



“BIRTHDAY BASH: MAKE A WISH”

At most birthday parties, there is a moment when everyone gathers around the cake. Friends, family, neighbors come together to watch the guest of honor make a wish and blow out the candles. As we celebrate the church's "birthday", we have a wish to make as well. We wish for more people to come together to celebrate the church of Christ!



The Word

Today's Scripture:

Genesis 2:7, 2:15-17; 3:8-10, 3:21, Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 John 4:7-12

Next time you blow out the candles to celebrate another year of life, remember that God blew life into the first person.

Genesis 2:7

7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Verse 7: Life was breathed into people by God Himself. He made dirt into something alive. He formed us for the purpose of relationship. The life of people was different from plants, animals, water, land, or light. We were created to know God and live for Him.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

*13 Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.*

Verse 13: To fear God does not mean to be so afraid of Him that you hide from Him. Adam made this mistake after he and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden food.

Genesis 3:8-10

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Verse 8-10: Adam did not understand his relationship with God. Because he had sinned, he felt that he should run from God. He forgot that God created him for a relationship, not for rules. (Of course we cannot be too hard on Adam since he and Eve were the first two to ever sin. Of course, they messed it up for the rest of us!) The rules that God gave Adam were to protect their relationship. What rule was Adam supposed to follow?

Genesis 2:15-17

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Verse 15-17: When Adam broke the rules, He believed that the relationship was broken as well. If the relationship had depended solely on him, it might have been over. However, Adam was in a relationship with the God who created relationships. While Adam and Eve hid, God came looking for them. He was more concerned about the people than the rules.

Does this mean it does not matter if I break commands? No! It just means that when the rules are broken, the relationship is not over. However, there is a price to sin.

Genesis 3:21

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Verse 21: This is the first blood shed in the Bible. To make a garment of skins, God would have had to have killed animals. The shedding of blood led to the covering of Adam and Eve's sin. This, of course, was symbolic of the ultimate shedding of blood by Christ to cover our sin.

God, who breathed life into you, wants a relationship with you. He does not overlook broken rules but instead will show mercy by the blood of Christ.

God is the model of relationships that we must follow. As we come into contact with others, we are going to break rules, hurt feelings, cause hardships, and so much more. When we are on the receiving end of people sinning against us, remember to be like our Lord. We need to look at others through the cross of Christ. The blood that was shed for us was shed for the person who hurt us as well. We must show mercy to others. In a culture that throws away relationships, we must make an effort to foster ours.

1 John 4:7-12

7Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son

into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Up Close and Personal

Confess any tendency you have to break off relationships with family or friends instead of showing mercy.

What did it cost God in order to have a relationship with us?

Who needs you to show mercy instead of anger?

What would it cost you to show mercy?

In what ways do relationships require effort?

When is it easy to throw away a relationship?

How do we become people who like God shows love to others?

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:

John 2:23-25, 15:15; Matthew 16:13-16; 1 Peter 2:12

The Word

There are levels to our relationships. There are some people with whom we talk sports or weather while others hear our deepest concerns. Christ Himself showed this same hierarchy in relationship.

John 2:23-25

23Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

Verse 23-25: The crowds claimed a relationship with Jesus but it was not authentic. Jesus recognized that the people were just using Him for His miraculous powers. The Lord knew that He needed to have boundaries with these people.

There are going to be people in our lives who try to use us for an assortment of things. It is alright to set a limit with these people. Jesus is our example for this. The boundaries, however, were in the fact that Jesus was willing to help but not willing to trust them. We can help others but we are not required to trust them. For example, I can help someone by buying groceries that are needed. But I do not have to trust them with money for I may not trust how it will be spent.

While some relationships have a distance to them, there are others which are much closer.

John 15:15

15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Verse 15: Jesus had friends while He was on earth. He was not far removed from His disciples. He did not look down on them or have an attitude of superiority. He did not even remind them that He was Lord and they were not. In fact, it was in the context of relationship that they came to know Him as Lord. He never told them. Jesus allowed them to discover it on their own.

Matthew 16:13-16

13When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Verse 13-16: Through the context of a relationship, these twelve men came to know Jesus. The Lord did not tell them right away, "I am the Son of God. Worship me." Instead, He lived His life in front of them and they could not help but discover who He is.

The same is true for our relationships. We are to allow Jesus to live His life through us in our day to day contact with people. Through His life in us, they will discover who the Lord is. Some will accept Him and others will not, but everyone will know Who we are in a relationship with.

Our relationship with Jesus flows into our relationship with others. This is the concept of evangelism. It does not have to be a man preaching to a crowd. It can be people at work, at school, at community events building relationships with others. Through these friendships, opportunities to showcase the life of Christ become available.

1 Peter 2:12

12Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Verse 1-12: Our relationship could lead to someone coming to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. We need to have wisdom in our relationship, when and where to have boundaries. But no matter how close or distant we are to others, we must live out the life of Christ. We never know when the person will be eternal changed by our choice to live for Christ in all of our relationships.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord for His help to see all your relationships as an opportunity to showcase Christ.

Why is it important to understand that boundaries are alright to have in our relationships?

How can our relationships lead others to faith in the Lord Jesus?

How can you showcase Jesus in the relationships you have now?

DAY 3

Today's Scripture:

2 Timothy 4:9-18; Acts 16:1-5; Titus 2:1-5

The Word

I have heard that the loneliest job is to be a preacher. I think this statement reflects a false view of what a preacher should be. Often he will feel like he cannot be real before the people because he will be ostracized for being less than “spiritual”. Sadly, many people in the congregation support this view because they expect a minister to be “above” them and without reproach. This is all false. Preachers are human and are in need of relationships. Paul, the preacher of preachers, knew the importance of this. Read the words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:9-13, 19-22

9Do your best to come to me quickly, 10for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

19Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. 20Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. 21Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

22The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Verse 9-13, 19-22: These are just a few names of people that Paul knew and love. This minister had true friends. Some of his friends, like Demas, broke his heart. Other relationships were an encouragement to him. In this letter to Timothy, Paul is honest. He lets him know what hurts and he lets him know what he needs. He was close enough to be transparent.

2 Timothy 4:14-18

14Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

16At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Verse 14-18: Do you have friends with whom you can share both good and difficult times? This friendship was built over years. The development of this relationship was the preacher becoming a mentor.

Acts 16:1-5

1He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. 2The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Verse 1-5: Timothy was a young man. Paul was a seasoned missionary. Yet, Paul asked Timothy to join him. He saw in Timothy a man to carry on his work after he was gone. He mentored this young man. This took time and energy. He invested his life into this man.

The art of mentoring is desperately lost in this culture. In days gone by, every profession had a time of mentoring. You taught a skill to someone. Often that person would be mentored for years. Today, colleges have replaced mentoring. Sadly, the art of mentoring has been lost in churches as well. Yet, by God's Word, we are called to mentor others.

Titus 2:1-5

1You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. 2Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

3Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at

home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Verse 1-5: Titus was to teach men and women how to live a godly life. In turn, they could teach others. Mentoring is choosing to develop a focused relationship that teaches someone else the ways of God. This is not a lecture format but showing him what a spiritual life looks like by allowing him to observe your life in a day to day context. It is allowing this person access into your life, the good and bad, so he or she can learn how to live for God as well.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to show you a person to whom you could mentor. Or if you feel that you need to learn more yourself, ask the Lord who to ask to be your mentor.

How would mentoring a new believer help mature him in Christ?

How is Sunday morning preaching different from mentoring?

How does a mentoring relationship differ from other relationships?

DAY
4

Today's Scripture:

1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8; Genesis 1:18, 21-25; 1 John 3:1, Ephesians 6:4

The Word

I believe that one of the most difficult contexts for being a witness of Christ is with family. We have been hurt by family members and some of us harbor the pain for years. Or, we recall how we treated our family in times past and they are unwilling to accept the fact that we have changed. I know that for me personally, I have many family members who are not Christians. They have mocked things I have said and done. They get mad for what I believe. I know that I struggle with reaching out to them for the sake of Christ. Yet, we are called to be an example of our Lord in our families, whether they accept it or not.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

12To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Verse 12-16: These verses deal specifically with husband and wives. We are to live with unbelievers and be an example to them. The way we showcase Christ in our relationships could bring our spouse to repentance. But this goes beyond just married couples. Other family members also need to experience our faith working its way into our relationships.

1 Timothy 5:3-4

3Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. 4But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

Verse 3-4: The church was taking care of widows. Sadly, some of the widows on the list had children and grandchildren who could care for them. But for whatever reason, the family was ignoring the need of a family member. We do not know the reason behind this neglect but we know what these people were told to do they were commanded “to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family...”

Some of us today may need to hear this same lesson. I do not know your family or what you have experienced. But I know by God’s Word that we are called to care for those in our family. Our actions may lead them to Christ. But even if it doesn’t, our actions will please God.

But if we choose to not provide for our families, we are hindering the witness of Christ to those around us.

1 Timothy 5:8

8If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Verse 8: As believers, when we do not live a life in line with Jesus Christ, we are worse than someone who is an unbeliever. An unbeliever is not going to act within God's law because they do not have the Spirit with them. But since we do have the Spirit within us, to not act in accordance with the Spirit is to act as if we do not know Him. For the Spirit, families are extremely important. God Himself created the family.

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

*23 The man said,
"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman, '
for she was taken out of man."*

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Verse 25: Focus again on verse 25, Adam and Eve were called man and wife. This was the beginning of family life. The family institution was created by God and is used in Scripture to symbolize the family of God.

1 John 3:1

1How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Verse 1: The physical father of creation was Adam. The spiritual Father of creation is God. Adam had physical children. God has spiritual children. The physical family symbolizes the spiritual family. As believers, when we do not treat our family as God intended, we are destroying the symbolism God intended in the family. This causes our witness in our family to be non-existent. Fathers are especially warned about this.

Ephesians 6:4

4Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Verse 4: Parents have the honor to be the “physical presence” of God in the family. Children get their ideas about what God is like from their parents, especially from the father. Our actions and attitudes either draw our children closer to God or could cause them to run away from Him.

Godly relationships are vital within the family. We are called to be a witness to our relatives. Would our family members say that we point them to God or away from Him?

Up Close and Personal

Confess any sin that you have committed against your family. Ask God to help you deal with any resentment within you.

What family ties need to be strengthened by you?

How does it feel to know that you are called to be a witness to your family?

DAY
5

Today's Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:11-15; Jude 23; Romans 10:1; Acts 17:1-4

The Word

All of our relationships have eternal value. Each person in our life whether family, friends, or acquaintances may spend eternity with us in heaven. To know the eternal destination of someone can give us comfort.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17After that, we who are still alive

and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Verse 13-18: When a loved one departs from earth, we can have hope of his resurrection from the dead. This brings comfort to our sorrow. We know that the relationship has not ended but will continue onto eternity.

However, when we know that someone does not know Christ as Savior and Lord, we feel grief over the eternal separation that has taken place.

Revelation 20:11-15

11Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Verse 11-15: We usually avoid discussing the judgment of those who do not accept Jesus Christ. We do not mind talking about heaven. That feels nice. But to ignore the reality of hell keeps us from our mission: to witness to others so they may choose eternal life instead of eternal death.

Jude 23

23snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Verse 23: We need to be aware of the future so that we can live a life today that makes a difference. We must desire for those around us to come to know Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul had this passion for his people, the Jews.

Romans 10:1

1Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Verse 1: His zeal was for an entire nation. This zeal was not only in his heart but was enacted upon in every city he entered.

Acts 17:1-4

1When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said. 4Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

Verse 1: A synagogue is a Jewish house of worship. Paul would always proclaim to his people the good news of Jesus. He knew that his people were lost and he did all he could to reach them with the message of Christ. We, too, need to be aware of the spiritual lives of the people around us. We must probe to find out who is a believer and who is not. For those who are not Christians, we must share the message of salvation. That way, our relationships can truly last forever.

Up Close and Personal

Pray for unbelievers whom you know. Ask God to empower you to share the gospel with them.

In your circle of influence, do you know who is a believer and who is not?

How often do you discuss spiritual topics with those you know?

Have you ever considered that God led you to an unbeliever for the sole purpose of presenting the gospel to that person? What are your thoughts on that idea?

How can we begin to think of relationships from an eternal standpoint?