

*This sermon is based on chapter two of the "Someone Like You" book (pg. 7)*

*This message is focused on how God redeems our past to help rescue and comfort others. Our story can be someone else's survival guide, and God restores what the enemy tried to destroy.*

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## **Introduction**

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Today, as we continue in our series, Someone Like You, we are going to be talking about: how do we respond in a hurting world?

*Take a moment to discuss a few tragedies and events from recent news, or recent years.*

It's tragic. Regardless of what people believe about the positions and actions of people. Here's what I know. Without a shadow of a doubt.

That every one of these people and every person in this room... are created in the image of God. Every one of us has value. Every one of us has a God-given purpose, whether we know it yet or not. And we live in a world that is hurting. And I am certain that hurting people hurt people and it creates fear.

But the answer to fear is not to run away. The answer to fear is to run to Jesus, because the Bible tells us perfect love casts out all fear. And the only perfect love that exists in the world **is** Jesus. And so people need Jesus and people need help. And people need healing in the midst of hurt. And so today, I want to take a moment, and I want us to pray for people around us.

And I want us to pray for our local community. Just this morning I heard another story about two parents who had a child, a grown child who tried to stab them to death with a machete, and they survived. These are not things that are happening somewhere else. They're happening to very real people. It is impacting very real lives.

And it's happening right here in our backyard. Jesus is the answer. And we unapologetically point to Jesus every week. And if you've missed the script, it is because that is the hope of the world. That is the number one solution. That is the plan because there is no real plan B. So let's pray.

**(Open with prayer.)**

Today. The message is really very simple. But I think it's very important. **God redeems your past to help rescue others.** God redeems your past to help rescue others in pain. And to explain that, I think one of the best ways to do that is with Diane's story.

Decades ago, Diane Stores founded The Dwelling Place, a safe home for women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence.

The Dwelling Place is a two-year transitional housing program that includes classes, therapy, and all kinds of supportive services. Today, they own the equivalent of ten single-family homes, and they've helped hundreds of families heal from trauma, find jobs, and secure stable housing to break the cycle of abuse.

But it all started with one house, and one single mom. Let's take a look.



Show the week two sermon video here, available for streaming or download by following this QR code. Length: 4 minutes 43 seconds

I think about that one dollar and the difference that made and how God showed up in providing for needs. It reminds me that we have an opportunity, even with things like Dollar Club, to support and love people, in ways that make a big difference today.

I believe that what we're talking about is what do you do when you experience incredible hurt and pain in your life? What do you do with that? And today, I think that the message God is giving us for someone like you and someone like me, is that **your pain becomes a platform when placed in the hands of God.**

That when we place our pain in the hands of God, He can mold it, shape it, transform it, do something with it that we didn't expect. And so today, I'm going to focus in on a passage of scripture, Second Corinthians chapter one, verses three through four.

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

Today I want to talk about three ways that God uses the rescued to help rescue others. Listen, if hurting people hurt people, rescued people can rescue people. And this is so foundational and we've seen living proof of a loving God to a watching world here in our church today. An example of a person, in this video, that just said, "Yes," to God. And I believe there are three things that we can pull from this today based on this passage that we read.

### **Point Number One: God Comforts So We Can Comfort**

**God comforts, so we can comfort.** Now I want to emphasize the word "can." Everybody say, "We can!" Can means "is possible" but can also means it's a **choice**, that we should do it. But he says **we can do it**.

A lot of times the reason we don't do it is because we think we can't do it. If there's anything I've learned this week, man, I want to be known for being an American, not an American't.

Like, what can we do? I believe that there's a lot we can do, and I don't believe that God expects us to do more than we can do.

In fact, in Second Corinthians, chapter one, verse four, it says, "...who comforts us in all troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble." You might say, "I'm not qualified." None of us are. I can't tell you how many times I have to say I didn't see it coming. Like, that's a regular occurrence in my life right now. But we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort **we ourselves receive** from God.

*Share a personal story of someone in your congregation who didn't feel qualified, yet stepped into ministry.*

Whatever God's poured in, you pour out to others.

God does not expect us to give something that we have not received ourselves, which is why he wants us to walk around open handed, with open hearts so we can receive what God has so that we can give comfort to someone else.

Let me explain it another way. This is a baton.

**(Hold up a baton, the type used in relay races.)**

How many of you know what this is? It's a little short stick that gets passed in a race. I'm thinking about the Olympics in Paris. Whoa, man. These women that are on the screen, Thomas and Terry were part of a relay team, and, man, they were smoking. So fast. Everybody knew they were going to run this race, and they knew they were going to run it well.

But listen, they had a problem on team USA in the prelims. They almost didn't even make it to the finals because they had trouble passing the baton to the other person. So they barely squeaked in because they had difficulty passing it on. Now, what's amazing to me is they worked on that, worked on that, worked on that.

They get into the finals and then I want you to see the picture in the finals.

**(Show photo of racers passing baton, "Slide9-Baton-Race.PNG")**

Now they successfully pass the baton, but they are not in the lead at this juncture. They're not in the lead, but because they successfully passed the baton from one to another, they were able to turn on the afterburners and win the race.

Listen, I heard about another person who ran a race, was running so hard, dropped the baton, didn't even know they dropped it, ran across the finish line, disqualified. It is so important that we help people by passing the baton. The point I'm trying to make is that when we're talking about healing, healing is meant to be passed along. That if God's done something to heal you, hey, just help somebody else the way that God helped you. And that's all God's asking us to do.

**Point Number Two: Stories Matter**

**Stories matter. Your story can be someone's survival guide.** Listen, you don't know that it's important until they tell you later on, "You helped me." It's critical. This is amazing to me. Psalm 107, verse two says this: "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story."

You know, many years later, after founding The Dwelling Place and doing other ministry work, Diane Stores went on to start another nonprofit called Door of Hope.

Door of Hope leads support groups to help men, women and children process the trauma that comes from abuse and neglect, and they host in-person and online support groups for over 400 people each year.

Now, those support groups are run by about 60 volunteer group leaders. Where do the group leaders come from? Typically, it's people who have gone through one of the support groups. People who have their own story to share, people who have overcome the trauma and pain in their own lives by the grace of God, and now they help others. It's incredibly powerful.

If you're redeemed, if you've been helped, if you've been healed by God, tell your story. It's a command. It's not a suggestion. It's something we can do. It's something we **need** to do.

Psalms 107 goes on to say, "...those he redeemed from the hand of the foe." I'm certain of this. There is evil in the world. Evil is real. Evil is organized. God's answer? Someone like you. Someone like me. That's amazing to me. He chooses us.

I was thinking about this racing concept. And then I was thinking about taking it off road because I like to watch ESPN and all these, like, terrain races, and they go through the woods in the mountains and those guys that ride those bicycles on those cliffs. When I watch that, man, that makes me feel like I drank a monster energy drink.

I'm like, my heart's racing and I hate it. Okay, I hate that feeling. And I think, "How do they even know where to go? It seems like that's dangerous." And then I learned that one of the things that they do out in the terrain, they have stacks of rocks that sometimes have things painted on them.

And the stacks of rocks are there on purpose. They're not just like, oh, we just put them here because we had nothing else to do. No, they communicate mile markers, and if there's paint on them, that communicates something else. Now on this screen you see this word and some of you are like, "I don't know what that word is."

**(Show the photo of stacked rocks, "Slide15-Cairn-Rocks.PNG")**

And it's pronounced cairn (*care/n*). Now that term is used with shepherds. It's used for guides. It's used to describe that they would use rocks. Oftentimes, rangers will set up rocks, and paint on trees to say, listen, these are mile markers.

These are things along the way. And they do this so that when you're walking in, you see these rocks and then you can see the next set of rocks, the next cairn, and you know which way to go.

Sometimes we get lost. But not only that, there are moments, not just in being lost, but that you can go too far. I remember one time I went on a hike and I was walking through this area, and I walked out into this incredible, beautiful scenery and there was no rope or anything. And I mean, literally, I almost walked off a cliff.

There wasn't a cairn there. No rocks, no sign.

**(Show the photo of a woman stacking rocks, "Slide16-Cairn-Stacking.PNG")**

Here you see a woman who's stacking a rock in this beautiful location. And the reason that rock exists there is because this is a great spot to stop and look. But you need to stop so that you don't go off the edge. Listen, it's not the gravity that's going to kill you. It's the sudden stop.

And so this is her adding to it. And so she's sharing, like, "Listen, I was there, I've been here and acknowledging that this is the spot where you need to stop." The point is, **every testimony is a roadmap to someone else**. Your story matters, no matter how small it may be. It's got to start somewhere.

### **Point Number Three: God Restores what the Enemy Tried to Destroy**

**God restores what the enemy tried to destroy.** And boy, that is the key man. Because, listen, there are devastating blows that the enemy will land. He will. He will set people back. He killed Jesus. But he didn't stop him. Because we've got a God that's so out of the box, he's out of the tomb.

They say you can't keep a good man down, but you can't keep God down. That's for sure. And so, guess what? As believers of Jesus Christ, the thing that sets us apart from every religion in the world is that God lives within us. So when we get knocked down, God remains standing, and we resurrect **with** him.

God restores what the enemy tried to destroy. From Joel chapter two, verse 25, “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten.” Some of us here are living in that moment, where you’ve lost everything. These people lost everything. The locusts ate it. But God says, “I will repay you.” It doesn’t mean that you and I don’t go through bad things.

It says, though, that he will **redeem** those things. He will not waste pain, but he will give us purpose. So when I think about that, I’m thinking about the race. How do we pass the baton? I’m hurting. I’m hurting. My pain can be a platform. What do we do? Then I think about another racer, April Jones.

**(Show the photo of April Jones, “Slide20-April-Jones.PNG”)**

Whoa, man, that’s a million-dollar smile right there.

Team USA. I’ll tell you what, man. We’ve got some of the most photogenic people on the planet. Her story is incredible. NCAA racer, future so bright she had to wear shades. And then tragedy struck. I mean, she went through a literal train wreck. A literal train wreck changed her whole career.

She had two great desires in her life. What did she want? What was the race she wanted to run? She wanted to work for the Secret Service because she wanted to protect people who were carrying messages. She wanted to protect people, but sadly could not protect herself from a train wreck. The other thing is, she’s an athlete. I mean, a really good one.

**(Show the photo of April Jones at the finish line, “Slide21-April-Finish-Line.PNG”)**

But she went through such tragedy. She almost lost her life. She did lose a limb. But she didn’t lose her way. She didn’t lose her dream. And she found the Paralympics. And she ran in the Paralympics. And she’s the one right there in the middle. And she’s crossing the line with a prosthetic leg, that replaces a leg that is no longer there.

How do you do that?

You do it because you **can**. Because we follow a God that **says you can**. We follow a God that doesn’t say “You’re not going to go through bad things.” But he says, “I’m going to redeem it.” And what I know is that restoration is real with God. And so as we’re talking about running this race today, listen, you’ve got to ask the question, “How can someone like me pass the baton?”

How do we do that? I want to give you four ideas based on the word pass. Because I'm a preacher, I like acrostics. Here we go. The **P** in pass is **pause**. Pause. Slow down and listen to God's leading. When you get knocked down, don't just get up. But when you get knocked down, lay there for a second and be like, "How did I get here?" If somebody puts you down, don't stand up and take another. Just take a moment and pause.

But in that pause, it's important to **ask**. That's the letter **A** in pass, ask. That is very painful sometimes. Ask, "Who in my life needs the comfort and grace I have experienced?" If God has helped you in any way, who is someone else? Say, "God, I will allow you to use this pain, this awful thing to help redeem my moment and someone else's." Because I follow a God that is a God of second chances. But I also follow a God who's a God of twofers. He doesn't do it just for one. He does it for many. That's why he died on the cross for everybody. Because he's got more than enough.

The **S** in pass is **share** – who do you need to share your story with?

Consider this, could you tell one person, just one person your story this week. I heard a lady tell me that years ago. God told her that her ministry was going to be working with older people. And she said, "Now I'm an older person. I'm a person who's in a facility with older people. And what I do is, I listen to people and I just listen to them and they say, 'thank you.'"

Stories matter. Our stories matter, our listening matters and sharing our stories. But listen, the last letter S, the second S is **serve**. Find a ministry or an outreach, a place where you can turn your rescue into rescue for others. Like, man, I'm looking at recovery ministry. Be there. Join that.

I'm thinking about people who maybe had a bad experience as a kid or a teenager. You might have had a good experience when you were a kid or a teenager. People need to learn from your bad experiences, and they need to learn from the good experiences, because we need the experience of grace. At a minimum, everybody in this church ought to be in a group because man, God might put you in the mix with somebody who desperately needs what you've got in your life.

I didn't even think it was that big a deal, but it meant everything to that person. And you might be sitting here saying, "Hey, I'm good. I'm good." Just wait. The train's coming. You and I are going to have a moment where we're going to get run over by life. And it may go into reverse and back up over us as well. Some of you know what I mean.

And we're going to need somebody. And you'll be shocked when that somebody drops some knowledge on you and you're like, "Whoa, that's huge. I needed that." We all **receive** the rescue and we all can be the one who **passes** the rescue. But today I want to end with this idea.

Will you let Jesus rescue you today? Listen, I think the action steps are really clear. Every person in this room needs an open hand to receive what God has to pass on to them. And then we need to intentionally pass it on to someone else. But I believe that there are people in this room that are coming to church, maybe for the first time or returning after an absence, because the world's gone so crazy.

You don't know your way. And I'm here to tell you there's only one way. And his name is Jesus. And so the question is, **will you let Jesus rescue you today?** What do I mean, rescue? Well, Colossians chapter one, verse 13 and 14 says this, "For he has rescued us." Everybody say "rescued," yeah, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

For those of you who are not yet believers, it's actually very simple. Every one of us will one day face a court date. We all die. We all stand before Supreme Judge of the universe. Justice means getting what we deserve. And because we're all sinners who fall short of the glory of God, what we deserve is separation from him.

A place that is not good. But here's the good news. Because of the cross, a perfect and loving God came down in human flesh, lived a sinless life, died in our place so we could live forever. We should have received a sentence of eternal separation. Jesus steps in and says, "No, I know him. I know her."

And instead of condemnation, we are all welcomed into eternal life. The gospel summed up in four words: Jesus took my place. Three words: him for me. Two words: substitutionary atonement. One word: grace. Grace cannot be earned. Grace cannot be bought. It doesn't matter how much money you give, how good a person you try to be, or how hard you've worked to do your best.

Christianity is different because salvation is not something you achieve. It is a gift offered freely to all of humanity. And when you receive this gift, your life will be transformed. You will be born again. Grace is not earned. It is given by God. God loves you and longs to spend eternity with you. It's the most important decision you'll ever make.

Today I'm going to ask that we pray. I would ask that we would run the race that God has set before us, that we'd be willing to receive his comfort so that we could comfort others. I also believe that the greatest comfort we can possibly have is our confidence in the salvation of Jesus.

That even though we fall short, our God follows through. Let's pray.

**(Close in prayer.)**