

Relationships

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[0:00] We're going to continue on next with our sermon series in Proverbs. Ronzi is going to come up and bring the sermon today. So come on, Kirk. Yeah, that's for real, actually.

I've worked in schools for many years. And at one school, my students had to call me Mr. Ronzheimer, which turned to Mr. Ronzi. And then it was just Ronzi. So I was like, okay, I've learned that if students give you a nickname, it's a good thing.

It's a good thing. They love you. Again, thank you, Philip, for that. And tying into what we're about to talk to you this morning, we're continuing our series in Proverbs.

And so if you're new to City Grace, this is your first time here, you may wonder kind of where we're at in all this or why a topical series. But we've been moving through Proverbs and looking at the different, I guess, really important concepts and ideas in Proverbs.

And so this morning is relationships. Relationships. It's really big. I mean, that's pretty huge. Not sure why I chose that one. I'm like, why do I do this to myself? But relationships.

[1:03] I love relationships, okay, from a biblical perspective. Relationships are awesome, okay? There you go. Boom. Think about your favorite people and your favorite friend.

Like the best relationships, your favorite relative, auntie or uncle or somebody. You know that person that just brings a smile to your face? That friend who's a coworker?

Like, man, that best friend I have at work or school or something. You know how you feel when you think of them? Just feel good, right? It's like, man, good relationships just bring joy to our soul.

I think there's a reason for that. I believe our, the best relationships, like good, healthy, loving relationships, that joy we feel, that reflects the goodness of God.

Like God's good character. And also, I think it reflects his, his design for us, that he's made us. And here's the premise, like God has made us as relational beings. We're made to be in relationships. I know that's not rocket science, but we are.

[2:04] And he also gives us a design and a way to do it well. And I love Proverbs. And we've heard all about this throughout, throughout this, throughout this series. And so I know it's not like brand new, there's specific relationships, you know, friends, bosses, spouses, you know, family, all these things.

But today I want to do, I want to do something that usually we, we can look at big principles. Like there's these huge theological principles of like, how does God feel? How does the Bible say about, you know, relationships? And then there's also the, the particulars, you know, the small, the very specific things.

And just like, and so I'm going to do both. Okay, don't worry, it's not going to be forever, but I'm going to do both. I'm going to give you like one huge principle and then some specifics. And the big idea is this, right?

The main idea, if you look at scripture and the real goal of relationships, wait for it, wait for it. It's love, right? Love. That's the goal. Okay, if you're like, man, what's my goal?

How do I do this right? Proverbs does talk about love and mentions love often. But I also want you to think about all the different ways it encourages us to relate to each other as love.

[3:12] I mean, sometimes we're so focused on words that we miss the point. It's like, don't steal. Don't cheat your neighbor. Don't slander. You know, have compassion on the weak or the poor.

Like, all those things are, are love when you think about it. So that's the goal. Now, for the Jewish people, this concept of love, this idea would have been rooted in the Old Testament, in the law.

The Proverbs, when they would have read Proverbs, they would have been thinking about this. It's like, where did this come from? Where do these foundational concepts? And so I want to read some of that from the law. I want to go back to Leviticus.

What's interesting, Leviticus kind of reads like Proverbs. When you kind of start to see those laws, you're like, I feel like we're in the same book here. So here we go. From Leviticus 19, I'll be reading out of the NIV this morning.

And I want you to listen for the relational language in Leviticus. So Leviticus 19, here we go. Do not pervert justice. Do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

[4:11] Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart.

Rebuke your neighbor frankly, so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Now as a kid, maybe in Sunday school or somewhere along the way, like you heard this story and your teacher would say something about, we're so love our neighbor as ourself, right? I mean, we've all heard this and Jesus brings that back, right? And that was always an interesting word. You know how they always had to explain like, well, your neighbor is not just the person that lives next to you. Because in English, it's like, well, I have a few neighbors.

But it's like, it's supposed to be everybody. And I was always confused. I'm like, that's kind of weird. Why didn't it just say everybody? Well, actually the Old Testament word there, this concept, it is a word that means everybody or anybody. The Hebrew word is *rea*.

[5:09] And it has a real wide usage. It can mean that other person. An associate. Or it can mean like my close companion. Or my friend. Like that person over there.

Or my person. Someone distant. Unfamiliar. Or someone very intimate. And here's a hint. I was reading this commentary. There's a hint in the way this word is used in Leviticus.

There's this guy called Derek Kidner in his commentary on Proverbs. He says it this way. The use of the term Leviticus 19:18 suggests that God means us to reverse the depersonalizing process which the word's use reflects.

Yeah, I had to read that more than once too. I was like, wait, what? That sounds good. But what does that mean? In other words, God has this relational goal for us. Is to take that person over there. Be like that guy.

Or that woman. And like be like, no, this is my guy. This is my person. This is my lady. That is my associate. It's like those people over there. And turn them into like our friends.

[6:14] Neighbor. Neighbor. So here's my first question for you, okay? I like to ask a lot of questions. And by the way, all the things I talk about this morning, these are process things. These are not perfection things.

You will not ever master this. Maturity is the goal. So we're always growing in these and myself as well. But here's the question. Who's your other people?

Like there's an us and them. Who's them in your mind? Those people over there. Now I want to acknowledge this, okay? I'm not trying to make you feel guilty. This is what we do as humans, okay?

We just have this natural sense of insecurity or we want to protect our resources or ourselves. Just think middle school, right? Middle school is brutal. Like you're just hoping to get through the day and not get ridiculed or beat up or something, right?

You know, if you can find a little gang like these are my people. They're going to protect me, you know, from all those people. It's what we do. Unfortunately, we go through that in adulthood and we tend to find our people.

[7:12] Okay, nothing wrong with having your people. Okay, just it's okay. The problem though is when we start to think of those other people. And because maybe we don't understand them or they're just different or it can be a little intimidating.

And then some fear creeps in and we perceive them as dangerous. Maybe even enemy-like. Silly story, okay?

When I was a freshman in high school, my family moved to Nebraska. It's real. It's a real place. My daughter tells me it's not.

It is real. And I liked sports. But I did not understand the depth of love and loyalty to football that one could have.

Okay, that's all they have. They have cows, they have corn, and football. That is it. They will tell you the same thing. Good people, whatever. But at that point, this is early 90s. They're in the Big 12.

[8:14] And we had rivals for years. I mean, they've been Oklahoma and there's Colorado. But then Texas crept in and it's like, ah, we just, we hated them. And I know, like, it sounds so ridiculous.

To those of you who hate sports, you're like, I don't get it. That's so stupid. Yeah, you're right. It is stupid. But I just, I couldn't see it. All right? I couldn't see it. I was young and I was like, I hate those people. Not just the team.

Not just like the universities. It's like all of them. All of them. I don't know. The whole place. They're just so terrible. And then we'd lose and like, oh. Years later, as a young adult, I had a chance to go to this little conference thing.

It's more like a retreat. And we landed in Houston, Texas. And these big older gentlemen.

I mean, they're all big. I don't know why. Everything's big in Texas. True story. I don't know. It's like these big guys. Like, they just, like, they're like, hey, let us get your bags for you. They were so nice. So nice.

[9:10] And I'm like, okay, you sent your best. I sent the nice people down here. And then we got to this little conference place. And it was much smaller than I thought. But everybody was so nice. They're just like, and yeah, they're proud of Texas.

But, like, we're just so glad you're here. And I was like, oh, I was so mad. And they loved Jesus, too. I was like, oh, my goodness. Right? My Raya.

It's like those people. Right? They became, like, my Raya. Like, I was like, oh, I love this place. You know? So good. As stupid as that can be, I'm like, okay, Texas is real.

Good people. The Jews were well acquainted with this us-them thinking. Okay? In the back of their mind, they knew where they came from. They had been slaves in Egypt. And God brought them out.

Those people. They'd gone through tons of little skirmishes. If you look at their history, like, they're always finding somebody around them. The Edomites, the Philistines, something. Right? They're always at war against the other.

[10:08] And then you have these giant empires. Unbelievable. The Syrians. The Babylonians. It wasn't just bad. They were brutal.

Some things we can't talk about. If we talk about how brutal they were, it's like, we went bad. Followed by the Persians. And then there's the Greeks for a while. And then the Roman occupation. Right?

The great Roman Empire. That's a tough history. You can see how, I mean, to be fair, you can see how they got there. Those are people, like, they are holding on to everything they have. Their national, political, religious identity.

Like, they are just holding on as a people. So much so that they overlooked the original command to love your neighbor. I want to show you this verse from Leviticus.

If you read on in that same chapter, here's what it says. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself.

[11:09] For you are foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. So the stranger, the alien, the foreigner, the immigrant. Consider them like your own family.

Why? Because I'm the Lord. I rescued you. I don't want you to forget where you came from. I don't want you to forget where you were when I found you and had mercy on you. I gave you mercy, so give mercy.

This is what I do. This is what I want you to do. Sadly, by the time the first century rolled around, there was actually a saying. It wasn't love your neighbor as yourself anymore.

It was literally love your friends and hate your enemies. And Jesus speaks to that, right? You read in the New Testament, he's saying like, you heard it said, love your friends, hate your enemies.

But I tell you, love your enemy. I mean, I'll look at him like, who are you? And then he goes on to just, to talk about blessing people who persecute you.

[12:05] And he tells a story, you know, when someone's asking, well, who's my neighbor? You know? Taking that Old Testament concept. Who's really my Rea Jesus? Someone asks him. And he tells a story about the Good Samaritan. Which I think I was reading, I can't remember.

Maybe it was Paul Miller. Maybe his love walked among us. I remember. He talks about how, just again, scandalous that story would have been to the first century Jewish person. To us, like, hearing something like, the good Nazi. You're like, what?

Biblical, godly, Christ-life, spirit-filled love, man, extends to strangers, foreigners, immigrants. For the Jewish people, the non-Jew, the non-like us.

Metaphorically, anyone who's other or outside. Have you ever experienced that courageous, lying, crossing love? That ridiculous, bold love?

You moved to a new school, a new town, a new neighborhood. You felt alone. And then, man, somebody just reached out. They didn't have anything to gain. They're like, who are you? But they just reached out. You ever been somewhere out of place, not with your people, and you're aware of it?

[13:14] But then someone brings you in? My very first cross-cultural experience was to Texas. No, I'm just kidding. It was to Reynosa, Mexico. Again, I was in high school, living in Nebraska.

First couple days I was in Reynosa, Mexico, I was out of sorts. I did not like it. Nobody else had blonde hair, blue eyes. I mean, it was just like, I was too tall. It was weird. I was like, oh, I just fell. But then I started meeting the people. They were so kind. To the point that you're like, why are they so kind? They don't know me. Why do they love me so much?

It was, it blew me away. And then I was aware, like, as we move on, we built this house. It was so small. And it's like, I don't feel like we're doing much for them. You know, as a teenager. And I'll never forget the last night.

They made this meal for us on the street, like in front of the pastor's house. And they just kept bringing food. These ladies, the pastor's wife, was so gracious. I was like, you know, a teenager, that is love. I just keep feeding me.

[14:12] I'm like, yes. I'm like, we're outside. I went home. Like, why do they love us so much?

They were so nice to us. And you've probably experienced that in other cultures. You know, they're like, they're so gracious.

They wanted to give me their best. When I think of Mexico, I think of my family, my spiritual family, my brothers and sisters, my spiritual mothers and fathers in Reynosa, Mexico. I was proud of us, America.

And Rob, you don't show the video, but when the World Cup happened this summer, I was a little nervous. But I watched some of the reels and highlights of, especially those Europeans, man.

Besides all the food, they're like, I can get so many refills. I can get a hundred refills. And I'm like, yeah, but I like the portions. Okay, we eat a lot. We get it. But they just kept commenting on how nervous they were coming to America.

They're like, we were so scared to come. We thought we were going to get mugged. We thought people were going to shout at us. And I'm like, people were so nice. This one guy kept saying, like, people kept inviting me to their home state. Like, come to Florida.

[15:09] I'll show you around. Come to New York. He's like, I don't know why. They keep inviting me to come visit their home. And it was encouraging. I was like, where'd he go? Huh. The love is there. Wouldn't it be amazing as a people, if people just looked at Christians like, golly, those people, they just, they love.

Why do they love us so much? Like, I asked in Reynosa, Mexico, like, why are they so kind? And people didn't even understand our church name. They're like, I don't know. What was that church? Like, Grace. Like, Grace of City, City of the Great.

Grace of the City. They don't know, but they're like, man, man, man, they fed us. They come visit us. They, like, drive us places. Like, must be those people. Again, who's your Rhea over there? How can they become my Rhea, my neighbor, my friend, like, family? And let me say, it can be a little scary when you put yourself in those places. It's going to be a little scary. A little intimidating. Maybe a little heavy.

I'm so glad that Jesus said, with man, that's impossible. These things are impossible. With God, nothing is impossible. So let's just ask Jesus to show us the way, right?

[16:13] Let's ask him, like, hey, God, I don't know about this group of people I'm nervous about, but would you just, I say slow pitches, right? You know, like, you play wiffle ball with your dad when you're little, like, I'm like, God, give me a nice easy one.

Give me a slow pitch here. Give me a slow pitch. Bring someone my way. Put me in a situation, God. Let's see what he does. All right, so with that command to love our neighbor, here's two specific things in the Proverbs that I really think point to the kind of biblical love that will set us apart in this world.

This doesn't exist in the world in a way that I think the church, the way God's spirit can lead us into. So the first one's loyalty. Loyalty. Proverbs.

1717 says this. A friend loves at all times. Proverbs 18.24 says this.

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother. So in other words, the stability of my relationships is somehow connected to the stability of my life.

[17:20] Like, when I'm alone, I'm isolated, like, I could come to ruin, and it feels like that, right, when you've really been alone. But also there are these friends who are the family that we need.

Proverbs 27. Says this. Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you.

Better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away. So I'm supposed to honor these relationships of the past, even my parents' friends. But I shouldn't just rely on my family structures.

Like, not just family systems. I had a student who used to say, she came from a small family, and she said, our family slogan is kind of like, it's us against the world. And I was like, ah, sounds nice, but Proverbs actually says you need more people than your family.

And actually, it's more practical to have people close that you're close to, like family, especially in an urgent situation, that have to, like, call someone far away.

[18:18] Like, those people should be right near you. So who comes to mind when you think of a loyal friend? Someone who listens well, shows up in time of need.

They remember things. They just, like, you're like, how did you remember that was happening today? And like, well, you mentioned it a few weeks ago. And I'm like, I forgot that. I mean, they were just remembering. You know, you have people like that.

You're like, they're like, they remind you of things on your calendar, your schedule. They give you a shout out on your birthday. It's not like, oh, the Facebook reminder came up. It's like, they just know when it's your birthday. When you have something you're worried about, you're struggling through, like, you can lean on them.

Just, you know, you can go to them. Recently, City Grace lost a dear sister in Christ. Miss Lois Lytle.

And even from the periphery, I just want to say, like, I was inspired by the kind of loyal love that people reached out. Mr. Jim, Elliot, and his family.

[19:24] Like, just, man, right with her, helping her, serving her. Her community group. Like, I just heard the stories. I was just like, they just continued to be friends.

They continued to show up for her. At her memorial service, there was this flower arrangement.

One of the little banner things that said, the God Squad. And I was like, well, it turns out, like, I found I was talking to one of them.

It's this group of ladies, even within their community group. Man, these ladies, like, showed up.

They're like, bringing food. How are you doing? Checking in. Like, checking in and checking in and checking in.

Right to the end. Man, that we would all be so blessed to have loyal friends. Yeah, right to the end.

That is, that's a kind of love that reflects the heart of God.

So here's some questions for you. And again, I'm growing in these areas. Am I committed to loyally love others through their best and their worst? Listen, it's easy to love people who are pretty and happy and nice and regulated.

[20:31] You'd be surprised. Like, rational. It's like, wow, I thought rational was a standard. But anyway. But to love people when they're, like, they're going through their worst or hard times. Or they're having a bad day.

Or just, like, they're just struggling. Like, the people that are, am I committed to love those people? And even to look for that in those, like, man, to look for when they're struggling, going through those hard times. Man, it's like, I'm going to find you in that dark time.

I'm going to seek you out. Am I committed to loyally love others the best and worst? Another question. Are there any relationships I've lost unnecessarily that need a chance for healing?

And I say that unnecessarily. We've got to be careful with this. It's like Romans 12, 18 says, you know, if it's possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with everyone. And there are some relationships.

Listen, some bridges burn. There are some places you need a healthy separation. Like, this is not good. You know what I'm saying? That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about maybe those places where you look back.

[21:31] And I have plenty of these. And you're like, oh, you know, it was actually my immaturity or insecurities or my lack of loyalty that kind of ended that. Maybe it was mutual, but it's like, huh, maybe that could be repaired.

A simple conversation, a simple, like, apology. You know what? Could be healing. Could be healing for you and for them. Maybe it's just a quick phone call or something. That shows loyalty.

Again, in this world, that doesn't always exist. People are like, oh, wow. Usually they're taken aback by that. I'm like, thank you. And the last question, am I caring for the loyal friends in my life? Listen, these people, if you have a loyal friend, do not take them for granted.

These people, again, they show up. They just, they believe the best in you. They see the best in you. They listen well. But it's so easy to take them for granted because they're just not that needy. Or they don't show it.

They don't ask for help. But it's good to remember. Like, if you have someone like that, they're human. They do need help. They need someone to ask them, how are you doing? You know, remember their birthday. If you're forgetful like me, it's like they have something coming up.

[22:34] Like, oh, I'll put that on my little reminder to pop up the day before. I'm like, how are you feeling? You know? So take care of those loyal people. If you have loyal friends in your life, look out for them. Take care of them. Don't take them for granted.

Proverbs encourages us towards loyal, loving relationships. Both to seek them out. Find those people. But also be those people for others. Okay. So we have love. We have loyalty.

Last thing here. Honesty. Honesty. Like, okay, come on. The basis of all relationships is trust, right? And honesty makes trust possible. Again, I know that sounds just like that is, that's not quantum physics.

But we got to say it. Proverbs is really big on honesty. Elliot spoke on the tongue. And I mean, we've heard it a lot. Proverbs 27.6 says this.

The wounds from a friend can be trusted. But an enemy multiplies kisses. Right? There's this kind of honest love that may hurt. A little painful. It's like, oh, I didn't want to hear that.

[23:31] But it's the truth we really need to hear. And people who just kind of flatter you, say the nice things. Yeah, that sounds nice. But it's really, that's actually wounding you more. That's hurting you. That's like an enemy would do. Proverbs 27.9.

A few verses later. Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart. And the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice. While perfume and incense, which were in that time were expensive, costly, beautiful things.

Is there a fragrance that brings you pure joy? Okay, for me, it's like pumpkin pie. I don't know why a lot of people don't like pumpkin pie. I don't know. It's like a gourd or something. It's weird. I don't know. But I love it.

I don't know why. Pumpkin pie. Especially at Christmas, right? You put all the smells in the house. Like you have the Christmas tree and the candles. And it's like, so good, right? Listen, like Proverbs says, when that person that knows you really well, and they know what you're going through. And they've really thought and prayed about your suit. Like they put themselves in your shoes. And then they come with this nugget of wisdom and advice. And they're like, man, I think you need to hear this, sister. I think you need to hear this, brother. Like, wow, that is pure joy.

[24:34] That's like pumpkin pie at Christmas. Like receive that. That's honesty. Honesty is vital. But Proverbs also warns about honesty that maybe is rude or deceptive.

Proverbs 11, 12 says, whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue. In other words, there's some things that just don't need to be said.

We need to be really careful in how we justify our compulsions to criticize. Just because we feel like, man, this is true. This person needs to hear it. Maybe you've said these things yourself or you've heard this.

Okay. What? I'm only being honest. Everyone's thinking that I just said it. Okay. Hey, I say what I think.

That's just who I am. Right? That's a good one. That's just who I am. This Hebrew word derides, it really talks, it's more about like it's to scorn, to mock.

[25 : 35] There's a disrespect conveyed that really it's not. It's against the attitude of love the Bible pushes into. And it's against the fear of the Lord. It's not what God sees. It's what I see. And I need to say it. And I just want to add a little caution to it here with a little side note that the word talks about mockery.

There's mockery comes up a lot in Proverbs. And this word leans into that word. We just need to be careful, I think, in how we're honest. Both do you, sometimes we use humor to cover our honesty or dishonesty.

Like we'll say things and like, I see this in middle school a lot too. It's like we just trash each other. And then it's like, oh, I was just kidding. Right? Or we say things in a way that it's not straight and honest. It's not coming from love.

This verse, I love this. This is the NIV. Legitimately, this is what the NIV says. Proverbs 26, 19. Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death.

Firebrands. It's true. I looked it up. Hebrew. It's one who deceives their neighbor and says, I was only joking. We just need to be careful. Again, I say this because I'm in the same culture.

[26 : 39] We love our sarcasm. There's times where we just need to be cautious. How we use humor after honesty or subversively to get that honest point across. I know it's getting a little hot in here, right?

You're like, oh man, bro, you're getting close to home. Come on. So it's going to get worse. Here's a question, okay? This is a long question. You don't have to write the whole question down. But here's the question, okay?

On the cautionary side, like just to be cautious in how we are honest. Do I dishonor biblical honesty and hurt others with sarcasm, passive aggressive statements, unnecessary criticism, or funny but wounding humor?

Okay, if you're human, the answer is yes, okay? Again, don't beat yourself up. You want to see these things. Proverbs draws us out. But just be mindful, again, how am I prone to misuse honesty or to cover honesty with other things or be deceptive?

And if you don't know that, if you're like, well, I don't know, I'm not really sure. Just think back about the family of origin you came from or just whoever you grew up with. Like what was acceptable but hurtful? Like for like my family, and I'm again, love my family.

[27 : 45] Praise God. So many good things. But we were like champion sarcasm people. I don't know how to say that. But like we were the best, man. Like sarcasm. And then you grow up in a high school and that's just how you relate your friends and whoever could roast each other.

And when I got to college, I was very sarcastic and I didn't feel great about it. I just didn't think I knew anything different. And I met this group of people who were very sincere. They're just, I was like, wow, they say what they think and they're kind.

And, you know, you drop a sarcastic comment and they just kind of look at you like, what's wrong with you, man? And I was like, I want to be like that. So I prayed a lot about it year after year after year.

And hopefully God has moved me from someone who's a little less sarcastic and more sincere. So just, I say that to say, there's always something that we just kind of grow up in this, like, it's just what we do.

But it can change. God can help us grow. All right, next question. How can I courageously offer honest, possibly painful, but beneficial truth to people I love?

[28 : 46] And this has to be something God's Holy Spirit really agrees upon. Maybe God gives you a verse. Maybe God, you just pray about this situation. You're like, ah, this might hurt this person, but it's like, I feel like this is coming for love. Like, if I love them, I have to say this because I love them.

And that's how you know. Love and fear, right? First John, all the time. Am I afraid? It's like, I don't, but do I love? Like, this needs to come from love. So I have this friend. You might, his name is Freddy.

He's really good at this. If you know Freddy, you know what I'm talking about. But like, he just, he'll be like, hey, why do you do that? And I'm like, oh. And it hurts, but it's like, if there's no pain in it, it's like, oh man, this guy loves me.

I was talking about my devotional time. And just like, a few weeks ago, we were walking in his, I was putting some obligation on it. Like, I just don't feel like I'm as close to God as I should be. And maybe I'm not, or whatever. And he's like, why are you doing that? You know? Like, you're making it by yourself.

That's self-righteousness. That's like, God doesn't need it. I was like, oh yeah. He just like, boom. What's funny is like, weeks later, I catch myself doing the same thing. And I'm like, oh yeah, it comes back. I'm telling you, that kind of heartfelt advice.

[29:46] Yes. Man. God will, the Holy Spirit will keep speaking that into your life. Last question here. Okay, so be that person.

Do you invite and listen to honest, unfiltered feedback from at least one person in your life? Now, to be honest, nobody likes to get wounded. Not many of us like this, like the wounding of a friend. It doesn't feel good, but the issue's there and it's going to get worse if we don't get help, right? If I isolate myself, I don't grow. So I need that. We all need that. So, be that person for others.

Look for those people and invite them into your life. Hey, as we come to communion and celebrate, this is the time, first of all, to confess those shortcomings. And we all have them, okay?

Like, man, I'm not as loyal as I, huh, or honest or loving as I could be. Like, those people to make them my people. So it's a time of confession, but it's also a time to receive grace and to really celebrate.

[30:49] If you are not yet in fellowship or relationship with Jesus, you're like, hey, this whole Christian love thing, this whole, like, being God's children, like, this is new to me. As we do this, just I want you to reflect.

There'll be a prayer on the screen that invites you into that relationship, that loyal relationship with God. And then come talk to us. Man, if you're like, really, I don't know what that's all about.

Man, we've got people who would love to talk with you and invite you into that relationship with the Lord. But for the rest of us, and as the band comes up, as we celebrate communion, you're going to go get the elements.

Man, this is the body and blood of Christ. This is, he made this way for us. So think about the Trinity, God the Father. We celebrate that God the Father is loyal.

He said, I'll never leave you. I will never forsake you. We celebrate the Holy Spirit, our counselor.

Holy Spirit's honest. Holy Spirit, we're convict.

[31:44] Remind us of the words of Jesus. The Holy Spirit steps in with the best advice ever. And then we celebrate Jesus, the Son, who stopped at nothing. To take us from being those strangers, those other people, the them out there.

The man to bring us in, to welcome us into his own family. To make us the redeemed children of the Father and the friends of God. So receive that and celebrate that as we take communion today.

God's loyalty, honesty. His love for us, drawing us into his family. Let me pray. And then you can go in your own timing to receive the elements. Lord Jesus, you showed us what friendship is like.

You invited us into relationship with you. You pursue us. And you make it all possible. And so I pray over your children, over our church today. God, the places where your Holy Spirit convicts us that, yeah, we are, we've fallen short.

Lord, give us hope. Forgive us. And then graciously provide your grace to become the people that you want us to be. Cover over our guilt and shame.

[32:48] And God, just give us gratitude for who you are. And then also the people in our life who demonstrate these things. The body of Christ. God, there are people, even in this room, who bless us with honesty, with loyalty. That show us what this faithful friendship is all about.

Thank you for them. Bless them. Encourage us now as we come to celebrate you. In Jesus, your name. Amen.