

# LIVING ON THE EDGE OF DESPERATE

## Week Seven Notes

### The Hemorrhaging Woman: desperate for Community Luke 8:43-48

We began this study seven weeks ago in Luke 8. Jairus has made a desperate plea for his dying daughter and Jesus is responding. However, an interruption occurs. A woman with a bleeding issue, a woman who will live another day. For 6 verses, Jesus deals with this woman while poor Jairus must be on the verge of panic. For us, these six verses could be seen as simply another healing miracle, but indeed there is something deeper...something better.

#### 1. When the issue becomes an issue.

**Read Luke 8:43-48.** This interrupting woman has a problem. She has had an ongoing menstrual cycle for twelve years. Certainly, the condition was painful and exhausting. But Mark 5:26 tells us she has suffered much at the hands of doctors. Ancient remedies were often worse than the condition being treated.

Jesus has returned to Capernaum. The crowds have been anticipating His return. As he is making His way to Jairus' house, the crowds are pressing in around Him. This bleeding woman quietly slips through the crowd and bending down low, grabs the fringe of Jesus outer garment—perhaps the prayer tassels that Jewish men sewed to their cloaks. Immediately she is healed. This could be the end of the story, but Jesus wants something more.

Leviticus 15:19 and 25 helps us understand the ramifications of her condition. Everything in the Old Testament points us to the New testament. Everything in the Mosaic Law has meaning and significance that either illustrates a truth about God, worship, or the coming Messiah. Leviticus 15:19 is explaining the protocol for menstruating women. Physically, her body is purging itself every month through the flow of blood. God created her this way so Leviticus in NOT saying this is a bad process because she is a bad person. Her monthly cycle is a spiritual illustration, reminding her, her family, and the people in her world that sin must be purged from all of us and it is purged by the flow of blood. The Day of Atonement and the temple system were the Old Testament means of purging sin through a sacrifice, the blood of that sacrifice sprinkled on the mercy seat, where God met with the High Priest once a year. Blood was sacred, it had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin.

Ponder this Old Testament illustration. Do you see the foreshadowing of Jesus shedding His own blood for the forgiveness of our sins?

Leviticus 15:20ff lets us know the entire family participated in this monthly illustration. They could not touch her, sleep where she slept, sit where she sat lest her impurity be transferred to them and they be considered unclean. Again, an illustration of the effects of our sin on others. Again, God is using something perfectly natural as an illustration. But Leviticus 15:25 tells us of a far greater problem. If a woman is bleeding beyond the normal time of her monthly cycle, she remains unclean for the entirety of her bleeding. The woman in Luke 8 has been bleeding for TWELVE years.

For twelve years she has not felt the touch of another human being. She has not hugged or even fellowshiped with family and friends. She cannot go to the market, hold a job, draw water at the well with others. She is isolated, lonely, and dejected. She lives in a completely Jewish community which strictly adheres to the Mosaic Law, following it to the letter, thus isolating her from everything. She is ostracized socially, and she is ostracized spiritually. She cannot enter the synagogue to hear the reading of God's Word. She is not allowed to participate in the Sabbath ceremony. She is shut out of all special feasts and festivals. As far as the Jews are concerned, she is completely cut off from God Himself because of her condition. Oh my. Doesn't she break your heart?

Jesus is about to change everything! While she believes her touching the cloak of Jesus can be anonymous, Jesus instead calls her out. When He asks in verse 45, "Who touched me?" there is no doubt sovereign, omniscient God is the flesh knew exactly who touched Him. In fact, he knew everything about her. While this healing may seem random to us, Jesus never heals randomly. No one can "steal" a miracle from the Lord. His power is not superstitious touching the tassel, or the talisman, or the TV. He is not sprinkling fairy dust on whomever it lands to provide healing. His healing is always intentional and filled with greater purpose than the surface seems to indicate. Even this one for this woman.

When she knows she has been discovered, she falls on the ground in front of him trembling. The crowd is still gathered. They know her. They would have stepped back or been angry knowing she touched people in the crowd on her way to Jesus. Verse 47 tells us she admitted in front of all the people why she touched him—she exposed her own condition—and she told everyone she was immediately healed. Jesus responds with two phrases. Each phrase is packed with significance.

The first phrase, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." He recognizes her as part of the Jewish community when he calls her daughter. He also confirms that her condition has been healed. Be careful with this phrase. We can misunderstand the meaning of "your faith has made you well". Faith is acting on revealed truth. It is trusting God enough to act or obey Him. This woman only had a tiny piece of truth. The oral law said if someone touched the Messiah, they would

be healed. This oral law was not God inspired. In fact, it is where the other 636 laws came from that proved to be a burden to every Jew. Perhaps she had heard the oral law and somehow knew Jesus was the Messiah. But perhaps she had seen and heard how He had already worked in Capernaum. She believed Jesus could heal her. She acted on that tiny bit of truth she had—and she was healed. Sometimes we think faith is making a big bold claim and demanding God come through. That is not faith. Faith is acting on the truth we already have, trusting and obeying...one step into the light of truth. This is living by faith.

In publicly announcing she is healed, Jesus has not only healed her, but He has also restored her to the Jewish community. After a ritual bath that evening, she will be free to go wherever she wants, hug whomever she wants, visit whomever she wants. She has been restored socially to the community.

The second phrase in Verse 48 is even more important, “go in peace”. Not only was her body healed, but her soul was healed as well. She could have peace, not only with others but also with God. Like the woman caught in adultery, Jesus is promising an eternal peace that will come in full upon His own death. The peace He offers her will come at great price to him as He sheds His own blood for this dear woman’s peace. This simple phrase, “go in peace” restores this woman to her spiritual community. She is at peace relationally with God. Everyone hears what Jesus says. She will worship again, hear God’s Word again, and participate with her spiritual community again.

The woman wanted to be healed of a difficult condition. Jesus wanted to restore her to the community and redeem her to new life. Certainly, she was not an unforeseen interruption. Jesus knew she was there all along and He had great compassion on her.

Digging into this account, I am struck by the concept of COMMUNITY. I define it as *people who are connected to one another through shared relationship and shared purpose*. Community seems to be a buzz word these days and certainly people are searching for significant relationships with other people. But true community has always been God’s design and His creation. Genesis 2:18 tells us Eve was created for Adam..the first community designed by God was a husband and wife, shared relationship with God and shared purpose. In fact, God has always carried out His redeeming plan for all of history through two specific communities. 1) The nation of Israel and 2) the church. Both Israel and the church meet the criteria of community—shared relationship (with God and each other) and a shared purpose of being God’s people.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-8.** God chose Israel to be His people, a nation not based on race but rather based on relationship to Him, chosen out His love and grace. Additionally, God dealt with Israel as a community when there was sin involved. We don’t often understand in our individualistic culture that everything we do has an effect on everyone around us, but it does. Because we are believers in Christ, we are a community and our personal sin always affects others. **Read Joshua 7.** It is a difficult chapter, but God is dealing with Israel, first as a community, then deals with a man named Achan who caused the problem in the first place.

1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to describe the New Testament version of community which is the church. One body, many parts, working together because of a shared relationship with Christ and the shared purpose of being conformed to the image of Christ.

So, if community is God’s design: if we are believers in Christ and thus an important part of the church, the body of Christ, how do we encourage/build/foster community? How do we operate as a community? How do we draw others into community? And how do we enter community if we have been standing on the outside looking in? All Christians are on one side of the community issue of the other. Either we are not connected with a community of other believers and need to be OR we are connected to a community of believers, and we need to draw others in. In the strictest sense, our community can be the local body of Christ—the local church and even more specifically, a small group of believers who walk through life with one another. BUT Christian community can take place among believers anywhere. The church is bigger than one local body. While there are many aspects to community, I briefly explore three.

### A. Encourage and Build Up

**Memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:11.** Believers are admonished to **build up**, strengthen, one another in their walk with the Lord. We are also told to **encourage** one another which means to come alongside, to comfort, exhort sometimes with hard truth spoken in great love.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7** We are to **comfort one another** in difficult times. Our difficult paths help others. Take what you have learned along the way and share it with others.

**John 13 and Philippians 2:3** teach us to be **servants**. Jesus washed feet and so must we, taking the role of a servant, unafraid that someone will take advantage of us. Certainly, using wisdom and discernment in everything, but also trusting the Lord as we serve others.

**Galatians 6:2, illustrated by Mark 2:1-12.** We are to **bear one another’s burdens**. Carry someone else’s mat and always carry it to Jesus.

We must be willing to give to others, but we must also be willing to receive. If you have been standing on the outside of community—wanting to be anonymous—please realize, Jesus designed you for more. You are a vital part of the body of Christ. Your absence affects everyone and certainly they miss the blessing of you!

## B. Pray

**Memorize Hebrews 4:16.** Prayer is the greatest tool and most precious privilege God has given us. Sometimes we want to “do” more. But prayer is the greatest work we will ever do. It is simply talking to God. It is not complicated or reserved for professionals. It is for anyone who has a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God entreats us to come boldly to His throne room, always finding help and compassion for the things that weigh upon our hearts. If you are uncertain how to pray, go to Scripture and pray the verse back to God on behalf of yourself or those you love. **Colossians 1:9-12** is a great start. Simply read those verses out loud to God, reading with your children, your friends, your spouse in mind. Read a **Psalm** as a prayer to the Lord inserting your own community of people and your own needs. Prayer is something we practice, not something we master. It is the verbalization of a surrendered life—seeking God’s heart and trusting Him with our greatest needs.

## C. Forgive

**Memorize Ephesians 4:32.** Many believers have been hurt by someone in the church. It is a common excuse for leaving a church to find another or leaving the church permanently. However, we have been given instructions on how to deal with difficult people. These instructions pertain to all of us especially if we have been hurt or if we have hurt someone else (Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:21-22).

Ephesians 4:32 say we are to forgive others in the same manner as we have been forgiven by God. It is hard to realize how great God forgiveness toward us actually is. God does not measure the depth of His forgiveness by the number of times we have sinned. He measures His forgiveness by the great cost of Jesus death. We are all sinners, deserving death...But God being rich in mercy provided another way. He provided Christ as a substitute for our sin. We are free and forgiven, our sins cast into the ocean of forgetfulness and removed from us as far as the east is from the west. THAT is how big our forgiveness is to be toward others. However, we do not have the capacity to remove sin from someone else’s life. Only God can do that. Ephesians 4:32 uses another word for the forgiveness that we exercise. It is a word meaning to release. We are to release the person who wounded us to the Lord, we acknowledge to God that the person owes us no debt spiritual debt, we abdicate any power for retribution that we might have. We release our hurt to Lord knowing He alone can heal our hearts and minds. We open our hands, so we are free from bitterness.

Biblical forgiveness however is not simply closure! It is not flippant. It is not exercised without boundaries. Here are 5 things to remember as we exercise forgiveness toward those who have hurt us

1. Forgiveness is not denial of the pain. We don’t sweep our pain under the rug and pretend we are okay. We release our pain to Lord admitting to God and the other person that the transgression hurt!
2. Forgiveness does not negate the consequences. Sometimes there are punitive consequences that need to play out. We do not have to fix or dismiss the consequences of someone else’s actions.
3. Forgiveness does not guarantee restored trust or renewed relationship with the one who hurt you. Biblical forgiveness does not require you to jump right back into a relationship with the person who hurt you. Sometimes hurts change things forever especially if the other person has had no change of heart. Forgiveness can be given, but humanly speaking, trust is hard earned.
4. Forgiveness is not a one-time event. It is not a one and done. Our minds do not have the capacity to forgive and forget. One of the reason Jesus says to forgive 70 x 7 is that after we forgive, we may wake up the next day and still be hurt, still rehearse the hurtful scene, still see the scars, still feel angry. We do not have to rehash the situation with one who wounded us over and over, but we may have to release it to the Lord over and over.
5. Forgiveness does not wait to be asked. If we wait until the other person asks for forgiveness, we may be waiting a lifetime. They may not realize they hurt you or they may not care. If we wait, bitterness has an opportunity to set in and cause problems for us and for those we love. We can even forgive a person who is unwilling to speak to us, releasing the hurt to the Lord, waiting for Him to work in the other person’s life. Some of the people we must forgive or dead or unable to be reached. Again, release it to the Lord. He heals the hurts that have been planted in us by people who no longer are alive.

Certainly, the topic of forgiveness encompasses more than a few paragraphs. If you have been deeply wounded, seek out an older wiser woman or a Christian counselor or pastor. Forgiveness is essential to healthy community and to spiritual wellness.

In closing, like the woman with the issue of blood, we are all desperate for community. If you are standing on the outside looking into a community of believers, don't let fear, past hurts, sin or unforgiveness keep you on the outside. You were created for community with other believers in Christ. Ask God to open doors and give you opportunities to serve, to reach out, to meet people.

Likewise, if you are already connected to other believers, don't be content with "your four and no more". Look around you. People are dying for spiritual community. The church is filled with anonymous people who need you!