Go ahead and try again" is the place where we say I'm going to let it go if it was a mistake, or I'm going to get forgiveness if I've offended someone, or I'm going to try to be more wise instead of being foolish, and I'm going to move forward instead of moving backwards. Some people are trapped from behind because of the history of their lives. I would suggest that God wants us moving forward and doing the right thing.

If you take Jonah, for example, when Jonah was reluctant to obey the Lord in the passage, we saw that God decided to give him a break. That was His discipline strategy. "Where am I going to put Him?" God says, "I think I'll put him in a fish." So he was in a fish for three days wrestling, settling his heart, coming to the place where he was willing to repent. So he was given another chance.

In Jonah 3:1 it says – *Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: “Go to Nineveh.”* So he had an opportunity to go back and do the right thing, which is why we complete the triangle by going to number four – we practice doing the right thing. I think it’s wise to go back and practice doing the right thing. Let me go back and make it right. Let me try to do this again. So if we make a mistake, we go back and practice doing the right thing so that we are prepared for the next time this thing happens.

We do it with children, certainly. “Let’s go back in the kitchen. Go ahead. Ask me for a snack. I’m going to say no again. Now show me your response that’s a better response.” So we practice it with children, but I would suggest as adults we can do the same thing. We want to practice doing the right thing as we move forward.

Now all of this, of course, is done with us as adults. We’re doing this with the spirit of humility and allowing God to work in our lives and teach us and train us and expand our ability to work in these things. Now that’s what we see a lot in the book of Jonah. I told you I would take you over the kind of overview of correction. I showed you number one was words, number two is this triangle of repentance, and I don’t have time to go into number three, but there are seven categories of consequences that we see used in the Bible. We would go to those if we need to to help children make some changes.

I want to give you some examples of ways that the positive conclusion is used in the Bible as God or Jesus disciplined people so that you can see how the model is used in the Bible.

Let’s go back to the Garden of Eden. You remember the offense was Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and there was a consequence involved. They could not go back in to that place. When they were challenged, God came to meet with them – “Did you eat of the fruit?” – what did they do? They blamed other people. They didn’t take responsibility. They blamed other people.

Now in the midst of all of that, God doesn’t just leave them with the consequence and go away. What He does is He has a positive conclusion and He meets with them, and what does He do? He makes them something new. He gives them garments made out of something they had never seen before. Animal skin clothes He creates for them. Something new, instead of the fig leaves. Remember they had fig leaves clothes that they had made for themselves, which reminded them of their past, where they were, and God says, “We’re not going to use those clothes. I’m going to give you new clothes you’ve never seen before because I want to do something new in your life.” So He’s moving them in a positive conclusion in a different direction and He gives them a hope. *Someday the seed of a woman is going to crush that serpent’s head.* Can you imagine? That’s what they needed in their hearts in order to move forward. God wanted to do something new in their lives.

Let’s go to the New Testament. Do you remember Peter denied Christ three times. The Bible says that after he denied Christ and their eyes met and so on, he went out and *he wept bitterly*. This is the sorrow, the regret that he had.

After the resurrection he says to his disciple friends, “I’m going fishing again.” Now that’s a really important statement because he hadn’t been fishing like this since Jesus called him. Jesus

said, “*Leave your nets and follow me.*” So for three-and-a-half years they’re in ministry together and then now he’s saying, “I’m going fishing again. I’m going back to fishing.” There’s nothing wrong with fishing, except that’s what God called him out of.

The other guys say, “We’re going too.” So they go off fishing. While they’re out fishing they don’t catch a thing until the guy on the beach says, “Hey, throw your nets on the other side of the boat.” So they do it. When they throw the nets on the other side of the boat, they catch 153 fish, John 21 says. Well John says to Peter, “Peter, that’s the Lord.” Well Peter doesn’t even help bring the fish in. He just jumps out of the boat and gets over to Jesus and welcomes Him, and these guys have to drag all the fish back over to the side.

When they get back there, Jesus makes them this cool breakfast. What an amazing thing. But then He takes Peter and he says to Peter, “Do you love me?” He asks the question three times. Why? I think just because the last time he had eyes with Peter it was when Peter denied him.

“Do you love me, Peter?” And the first question is this: *Do you love me more than these?* We don’t know what the *these* is, but I think that these are the fish that He’s saying. “Do you love me more than the fish, Peter?”

“Yes, Lord. I love you.”

“Peter do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord, I love you.”

“Peter, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord, I love you!” And each time after he says, “I love you,” Jesus says, “*Feed my sheep, tend my lambs.*”

What Jesus is saying to Peter is come on; we’ve got work to do. We’ve got a kingdom to build here. You made a mistake. Let’s go forward. I’m investing in you. Let’s move. So He gives him this positive conclusion that really reinstates Peter (we call that the Reinstating of Peter) into the ministry because he has this meeting with Jesus where something happens in his heart and God changes him. It’s this positive conclusion that takes place in his life.

Let me give you one more example. In the Old Testament David sinned with Bathsheba. Nathan, the prophet, confronted him. When he confronted David there was a consequence when his sin was revealed and the consequence was the baby died. It’s just a terrible consequence that David had to go through. The baby lived for seven days after he was told the baby would die. I don’t know, maybe the seven days were needed to have something happen in David’s heart, but seven days for the baby to die. The Bible tells us that after the seven days passed and the baby died that David got up, cleaned himself up, and he went in and comforted his wife, made love to her, and she became pregnant again. This is Bathsheba. They had killed her husband, Uriah. So now we’ve got David and Bathsheba and another baby on the way.

What do you do? You’ve got to have a lot of regret there. We see in Psalm 51 how David describes the pain that he experienced, the guilt that he experienced with this whole thing that was going on. Now we’ve got another baby on the way.

It's fascinating because God sends Nathan, the same prophet who sent the judgment to David, and says, "You can name this baby Jedediah," which means 'loved of the Lord.' That's God's message to David through Nathan. This baby Jedediah, you can name him 'loved of the Lord.' Do you see what God is doing in that picture? If there's any question now about where you're going and what you're doing, David, I want you to know that it's forgiven. We've got a kingdom to build here. Let's go forward and be the people that you need to be. So He's blessing him, blessing this child, and they're moving forward in their relationship. What a fascinating thing that God is doing in that picture.

It's the same thing that I think you and I need in our lives. We need this positive conclusion that God wants to offer us. But the positive conclusion comes with this repentance that we have. We come to a place where we say, "God, I realize that the way I'm running my life right now is not right," or "this thing I did was not the right thing."

So young people, I just want to suggest to you if you embrace this one idea (this idea of being able to take repentance and apply it to your life in a practical way, and understand repentance isn't just about salvation, it's about the daily activities of our life), it will change your heart in a way that will give you a life skill so that you can move forward.

I'm convinced that repentance does several things in our lives. It is a path of freedom from the past. It's a path to self-forgiveness because sometimes we know God forgives us but we don't forgive ourselves. It's a path to personal growth because we can now move to the next level and we can do the right thing, as we see in the scriptures, and it's a path away from this victim mentality. Some people live with a victim mentality. It's always somebody else's fault that I'm the way I am, and I never get a break, and all these bad things are happening. But if you start taking responsibility for your part, then good things can happen and you can move away from the victim mentality and God can do some really great things in your life.

Now although we're applying it in the day-to-day here, I want to go back to the big picture. I want you to understand that repentance is a key element in the salvation process. When you get saved, you don't just take Jesus Christ and wear Him as a badge or something to add Him to the rest of your life. It's a transformation that takes place in your life where you will end up saying, "I want to live differently. I want to follow God. I want Him to change my heart, I want Him to change my life, and I want to do what He calls me to do." So it's a repositioning of your heart.

Just think of your heart as that place where you make decisions. It's that place where you feel things, where you believe things. When Jesus Christ is at the center of that place, amazing things happen. That's why He chooses to live in the heart because the heart is that place in each one of us that controls our lives. So when you ask Christ to come into your life, powerful things happen. Part of that means repenting. That I'm not going to live like the rest of the world. That doesn't mean we have to look weird, but people are going to think we're different because we don't do the same things that other people do. We're living a life that's different because God has called us to something more powerful than He wants for us. That's what repentance is.

I just think it's a great tool for us to use, not just practically in our lives every day, but also to give us focus for our whole life. We do give up things because they are not the right things. We

focus on God. He's the center, He's in our hearts, and when that takes place then we can experience God in the fullest capacity.

As young people, I would suggest that now you make that decision that God is going to be the Lord of my life in everything that I do. Not just for young people, of course, it's for all of us. I invited young people to be in here because that's my desire is to help young people be successful in life. This is one of those life skills that we all need. If you catch it early, it will help you tremendously think through the challenges that you face in sin, offenses, foolishness, or mistakes in your life.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Our heavenly Father, I thank you that you designed our hearts in a particular way that they can change and that you desire to provide that new heart and that transformation. Lord, we thank you for the Holy Spirit that does that work and that discipline work in our hearts regularly. Lord, we ask that you would speak to each one of us in ways that we need to change and adjust our thinking. We thank you for the dynamic that exists between you and us that we can come to you at any time. You give us second chances and third chances, and you allow us to experience your grace in special ways. You empower us to do what's right. Lord, thank you for all of that. We just praise you and we're grateful for it. In Jesus' name, amen.