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Well, good morning. Welcome to The MET. Are you guys doing good at the Cypress campus and here at the *Jones Road Campus*? All right! We do want to welcome all of you over at the Cypress campus on Fry Road. Thank you for joining us. My name is Scott [Rodgers, *Jones Road Campus Pastor*], if we haven't met. We're in this series called *Kickin' It Old School*—what they had to say back in the day. Before we go there, I want to give you a very quick update:

I received an email from our youth pastor, Zach King [*Student and College Pastor*] yesterday and some pictures this morning. They have a team of students near Mexico City—there are 26—from here at the Jones Road and the Cypress campus. [While giving the update, displayed on the screens is a slide show of the pictures send by Zach King of the student mission team.] They're helping to host a camp for students (junior high, senior high kids) in that area.

Here's what Zach said: They had over 500 kids come throughout the week and 200 of those left receiving Christ into their life. Is that not good news? In addition to that, 100 of those students followed Christ in baptism. So it's (just) a great thing going on. They're also ministering to a group of people—Zach said there are about 400 people—living in this dump. (They) literally that's where they live. They're out there (just giving) to help feed them—loving on them. One of the guys from the team sat with a guy and they were talking last night and he led him to Christ as well. So there's (just) a lot of great stuff going on outside of the Cypress campus and the *Jones Road Campus* this weekend. So it's great stuff.

All right—*Kickin' It Old School*. If you're ready, say this with me: Who I was...is not who I am. A little more passion: Who I was...is not who I am.

## WHO I WAS IS NOT WHO I AM

It wasn't too long ago (to be honest with you): I'm driving down the road in my car and I'm scanning through the channels and I come across a song that I absolutely love. I haven't heard it in a very long time. What's amazing is how I can lose my keys—I can't find those—but I can remember words to songs forever; it doesn't matter how long it's been.

I'm cranking this song now; I'm singing it word for word—loving it. I remember when it first came out—loved it then. And then the radio voice-over comes at the end of the song—(you know) that cool, deep voice that says: You're listening to classic rock 94.7. And I'm thinking: Uh...huh-uh, huh-uh, huh-uh—no! That's my song—that's not classic rock. That is not classic rock; that's my song. But (you know) when your favorite (or one of your favorite) songs from yesteryear is on the classic rock station, you're old school. (You are old school.)

But don't laugh at me, because I know you are as well. Because—

- If you know who this is...[picture displayed on the screens is of *Mister Ed*, the talking horse, standing next to Wilbur, his owner, from the popular 1960s TV show] you are definitely old school. (All right?) Twenty of you know who that is.
- If you wore these or are wearing them today...[two pictures displayed show several men wearing 1970s-vintage bell-bottom pants] you are old school.

- If you thought this was the latest technology and the greatest in your life... [picture displayed is of a *Sony Walkman* cassette player with earphones] you're old school.
- You don't have to be a dinosaur to be old school, actually. If you have one of these in your pocket... [picture displayed is of a *Motorola Razr* cell phone, originally introduced in 2004] you qualify; you're old school. All right?

(You know) it's probably—it's fun, but it's not fair to label you guys as old school. But truth be told, we're labeled every single day. People label us—oh:

- He's this
- She's that
- She's always been that
- She'll never change
- He is that
- He is this

We also label ourselves:

- I'm this way
- That's the way I've always been
- I don't expect it to ever change
- That's who I was
- That's how God wired me (You've heard that—right?—that's how God wired me.)

We label ourselves and we're labeled every day. The problem with that is that when we really believe it, we begin—be it consciously, subconsciously, whatever you want to call it—we begin to live our life from those labels.

What's damaging about that is it's not uncommon that we limit what God can do through us because we're living from those labels. We also begin to sabotage our life. We begin to behave out in a way that says: Okay, yeah that really *is* who I am and we sabotage our future. Labels: they can really limit what happens in our life.

There was one such person in Scripture that *could* have really allowed her label to limit what God wanted to do through her; and that is, a lady named Rahab. If you have your Bible or if you have it on your mobile device, go to *Joshua, chapter 2*. We're going to begin in just a moment in *verse 1*.

Let me give you a little historical context here (though). It's this: Moses—the prophet of God, the man of God, the deliverer of the nation of Israel, the head of God's people—is dead. His assistant named Joshua is called by God to lead the Israelite nation into what He's called the Promised Land. So they set out on conquest and Joshua was trying to figure out what to do. In fact, in *Joshua, chapter 1*, God tells him specifically:

- Be strong
- Be courageous
- Be very strong
- Be very courageous

Because I, your God, am with you; so do not fear. [*Joshua 1:6-9* (summarized)]

So Joshua is leading this nation on this conquest to realize the Promised Land and they're coming toward a city called Jericho. So he thinks: Okay, I've got to send out a recon mission—check this place out—see what we're up against. He sends out two spies to the city of Jericho. That's where we're at in *Joshua, chapter 2, verse 1* (check it out). It says, "Then Joshua son of Nun..." Now, how that happens I don't know because I thought you had to have a mother and father, but anyway—

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from {S-town} [Shittim.] {I'm not trying that, all right? I'm not going to try it. Maybe at the 11:00 [service] but not at the 9:30 [service], all right? He says:} "Go, look over the land," [he said,] "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

*Joshua 2:1 (NIV)*

Rahab the prostitute—you may have heard that before. Rahab the prostitute: labeled for her sin. Rahab the prostitute: historians tell us that she probably lived in the city walls of Jericho. They literally had homes and commerce going on in and around these walls of the city. She set up her for-profit business right there in the Red Light District of Jericho; and the spies go to her place. Now, here's what they also say (whoever "they" are that): They assume that the reason the spies ended up at Rahab's place was because the King of Jericho [and] the people knew the Israelites were coming; they were keeping an eye out for them. As they're keeping watch, the spies thought: Okay, let's go here because they won't notice us. There [are] a lot of people going in and out and we're going to blend right in, so let's stop here. So that's what they tell us (why they went there).

So here's the thing: Rahab is mentioned eight times in the Scripture; six times she's mentioned as the harlot or the prostitute. Now, here's the question I have: Why are we usually labeled for our sin and—in the least—our weaknesses? (I mean) people are so quick (and we are so quick) to label others for their sin, their wrong, [and] their weakness. Rarely is it the strength that we label each other for. She's labeled for her sin.

Let me give you some examples from way back in history. Now I need some interaction. Cypress [and] Jones Road (both you guys here), interact with me. I'm going to say the beginning of a phrase and you need to complete it. Are you ready? Cypress, you're ready?—they're not here—let's see what happens. All right, here we go:

- Attila the...[congregational response: Hun]
- Conan the...[congregational response: Barbarian] (All right.)
- Alexander the...[congregational response: Great]
- SpongeBob...[congregational response: SquarePants]

See? Labels—they—can stick with you forever. It doesn't matter who you are or where you go, these labels can stick with you.

Let me ask you this question: So—

- What's your label?
- What's the label that's been put on you by somebody else?
- What's the label (maybe) that you've put on yourself?

Maybe for you—some of the common ones I brought up here with me—how about [holding up jumbo-sized “HELLO I’M...” name tags filled in with the following labels]:

- Ivan the **Insecure**
- Frank the **Fearful**: That’s who I am; that’s who I’ll always be; I’ll never overcome that.
- Diane the **Depressed**: That’s my future and there’s no way out.
- Connie the **Critical**: Don’t call me critical, jerk.
- Carol the **Controlling**: I’m not controlling, just do what I say or get out of here. (All right?)
- Alan the **Abused**: Yeah, it’s real—yes. Painful?—yes. Labeled?—yes.
- Alice the **Addict**

Here’s one; here’s one from my life (one of many labels that I have) and it’s called: **Son of the town DRUNK**. [He peels off the backing and sticks the name-badge to his shirt, across his chest.] I grew up in the home of an alcoholic father. I remember as a kid being stuck with this label: Son of the town drunk. Many of you know exactly what I’m talking about:

- The dysfunction
- The pain
- The shame that can come along with that

And I remember, as a kid, riding my bike with all my friends around the neighborhood. The first time I heard this—the first of many times—one of my friend’s dad yelled out: Hey, here comes Scott, son of the town drunk! And it was just like: Whoa! Man, I guess this isn’t hidden anymore. That label (I mean) it stuck with me. This label increased already what I had in me as far as insecurity. It (kind of) put some fuel to the flame of anger that I had in me. And for whatever reason (kind of) gave me what I thought was a bit of an excuse to be rebellious. Scott, son of the town drunk.

What’s your label? What I like so much about this story of Rahab is how God takes this broken, labeled woman and redeems her and transforms her life. And I am confident that this same God, Who has done that for Rahab, will do it for you and me. What’s your label? I’ve got mine.

So, let’s see what happens here with Rahab. She’s heard the news. If you read the context of this account, the people of Jericho, they knew what was going on: They had heard about the parting of the Red Sea. They’d heard about the whole deal back in Egypt and God’s delivering his people and the conquest. They are literally petrified and this is where we pick it up. Rahab is having a conversation with these spies, and here’s what she says to them in *Joshua 2, verse 11*. She knew the news—CNN was all over the place back then—and she says this:

When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, {and here’s where she’s at personally—she says:} for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

*Joshua 2:11 (NIV)*

Rahab comes to a place where she believes in God so much that she’s willing to place her trust in Him, to put her life in His hands.

That's exactly where I believe—if we want to see God do a transforming work in our lives—we need to arrive at the very same place. And here's what I call it (you can write it down if you're taking notes)—the same thing that Rahab did, we need to do—we need to take what I call the risk of faith.

## THE RISK OF FAITH

There's a risk involved. Rahab had a huge risk she was facing: Okay, if this God of yours is really Who he says He is, and He's really going to do what He says He can do—and I've heard the stories—then the only reasonable response that I have is to put my life in His hands. That's the only reasonable response. So she makes the decision, takes the risk of faith, because—reality is—she's a traitor. She's now a traitor. If she gets caught joining their side, she's gone; she's probably going to be executed. She takes the risk of faith and puts her life in the hands of the God of heaven and earth.

I remember when I surrendered my life to Christ, and I was probably—I don't know—it was a couple of years after high school. I came home and I had a Bible in my hand—I was living with my parents at that time—went in the house, they're sitting at the kitchen table. I walked in the house and I put my Bible on the kitchen table and I sat down.

I said: Guess what?

They looked at me and [said]: Yeah, what? What's up?

I said: I just asked Jesus into my life. (That was like a foreign language to them—you know?)

They're like: What? And they looked at each other (like) bewildered (like): Oh, boy, what are we going to do? They looked at me and my mom says: Is this a cult?

It was pretty comical then too [in response to congregational laughter].

I remember just trying to live my life as a follower of Christ in front of my parents. They had no relationship with God. So, I'm not preaching at them; I didn't know enough to do that. I was just—my heart was on fire for the things of God. It literally was like the blindfold was removed from my eyes and my mind and my heart because:

- I began to see the world in a whole different perspective.
- I began to crave the things of God that I didn't have before.
- I began to see myself differently as I read His word.
- I began to view Who my Heavenly Father was totally different.

(I mean) my heart was ablaze for the things of God. I'm just loving on my folks and just saying a few words here and there as I could.

It got to the point where my mom made the decision to ask Christ into her life. It was a pretty special, pretty cool moment. But my dad, he was more reluctant. (You know) he, as an alcoholic, he was pretty much stone-drunk six days week. He took a day off—it wasn't the Sabbath—it was just a day he picked. And literally, it was more miserable that day when he wasn't drinking than when he was.

I remember talking to him a lot. In his mind, there was (just) this thought of: Okay, if I ask God—if He's really there—to come into my life, then it's possible something's going to have to change. It's interesting with addiction and dysfunction—and I am not a psychologist but I've

lived in that world a bit—it's interesting that when we live in pain, we're fearful of moving away from it; because we think there's even more pain that we have to go through to get there. He wasn't at the place where he wanted to do that. He thought: Okay, something's going to have to change.

And so what I love about the whole deal with Rahab is—if you look at her—she didn't have to go through rehab before she gave her life to God—did she? She said: Okay, your God's the God of heaven and earth and I'm going to take the risk, put my life in His hands. What is so cool about that is that she didn't have to go through rehab.

My dad—I got [him] to the place where he finally made the decision to pray and ask Christ into his life—and he *did*—but he was still the town drunk; still drinking. He was a beer drinker. He'd drink about 14 to 16 beers a night after work—

- Couldn't kick it
- Still drinking
- Loved God
- A child of God
- Still the town drunk

Labels: Son of the town drunk. But what happens when we take that risk of faith? What happened to Rahab? Let's check it out. Turn [in] your Bible to *Joshua, chapter 6*, because here's what happens (*Joshua, chapter 6*) it says this.

Now, before I read this, let me (just) mention this: She takes the risk of faith. My dad got to a place where he took the risk of faith, asking Christ into his life. And I'm pretty sure that God may be asking a lot of you to take a risk of faith.

- Somewhere in your life—maybe you've never begun a relationship with Christ and you're sitting here today and the line has been drawn; you see it clearly. The risk for you is the same for Rahab: Okay, my reasonable response is to give my life to this God.
- Maybe you're a follower of Christ and you know very well what God's asking you to do, and it's going to take a risk. He's challenging you to step across that line.

Whatever it may be—it's different for all of us—but wrestle with that a little bit as we pick up what happened to Rahab. She takes a risk of faith. In *Joshua 6*, in *verse 25* they take the city of Jericho and they keep the agreement they did with Rahab. God saves her life—it says this in *verse 25*:

But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

*Joshua 6:25 (NIV)*

Rahab: God saves her life physically, but not just her life, it's her family. It's literally [that] her legacy is changed because she took the risk of faith. In fact, here's what Scripture says in

*Hebrews, chapter 11*. Before I go there, here's the result of her faith. You see, she took the risk; here's the result of her faith.

## THE RESULT OF FAITH

Write that down (if you're taking notes) because there is a result when we take a risk. And here's what it says in *Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 31* (it says):

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies,  
was not killed with those who were disobedient.

*Hebrews 11:31 (NIV)*

I find it really cool that here in *Hebrews, chapter 11*, which is known to many as—what? The *Hall of Faith*, is what some of them call *Hebrews, chapter 11*. In all this list of great men and women of God, who lived by faith and God did great things in their life, God slips in this prostitute. I like that. I like it when God (just kind of) messes with you a little bit. And not only is she mentioned in the *Hall of Faith*, she's literally part of the genealogy of Christ—a harlot. She takes the risk of faith, puts her life in the hands of the God of heaven and earth, and the result is:

- He spares her life
- He uses her to be part of the lineage of bringing about the Savior of the world.

But that is not all that happens. Let's check out the rest of the story, because there [are] even more things than that. If you have your Bible, turn it to *James, chapter 2, verse 25*. Because the Bible doesn't tell us that she lived happily ever after; it doesn't tell us that. It doesn't tell us the rest of that story, but here (in my mind) is the best of the story. *James chapter 2, verse 25*, it says:

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered  
righteous...

*James 2:25 (NIV)*

Hold on, you know those four last words, "the prostitute considered righteous"—that gives me hope.

- That's the God of Scripture.
- That's the God of grace.
- That's the God of forgiveness.

It says, "the prostitute considered righteous" and it goes on—she's:

...considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to  
the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

*James 2:25 (NIV)*

Here we see a transaction take place. It was a spiritual transaction—outside of the physical—and it's the very same thing that happens with you and [me] when we place our life in the hands of God. When we ask Jesus Christ to lead us in our life, here's what happens, and it is very clear. *2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17* says:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a {—What?—he’s a} new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

*2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)*

If anyone—that’s anyone, anyone, anyone—if they’re in Christ, they are a brand-new creation; “the old has gone and the new has come!” Now, say this with me: Who I was...is not who I am. Now say it again: Who I was...is not who I am.

## **WHO I WAS IS NOT WHO I AM**

If that’s the truth and you’re a follower of Christ, who you were, is not who you are; because, in Christ, you are a brand-new creation. So, just...[removes the name badge previously affixed to his shirt] rip off the label, tear it up, [and] quit living a life from the labels that we’ve put on ourselves [and the] limiting labels that others put on us; because we are new in Christ. (We are new in Christ.)

As God—Who redeemed the life of this broken and labeled woman named Rahab—invaded the life of my dad, he asked Christ into his life. He was still the town drunk, but his heart was churning for more of God in his life, to experience more of the fullness that’s available in his relationship with God.

I had moved out of the house, was living in a house that we rented with a bunch of guys. I remember I was sitting on—actually—my futon. Does anybody remember futons—still have those things? All right—old school?—yes. I was sitting on my futon and they are (like) that high [indicates a distance of about 18 inches between his hands] off the ground (right?) and reading my Bible. It was a weeknight about 9:00 at night. I am just reading through something and it (just) impressed on my heart: Go visit your dad. Logically, my first response was: No, no, no, no; I’ve got to be at work at 7:00 in the morning. It’s a half hour drive each way. That’s crazy; that’s just me. So I keep on reading. “Go visit your dad” pops up again. So I’m thinking: Okay (through my thick skull) maybe this is God.

So I get in my car. I drive out to their house—half hour drive away. It’s in the middle of summer. I think my mom was working second-shift because she wasn’t home. It was in Michigan, so the door was open with just a screen door. You can actually do that in other parts of the world during the summer—have just a screen door—but you can’t do it in the winter time. So I walk up—the house is lit up—walk up to the door and I knock on the door. No answer. It’s quiet. The lights are on; I’m looking through the screen door. Now, of course I could just walk right in, but I (just) wanted to be respectful and knock on the door—no answer.

So I yell through the screen door: Hey, is anybody home? Anybody here?

I hear my dad in (a kind of) a weepy (kind of) voice—he says: Scott, is that you?

I’m like: Yeah.

He’s like: Hold on.

[He] comes out of the bathroom, has a towel around his waist—totally naked except for the towel—and he’s just weeping. (He’s just I mean) honestly, tears were running down his cheeks. He looks at me and he says (he says): Man, I’ve been praying that God would help me and send someone to help me.

Honest-to-God truth; I've been praying that and I am thinking: Oh...whoa...this is getting cool. (That's what I am thinking.)

He says: Come on in. So he goes and he changes and we were sitting—again—at that kitchen table. He's just crying and he says: Scott, (he says) I can't kick the alcohol. I can't. I've been doing it for 30-plus years and I just can't. (And he says): What do I do? What do I do?

I didn't have the answers, but boldness rose up within me at that time and I said: God can set you free. I believe that God can set you free because the Bible that I read says that the Son came to set us free. And I said to him (I said): You know, I was reading in there; it says that if you're sick or you're struggling with something—you're bound by something—it says that a believer can put hands on you and pray and God can heal you. Is that what you want?

He looked at me; he said: Yes. And there was this real sense of repentance and pain and a willingness to say: Okay, I'm ready—I'm desperate for God right here—let's pray and let's ask God to set me free.

And we just prayed a simple prayer. I honestly don't know what we prayed. It was something basic, but it was full of passion and it was from the heart. We prayed. We said: Amen. He gets up and he had (like) three beers left in the fridge—nothing overdramatic (you know) hyper-spiritual looking—walks over to the fridge, grabs the three beers, dumps them in the sink, and he says: Man, I'm done. I'm done. And we just (kind of) hung out and talked a bit and probably embraced and I went home.

There was a risk in that though. He took the risk. For him to pour that beer down the sink—I'm telling you, guys, if you've been there you know what it is like—that's a big risk. That's a big moment. He took the risk. (And if I [was] to tell you how long ago that's been, I'd give away my age, so I'm not.) But the result of his faith in God in that moment—I cannot explain:

- Why it happens for some
- It doesn't happen in that way for others
- The whys and why-nots

I am not God. I can't explain all of that. But he has never taken another drink again and it has been *years* since that happened. And here's the kicker—and again I can't explain the whys and why not's, but—he never even went through detox. Free! Instantly!

I don't know where you're at in your life—and I struggle with this sometimes—but I'm telling you what: I'm going to choose to believe in the God of heaven and the God of earth who did His work in Rahab, who did His work in [my] dad, can do it in you and He can do it in me. Because He is the God of heaven and earth and nothing is impossible with Him.

Labels—forget the labels—because as I look through here [picking up his Bible]:

- This says that I'm a child of God. [*Romans 8:16*]
- It says that I'm more than a conqueror in Christ. [*Romans 8:37*]
- It says that I'm the head and not the tail. [*Deuteronomy 28:13*]
- It says that God will never leave me, He will never forsake me. [*Hebrews 13:5*]
- He says I'm seated in heavenly places with Christ. [*Ephesians 2:6*]
- He says that I am a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar person. [*1 Peter 2:9*]

That's right; you're different because the Spirit of God is in you. And it says a whole lot more. How about we just start putting *those* labels on and living from *that* place instead of the other labels? It doesn't make life instantly easy, but if we live from there, the result of our risk of faith is going to be God transforming us [and] changing our lives. Let's pray:

Father God, we consider it an amazing thing to be called a child of God.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I want to ask you a couple questions. The first one is this:

- What is that label and what is that risk that God's challenging you to take right now?
- What's that label that you're wanting to peel off [and] tear apart but you haven't? Because you've believed it and you don't think you can ever be different. You don't think that God can change you in that area.

Today's the day to take a risk of faith and surrender that to Him. You're sitting here with your head bowed and your eyes closed and your prayer is: Scott, just pray for me, because I'm taking the label off and I'm going to choose to trust the God of heaven and earth. I'm going to take the risk and I pray that the result will be that He will change my life. If that's your prayer, just lift your hand. I notice that it's many of you all over the place. Let's pray:

Father, I pray right now that You give us the courage to tear off that label that's limited us. Because that is not who You say we are and You are much bigger than that. God, we just by faith take the risk to choose to follow You, to surrender to You, to live our life as a child of God, and start from that place. God, I pray for these guys that You would transform their hearts and lives here at our Jones Road location and on Fry Road at Cypress. God, change us. I thank You that—in Jesus' name—I believe that's Your heart and Your desire to do so.

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed I want to ask you a question. Let me start it with this actually; I'm going to say a statement here and it's this:

You are who you've been and that's who you will always be until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

Because it's in that moment that spiritual transaction takes place. If anyone be in Christ, if anyone lays down their life and says, "Jesus, be the leader of my life; be the Lord of my life." Until you take that risk, you do not become that new creation where the old has gone and the new is come.

If you're sitting here today and you've never made that decision yet to ask Christ into your life and your prayer is really, "Jesus come into my life, save me, change me. I don't want to live by these labels; I want to become a child of God." If that's you and you're sitting here at our Cypress campus or here at Jones Road and that's your prayer and you say:

- Scott, pray with me.
- I want Jesus to be the Lord of my life.
- I want to be a child of God.

If that's your prayer and you've never made it before, I want you to lift your hand right now. Be bold; take that risk. Take that risk of faith; lift your hand real high. Ma'am, I see your hand over here. I see your hand over here as well. I'm going to keep asking. Take the risk. It's your time. Sir, I see your hand way in the back. Who else? I want to be a child of God. Today is the day I make that bold decision; I'm asking Christ into my life. We're going to pray together. All you guys [who] lifted your hand, we're all going to pray together as a family and say this prayer with them to support them. Allow me to lead you and say this from your heart, say it with your mouth—say:

Father God, today I surrender to You. I trust in You with my life. Please forgive me of my sin. I believe that Jesus Christ, your Son, died for me and that He's risen from the dead and He is the Lord of all. So, Jesus, be the Lord of my life. I'm a child of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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**Strategic planning is the key to warfare;  
to win, you need a lot of good counsel.**

*Proverbs 24:6*  
(THE MESSAGE)

**Legend:**

(**words in parentheses**) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[**words in square brackets**] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{**words in curly brackets within indented quote**} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*