

# Personal Relationships

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[0:00] Good afternoon. I did not get a nap. I got to go see Whistler, and it was beautiful, just absolutely beautiful. I'm so grateful that I get to be in Canada. BK said this morning that I'm anti-Canada. I have no idea what that means, and I just spent a couple hours. What's that?

Oh, I hope so. I just spent a couple hours with him, and I just forgot to ask him that. What did you mean by that? I'm definitely not anti-Canada. It's good to be back together.

We've covered a lot of ground. I have to tell you, when we rolled in, I told BK, I'm shocked all these people came back. It's a beautiful day out there. I have come to love this church, and I just felt like I was at my church this morning, and it's the beauty of being with God's people and worshiping and fellowshiping together. Thank you again for your kindness to me in the short time that I've known you. We're going to talk this afternoon in two sessions about really personal relationships. We're going to talk about the ideal of friendships and influence, relationships, and then in the last session together, we're going to talk about difficult relationships.

So these kind of go together, and obviously it all in the context of the family, children, marriage.

We're going to talk a little bit, or a lot actually, of things that would apply to dating for you to consider as you prepare your children for that phase of life. And if that scares you, that your children will date someday, it probably should. But I found it to be extraordinarily fun as a father to walk my daughters through that, and I think you will too. I wanted to start reading.

You don't have to turn there. I think it's probably a familiar passage. Ezekiel 11, I was prompted this way, kind of as a setup this morning during what BK was preaching. Ezekiel 11, verse 19.

[2:17] And this is kind of a summation of the gospel. The amazing story, the incredible gift of the gospel. And I just feel like we've got to start here. It sets the tone, believe it or not, for a discussion about personal relationships. This is the great gift that we've been given. It says, And I will give them, this is God talking about you and I, and I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and do them. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God. Isn't that an amazing promise? That's what we're about. And then verse 21, a tremendous warning. But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads, declares the Lord God. There is grace in that passage, and there is a description of mercy. Because of God's grace, for those of us here who are saved, we have had that cold, hard, stone heart replaced with a heart of flesh. And there's great promise and grace in that. And for those here who don't know Christ, there is a warning and a description of the mercy that because of God's grace, what we won't experience is that God will bring conduct down on their heads. That's a promise. That's the God of the universe who speaks truth. And I just wanted to start there to kind of set the tone for the seriousness of what we're going to talk about.

Often when you talk about friends, or you hear something about friends, or personal relationships, it can be very light, it can be very pedestrian even. And I just want to prepare you that God's word is very serious when it talks on this topic. If I was to summarize what the Bible says about friendships, there's really three things I would tell you. It says that good friends are rare.

Okay? That's one thing that you would see throughout Scripture. Another thing that you would see in Scripture is that bad company corrupts character. That's not news to you. You've heard that before.

And the other thing I think you would, to summarize what the Bible has to say about friendships is that you should pick your friends, your friends shouldn't pick you. And we're going to talk about all of that in this session. Human relationships are a gift from the Lord. They are also the source of challenge, sharpening, and even downright difficulty, which is our next session.

Children are a blessing. A spouse is a blessing. Parents and grandparents are a blessing. Fellow believers are a blessing. All of these things are ordained by God as gifts to us. And all of this because of the joy that they bring. They help, they encourage, they support, they protect, and they lead us.

[ 5 : 32 ] Life is enhanced and improved by the presence of interaction with people. We saw the reverse of that. We came to understand and appreciate that in a visceral way, at least where I live. I'm sure it was true here too in 2020 when we were prohibited from those kinds of interactions. The Bible speaks of relationships and friends in terms of influence.

You're going to hear me use the term influence. If you were to summarize what the Bible says about friendships, if you were to translate it, it isn't talking about social associations as much as it's talking about who do you allow to have influence in your life.

Or the flip side of that is who do you influence? We're told to imitate in the Bible over and over and over. Do you know that that's a theme of God's description of our interaction with other human beings?

It is the human condition that you can know God, you can fear God, you can know the wisdom of God, but you still need to find somebody to imitate. It's the way God made us. 1 Corinthians 4.16 says, Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

1 Corinthians 11.1, Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. And there's a command there. Find the influence in your life from people who are following Christ.

[ 6 : 58 ] If you're following someone who's following Christ, ultimately who are you following? Christ. And that's what you want. 1 Thessalonians 1.6, You also became imitators of us and of the Lord.

Hebrews 6.12, Be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. And there is a direction for us to include or to prioritize the influence of people in our life who are believers.

Hebrews 13.7, Maybe the ultimate description of spiritual leadership. Remember those who led you. What did they do? It says, Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God, and considering the results of their conduct, imitate their faith.

That's the ultimate description of leadership. The simple reality of life on this planet is that we're to imitate and follow others. We are to invite that influence into our life.

We should be seeking that influence and then submitting to that influence. And we should and we must be seeking to be someone who others can imitate and follow.

[ 8 : 15 ] And that's much of what we've been talking about, especially yesterday as we talked about parenting. This is especially true of husbands and dads, mom, leaders in the church, and if you want to be a friend to anybody.

Hebrews 10.23-25, if you have your Bibles, you may want to turn to Hebrews 10. It is a passage, short passage, that in my experience, probably summarizes everything the Bible has to say about friendships and relationships in three verses.

And it might surprise you. I had coffee last week with a young man from UCLA. who wanted to meet with me. And he asked me, he described difficulty he's having with his friendships.

And he says, I just need to know where to go in the Bible to understand friendships. Hebrews 10. Verse 23. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

For he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

[ 9 : 36 ] And this is where we take a turn, and we see the seriousness of friendships, the seriousness of decisions on who we marry.

For young people, who they might spend time with in a dating relationship, in the pursuit of marriage. There's all kinds of applications here, and I trust that you will make those applications. What does this passage have to do with relationships? Well, in fact, everything. Nothing is more important in a human relationship than how this passage defines a good friend.

There's two let us statements. I'm not talking about the vegetable. Let us. Okay? Let us first hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

That is the pursuit of every believer's life. If you were to predict what you want to say on your deathbed, you might say a lot of things at the end of your life.

[10:47] As a believer, what you want to be able to say is that over my life, I held fast the confession of my hope, my faith, without wavering.

There's the goal of life. There it is, stated in its most basic form. That's the first let us statement. And then the other let us statement is the ultimate definition of a friend.

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. At the end of your life, your hope, your goal, is to be able to honestly say before the Lord, I held fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

And you want to be able to say that you were stimulated to love and good deeds and that the purpose and the focus of your life was to stimulate others to love and good deeds so that others could come to the end of their life and say, I held fast the confession of our hope without wavering. A good friend helps you hold fast your confession of faith. A good friend helps keep you from wavering. And a good friend stimulates you to love and good deeds.

[12:06] And that word stimulate is kind of a harsh word. Doesn't look like it. Kind of sounds soft. But what that word means in the original language is let us provoke each other.

Let us sharply disagree with each other. Let us cause sparks. Cause friction. That's what stimulate one another to love and good deeds means.

It means to agitate. It's the only time in all of scripture that this specific word is used. And it's used to describe what Christians do to other Christians.

And it's not always happy. It's why relationships can be difficult at times. We're called to agitate each other. We're called to do whatever it takes to encourage each other to hold faster faith.

And to demonstrate that through love and good deeds. That's why I wanted to start with Ezekiel 11. The context of all of this is very serious.

[13:15] That God has saved us. Christ has saved you. He has done the work. And it says in verse 20 of Ezekiel 11. So that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and do them.

Then they will be my people and I will be their God. Why would you want any less for those whom you love? Proverbs 27.17 says, As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

That's friendship. That's stimulation. Iron sharpening iron creates heat. It creates friction. It creates sparks.

A good friend encourages you. Exhorts. Warns. Strengthens. Points you to Christ. To the love of God and to the love of others. And that passage goes on to say that we don't forsake our assembling together.

That's the encouragement that we give each other is we need to be together. As is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near. And that passage goes on to describe the day that is drawing near.

[14:31] If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of God, or the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire, which will consume the adversaries.

It's a pretty stark description of what's coming. It's not coming for you and I, but that is coming to a culture that's all around us. So a good friend stays with you as times get tough, the day drawing near.

As the time of Christ draws near, if you understand your Bible, you understand, and we're seeing it in the news every day, things are getting darker. Things are getting more difficult, and they have a ways to go.

Proverbs 17, 17 says, A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. All of that is contemplated by Hebrews 10, 23 to 25. So you must be very careful who you allow to be so close to you that they're considered a close friend and a best friend.

Are they interested? Are they consumed with the same thing you are? The two let us statements.

Be careful who you allow in the position of trust and respect to have the influence over you and over your life so as to affect your behavior, your thinking, and even your spiritual condition.

[16:12] Just for a moment to talk about parenting, the focus of parenting on this issue is you're teaching your children a level of maturity that they don't allow their surroundings to affect their thinking, their perspective on who God is.

Maturity is the ability to be around bad company without it affecting your behavior. And what we're going to do this afternoon in the time that's left is we're going to talk about bad influences, and then we're going to talk about good influences.

And those of you that come out of work in a secular world, as I do, you know the influences that are out there. And this goes back to the transition, the great transition of preparing your children to understand that when they leave your home, you may have isolated and protected them the entire time they're in your home, but they're going to leave your home, and they're going to walk right into the influence that you see in your life and in your world every day.

Are they prepared for it? That's what we want to talk about. If your children come out of your home and immerse themselves in bad company, lacking the maturity to process that, there is no avoiding the consequences.

The Bible makes that clear. There's no amount of maturity later that will spare them the consequences. I can't tell you how many times I've met with people in my own church, divorced or separated or in a marriage, and I hear from them some variation of this, everyone warned me, but I knew better.

[18:06] I ignored the warnings. I married an unbeliever, or I married a weak believer. Maturity hears those warnings.

Good parenting makes those warnings, prepares them now for understanding bad influences and good influences.

I want to talk about the bad influences first. We'll start with the bad news. And it's defined in 1 Corinthians 15. We were there this morning. If you can turn back to 1 Corinthians 15, we're going to pick up about two verses later from where BK, or the scripture reading this morning, stopped.

Bad influences are called bad company. And you all know the verse that says bad company corrupts good morals, right? You've heard that? Well, that's in 1 Corinthians 15, 33.

But context matters. Context is really important. To understand the gravity and the deeply serious nature of that statement, we have to look around that verse.

[19:14] 1 Corinthians 15, you might have picked up on it this morning in the scripture reading, talks a lot about death and dying. I counted 22 references in 1 Corinthians 15 to either death, being dead, dying, sleeping, six feet under.

Death, spiritual death, physical death. That is the context of 1 Corinthians 15, 33, a bad company corrupts good morals. I think we have to understand why that is.

Let me read. At the end of verse 31, it says, I die daily. There's another reference to death. I die daily. If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?

If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals.

Become sober minded as you ought and stop sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. Let me remind you again of the two lettuce statements.

[20:30] The command to Christians is to hold fast the confession of our faith all the way to the end. And we are to stimulate one another to the praise of Christ, to love and good deeds.

Then 1 Corinthians 15. If the gospel isn't true, as we heard this morning, a lot of things happen. And one is that the gospel has no claim on your life.

If the gospel is false, then you should eat, drink, and die. That's what that context is saying.

That's a conclusion that must be reached if you don't know Christ, too. It says that in verse 34, having no knowledge of God. People who have no knowledge of God have no hope.

It's all right here in front of them. Eat, drink, and die. That's their perspective. That's what you would expect. That's non-Christians acting like non-Christians.

[21:35] The sad part is when Christians act like non-Christians. Eat, drink, and die. That is the influence that unbelievers will have on your life.

Bad company will corrupt good morals. It says in verse 33, and it starts off saying there, don't be deceived. It's like the law of gravity. And there's a great divide between verse 33 and verse 34.

There's no knowledge of God. Eat, drink, and die. Verse 34, become sober, minded, and stop sinning. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

That's the distinction. So the verse 33 are those that have no knowledge of God, and then the good deeds is the sobriety and righteousness.

If the gospel is true, it makes a very strong demand on your life, and it's detailed there in verse 34. It just says another way what it says in other places in Scripture.

[22:44] If you have been saved by Christ, in Ephesians 2.10, it says you have been saved so that you will do good works that were prepared beforehand.

Your friends who are not saved are not driven to be sober-minded. They're not driven to stop sinning. They're driven to do the opposite, and they're not going to drive you to do those things. They're going to eat, drink, and live for today, for tomorrow when we die, and why wouldn't they? This life is all they have. Their motivation in life is completely contrary to yours. Let me say that again.

If you claim or your children claim faith in Jesus Christ, their motivation in life is completely contrary to those who conclude that they have rejected the gospel, and they're going to eat, drink, and die. 1 Corinthians 15 defines bad company as living for today and for this life rather than the next, leading to more sin rather than sanctification and helping you sin.

[ 23 : 57 ] Their motivation is to stimulate you to sin, to join in their sin, not stimulating you to love and good deeds. It's the party attitude rather than a sobriety that comes from eternal purposes.

You cannot avoid verse 34. It is a contrast to our culture, and that is what you want to prepare your children for.

Let's look at an illustration of this. If you can, turn in Proverbs to chapter 23. Proverbs chapter 23. I'm going to read verses 20 and 21.

It gives the backdrop for a profound and consistent biblical principle. It is in your face truth that serves to illustrate and define the other Proverbs that you will find.

We are not going to go through all the Proverbs on friendships. There are more than we could cover this afternoon. This is a concise sampling of all the descriptions in Proverbs of bad company, bad influences.

[ 25 : 09 ] Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine or with gluttonous eaters of meat. For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty and drowsiness will clothe one with rags.

That's a happy couple of verses, isn't it? What is the writer referring to when he talks about the drinker, the glutton, and the serial lazy bum?

First, we have to be clear. The point here is not that drinking alcohol, eating, or being tired is a sin. That's not the point of this proverb.

Okay? And if you start there, then you understand that what is an issue here is the shiftless, the shiftless party animal. The guy that's fun at a party.

It's probably popular, funny, likable personality because he's carefree. He's just enjoying life. Don't be so serious.

[ 26 : 13 ] He's carefree and easygoing. And that looks attractive and tempting to someone who's purposeful, hardworking, and sober-minded, which we're called to be as believers.

And here's the point. That's how they are today. What I just described, the party animal, having a lot of fun, carefree, that only lasts a while.

That's not how they're going to end up. Wisdom is often knowing the end from the beginning and making decisions now in light of that understanding. But we've got to go a little bit deeper.

Solomon is teaching a deeper truth here in Proverbs with an obvious and a profound illustration. There's some character qualities that are reflected in this description in verses 20 and 21.

And when you start to think, what is the character of someone who is a heavy drinker of wine, who is a gluttonous eater of meat, and who is poor because they are so lazy?

[ 27 : 22 ] That might sound fun for a while, but there's some character issues there. One is he's self-absorbed. He lives in the pursuit of pleasure.

It's what's the next greatest rush. What can I do to have fun? That's a character issue. He's a short-term thinker. He thinks of today's pleasure, and you deal with the consequences tomorrow. If you've ever been with a heavy drinker, you know they're not thinking about the hangover that's coming in the morning. Or if they are, they don't care. It is someone who thinks about today, not tomorrow.

Someone like that doesn't fear sin. I don't know about you, but I've seen enough news stories of crazy, crazy behavior, and you read down in the story, and you find out the reality that they were under the influence of alcohol, of drugs, alcohol fuels sin.

It reduces the effects or the perception of conscience and etiquette. There are crimes and evil behavior fueled by drugs and alcohol that never would have happened if that person wasn't living the fast life of alcohol and not thinking about the future and had any sense of fear of sin and the consequence of sin.

[ 28 : 51 ] It's a carefree life. The heavy drinker doesn't fear in light of that knowledge. They're immune. They're special or they're different. The rules don't apply to them.

That's a character flaw. Another one is there's no eternal perspective or purpose. Remember Ephesians 5, 15, and 16. Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise making the most of your time.

is that in any way consistent with someone who is a heavy drinker, a gluttonous eater, a lazy sleeper, or all three.

It's completely inconsistent. They're focused on earthly relationships and activities and they're distracted by fun and the focus of the culture. This proverb is using alcohol, food, and sleep to describe and illustrate those who are self-absorbed, purposeless, who don't fear sin and they're dedicated to social relationships and fun, not biblical and godly influence for obvious reasons. Nothing in the character being described here has anything to do with eternity, with sin, sanctification, or living for the glory of God. And what does this have to do with relationships?

[ 30 : 09 ] We have to look at the first four words of Proverbs 23, 20. It couldn't be more clear. Do not be with. It's very simple.

It's a hard message sometimes to our children who want to be with these people. These are bad influences.

And this is the simple clarion call of wisdom. And I have to pause and go back to what I said earlier. I don't believe it's possible or even wise to isolate your children from people who are drinkers, eaters, and lazy.

That's the world we live in. What we're talking about here is not about staying away from people like that, but it's what?

It's influence. It's having the maturity to be able to navigate that without allowing people like that to have the influence on your children's heart and on their life.

[ 31 : 13 ] This is the wisdom that you are to teach them. This theme is repeated over and over and over in Proverbs, which is why I just wanted to highlight one, because I know you're going to start going through Proverbs with your kids after last night, aren't you?

It's such simple truth, and this simple truth is so often ignored. And many of us in this room can look back at our youth and see we knew this, we ignored this, and there were consequences to that. It's not hard. It's not complicated. You don't want to run with this crowd unless you're prepared to be like that crowd and come to the same end as that crowd to the extent you give them influence. Hebrews 10, 23 to 25, I just want to read it again. Let us hold fast to confession of our faith without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. It's the first let us statement.

That is the goal of life. And the second is let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Those are good relationships, not forsaking the assembling together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

[ 32 : 36 ] So, how can you be a bad influence? One, live for fun. And obviously I'm going through this because as you evaluate your parenting, as you evaluate the choices your children are making of those who they want to spend time with, who they want to give influence to, who they want to date.

You talk to them about who they want to marry. You're also going to talk to them about whether they are a good influence or a bad influence. Does your child live for fun?

Do they live for today? Are they fickle? Are they selfish? It's all about me. It's not about how I can help others and stimulate them.

It's all about me and my fun and my life. They misunderstand Hebrews 10 to mean stimulate others to love me and do good deeds for me. That is a selfish existence.

That is not a good friend. People that never talk about spiritual things, they change the subject. Everything's a joke. Talk about the weather, but let's not talk about Christ.

[ 33 : 47 ] They live as if Christ means nothing to them. That is a bad influence as defined in Scripture. Another bad influence is someone who will never point out sin and error.

Remember, the stimulate means to annoy, to create sparks. It is doing whatever is necessary to cause you and me to love and good deeds.

Bad influence looks the other way in sin. even though you're called to sharp disagreements, provocation, and sharpening, you just don't like confrontation.

That's a bad influence. Even when your friend sees you heading for heartbreak and consequences of sin, if they're not willing to step into the gap and say, stop, what you're about to do is really, really dangerous, is that a good friend?

That is not a good friend. That's a bad influence. They'll just wave you right on by. They'll jump out of the way. So, let's now flip from the bad influence and talk about good influences.

[ 35 : 01 ] It's defined in Hebrews 10, 23 to 25. I won't read that again, but I want to illustrate it out of Proverbs. If you're in Proverbs, turn back to Proverbs 17, 17, and I want to talk about your influence on others, how to be a good influence.

And this short verse in Proverbs 17, 17, you probably don't even have to turn to it. You know it. It's on Hallmark cards. A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.

Does anybody know what I'm talking about when I say Hallmark cards? I just realized. Okay. I'm old and I'm, you know, from the United States, so both of those might play against me. There's a parallelism in this verse that's very profound.

There's an equivalency that has profound impact as you consider your friendships. And that parallelism is the equivalency between a brother and a friend.

And I want to examine that for a few minutes. This is a tough, hard truth. Loyalty and stability.

[ 36 : 13 ] That's what this is talking about at all times. Romans 12, 10 says that we are to be devoted to one another. Speaks of patience and steadfastness.

A friend loves at all times. Not when it's convenient. Not when you're in total agreement. But at all times.

And a brother is born for adversity. This verse introduces two concepts. That love might not be really convenient at all times.

And there will be adversity. The proverb is making a basic and profound point that a friend is like a sibling. The bible says that a good friend is just like your blood brother or blood sister.

Proverbs 18, 24 says a man of too many friends comes to ruin but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. It's really interesting in the proverbs.

[ 37 : 16 ] When it talks about bad company it uses the plural every time. When it talks about a good friend it talks about it in terms of singular.

Good friends are rare. A good influence is rare. We live in a culture your kids are coming up in a culture where their worth is measured by how many follows they have.

How many likes they have. How acceptable they are to people they know and people they don't know. They're called influencers. I find that really interesting.

That is really completely contrary to how the Bible describes good friends. They're rare. They're few.

They're far between. But this parallelism this description of a good friend being like a brother some of you struggle with this because you have such poor relationships with your siblings.

[ 38 : 17 ] But the point is this whatever the cause of that struggle they are still family. and there is a closeness and a permanence that is an example of what your friendships should be.

So my brother or my sister might commit a crime and go to prison. Guess what? They're still my brother or my sister.

They might do a lot of things in life. You might really like what they do in life. You might really dislike what they do and what they do might be really unpopular and really public and guess what?

They're still your sibling. There is no getting away from it. Some of you might viscerally relate to the point that the proverb is making here. There is a permanence.

There is a stability in the relationship. relationship. There is a lack of ability to get away from that relationship. And it's a relationship when you talk about a sibling that you had no decision, you had no part in the decision of being that person's sibling.

[ 39 : 32 ] family. The Bible says that a friend is like that. A good friend is like that. You forgive family because you have to. Because you have to spend Christmas and Easter with them every year for the rest of your life at least.

There are weddings. There are funerals. There are other events that will bring your family together. together. And it is much more navigable if you can forgive them.

And they can forgive you. And within a family we know there's always lots of reasons that there's a need for forgiveness. Isn't there? Always.

Sometimes it starts when they're five years old. We all too rarely extend that same forgiveness to one another. We would rather wash our hands and move on and that's not a biblical friendship. Biblical friendship has a permanence. Has an ambivalence to it. That regardless of the difficulties there's still that friendship.

[ 40 : 40 ] Do you hear a description of marriage in there? The marriage relationship. The permanence. The difficulty sometimes yes but the permanence.

The relationship with your siblings does not change just because they've seen you at your worst. They know all the bad things about you. They know they've seen you when you've been weak. They have seen you when you've been strong. That is the nature of a sibling relationship. That is the peril that is drawn in Proverbs over and over and over in comparing a friendship with a brother. 1 Peter 4.8 says above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. This is not a statement of ignoring sin. This is a statement of loving people in spite of sin. Again we're talking about we're illustrating good friends from Scripture.

[ 41 : 44 ] There's an ambivalence of patience and a looking past offense. this is the meaning of the proverb. That's why it goes from a plural of many friends to the singular brother.

I remember raising our daughters when they were young. They used to mix it up pretty good. And we were very very concerned that when they had disagreements when they had fights it was really interesting dynamic by the way with three because usually there was this negotiation of who's going to be on whose side.

The swing vote always had the most power. You understand all of that. So all this is going on and they could mix it up really well and we made it a point to stop that as quickly as we could for a couple reasons.

One is you create memories that are hard to overcome when you allow siblings to fight. The second thing is I would always sit them down and talk to them about 50 years from now.

And yes they would roll their eyes. but I would tell them 50 years from now should God bring you a spouse he will be your best friend.

[ 42 : 56 ] I pray. But outside of him and the children the Lord might give you I don't care who you think is cool today I don't know who you think your BFFs are or whatever the phrase best friends forever in case you don't know what that means.

Your siblings will always be your siblings your sisters will always be your sisters they will be your closest friends and I would tell them you don't understand what that means today that doesn't mean you're going to enjoy each other sometimes that doesn't mean you're necessarily going to like each other sometimes but what it does mean is very few people on this earth are going to understand you the way those two little girls understand you and will understand you and care about you that is the nature and the permanence of a sibling relationship and that is how the Bible describes a good friend okay so Proverbs 17 17 a short verse a well known verse and a profound verse describing good friends a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity so as you're teaching your children how to be a good friend how to be a good influence there's a couple things that we can close with to talk about how to teach this how to train our children to be a good influence and why would you want to do that by the way and again

I want to leave a lot of the application to each of you depending on what stage of life you're in but why would you want to teach your children how to be a good influence well they're going to be married someday this is how to be a good husband how to be a good wife how to be a good father how to be a good mother this is for the moms and dads in the room this is how you build maximum influence for your children because the day is coming when you will be less of a parent and more of a friend and remember we talked about it last night there's a great transition coming where you cannot require the obedience of your children you cannot require the honor of your children in your direction and you cannot require that you have the influence with your children but what you want to do is to have a relationship such that they seek your influence and they do that in the context of honoring you and so the application of all of this is all over the place depending on where you are in various stages of human relationships

Hebrews 10 is the starting place the goal of life if you're a believer it's profoundly serious I want to hold fast the faithful word and I want should the Lord bless me and he has blessed you that's why you're in the church to have influences in your life that will drive you towards Christ towards that goal that's what you want to be and that's what you want your children to be first thing how to be a

good influence one learn to love teach your children how to love what is love John 15 12 to 17 Jesus says this is my commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you what a profound statement you contemplate how has Christ loved you if you're saved it almost defies description how Christ has loved you that's how we're supposed to love one another goes on greater love has no one than this than one laid down his life for his friends you are my friends if you do what I command you and then verse 17 of John 15 this

I command you that you love one another that is a command for all of us that is the command then that we are to train into our children the next generation loving one another is the closest you will ever come to being like Christ because we're called to love as he loves us Christ displayed the ultimate friendship he died for his friends that's you and me Christ is the example of self sacrificing love for others however loving you think you are it's nothing probably compared to how Christ loves you and that's why this is a lifelong pursuit and so how do you teach your children to love others you teach them the fear of God and what is the fear of God it's the knowledge of God how has Christ loved them and if they understand that John 15 says they will know how to love others we're commanded to learn this and to obey you know in

[ 48 : 21 ] Ephesians 5 just to make application beyond parenting and into marriage there is a command four times for us husbands to love our wife I always chuckle at that I'm a guy and apparently under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul understood he needed to say it four times for us guys to figure it out it is so important a young man doesn't want to talk about learning about how to love other people but that is what the Bible says and it's preparation for marriage he needs to know how to love his wife he needs to see it dads and how you love his mom love your wife is in Ephesians 5 four times and it also defines it it boils it all down and by the way if you know Ephesians 5 you know it lays out you love your wife as Christ loves the church completely parallel to what we were just looking at in

John 15 but it boils it down and it says you give yourself up for her teaching your sons how to give themselves up not for their hobbies not for their best buddies but someday for the woman that God brings to them for the rest of their life 1 Corinthians 13 4 through 8 is a passage that's read probably at a lot of weddings I've done a lot of weddings I've never read 1 Corinthians 13 at a wedding but I hear it a lot and it describes love it describes Christ's love for us remember John 15 we're to love as Christ loves us 1 Corinthians 13 describes this it's not just marital love this is love in the church love is patient love is kind it's not jealous it does not brag it is not arrogant it does not act humbly meaning it doesn't try to embarrass or put down it doesn't seek its own you know and just to stop there there's a there's a tendency on young people to lift themselves up by putting other people down and sometimes that's carried right into marriage that is completely contrary to love as Christ loves us where it does not seek its own it's not provoked it doesn't take into account a wrong suffered it doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness but it rejoices with the truth bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love never fails this isn't just marital love it is marital love partially but this is a reflection on how Christ loves us and then how we are to love others teach your children to love demonstrate that love second you want to teach them to be servants and by the way a good friend is a servant ecclesiastes 4 9 says two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor for if either of them falls the one will lift up his companion but what are the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up we all fall the good friend picks us up learn to serve that

I remember back in the day some of you who watched me hike a mountain yesterday wouldn't believe this but I used to backpack all the time on the John Muir Trail in the High Sierras in California we had a buddy system we're carrying 50 60 pounds on our back we're hiking up pretty steep hills and you have a buddy system the whole point is if someone goes down somebody is there to pick them up that's the concept here marriage in Ephesians 5 25 when it says men to give yourself up for her that is the ultimate service that is the ultimate service Matthew 20 25 to 28 is the example of Christ Jesus called them to himself and said you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and their great men exercise authority over them it is not this way among you or it shouldn't be but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your what servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave just as the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many are you hearing the theme be like Christ and if we're to boil it down what it really comes down to is be like Christ and the people that you invite to have influence in your life your friends a spouse should be someone who is pursuing

the same thing be like Christ love like Christ serve like Christ number three be faithful like Christ fulfill the full purpose of a friend stimulating one another to love and good deeds looking out for others is more important than yourself Proverbs 27 6 another verse that you've heard about faithful are the wounds of a friend but deceitful are the kisses of an of an enemy your friendships will be tested and what are the wounds of a friend well it goes right back to Hebrews chapter 10 stimulating one another sparks tension annoying each other for the purpose of driving us to love and good deeds those are the wounds of a friend the kisses of the enemy are deceitful we need to provoke each other encourage each other sharpen each other be sharpened be encouraged and we stick together through all of that if you're married you chose the one to love and you spend the rest of your life now loving the one you chose there's a permanence to that there is a faithfulness required that the Bible says except for very rare circumstances that relationship is for life that's the faithfulness number four and lastly we need to be purposeful you pick your friends and I said this at the beginning you pick your friends you don't let them pick you if there is ever a simple lesson in parenting that's it and I'm not talking about associates and I'm not talking about people on the athletic team or whatever the case may be it is making your children understand that they get to decide at some point who the primary influence or influences are in their life what a tremendous opportunity and what tremendous risk if they don't understand that

[ 55 : 47 ] Amos 3.3 says do two men walk together unless they have made an agreement Amos 3.3 that's the Bible saying pick your friends don't let them pick you don't let your friendships and associations just happen and in those friendships and associations there needs to be a commitment together to stimulate each other to love and good deeds that's why we've done a lot of premarital counseling we spend time in Hebrews 10 23 to 25 are you committed to a lifetime of stimulating one another to love and good deeds don't waste your time on bad influence don't waste your relationships don't waste your reputation through association with bad influence be accountable and I think it's fair to say that if things are going south in life there's a number of checkpoints to look at and one of them might be who have you given influence to in your life let me finish just by rereading this the two let us statements let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering that is your goal if you're a believer

Christ has taken the heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh he has done that for you and at the end of your life you want to look back and say he did that for me and I held fast without wavering because he who promises faithful and then verse 24 let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds there is the definition of good friends good relationships not forsaking or assembling together and that by the way is a big clue on where you're going to find the best influences in your life so as you tell your children come to church and they say I don't want to you now have the basis to explain no this is why you come to church in 2020 down where I live the argument for reopening churches of getting the church back together was Hebrews not just Hebrews 10 25 but verses 23 and 24 we need each other we need to be together and the great gift of the church the great gift of the head of the church is that we find these relationships right here these are the people sitting around you who understand the seriousness of life that we don't just eat drink and die but that we're here for a much bigger purpose we need to encourage one another and all the more all the more as you see the day drawing near let me pray

Lord thank you for your word thank you for the truth of your word Lord as we consider relationships this afternoon I pray that you're honored by that Lord we pray for the children represented in this room that they would be wise that they would choose excuse me carefully the influence that they allow into their life be with the parents as they navigate these relationship issues in the lives of the people they find most precious give them wisdom as they guide their children and Lord we pray that in all of this there would be a seriousness about life not a lack of joy or a lack of fun but underneath all of that seriousness about life that we want to hold fast the faith to your praise and glory and Lord we pray for those of us who may have bad influences in our life as we think about this and consider this I pray that you give us wisdom as we consider that as we navigate that and make decisions in reaction to that we pray this in Christ's name amen