

# Friendship

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 10 November 2024

Preacher: Josh Varnedoe

[ 0 : 00 ] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com).

Proverbs chapter 18, and thank you for having me and my wife, Melanie, this morning. We've been able to come twice over the past six years, and it's been so encouraging to watch the church grow. And even as we came in, as I was thinking about this morning, my prayer is that Christ Community Church looks like Trinity Grace Church in six years.

So as I'm coming in, I'm taking notes. I'm observing things, how you guys do things. I'm taking notes from your pastors. I'm hungry for their insight, want their input, and we're just very grateful for this church.

Grateful for your support, grateful for your generosity. Thanks for being in our corner. Thanks for praying for us as we pursue this church plant. Some details for you to let you in on what's been going on.

[ 1 : 07 ] Christ Community Church, we'll open our doors on April 6th in North Knoxville, just minutes from downtown. And if you're familiar with Knoxville, maybe you are.

As the city has grown, these little pockets in the city have grown with it, and each area has just become very distinct. And so this area of Knoxville that we're planning in is very different from where Cornerstone is.

It's a different community. It kind of has a different vibe. It's more diverse socioeconomically. It's more diverse racially. And again, it's growing.

More and more people are moving to this part of town. My wife and I, we live in this part of town. And because we have everything we need, we never go out to Cornerstone. Cornerstone in traffic is about 40 to 45 minutes away.

So, you know, we wouldn't be making that trek if it wasn't for Cornerstone. And so there's a great opportunity here to reach this area. This area is in desperate need of a thriving, gospel-proclaiming church.

[ 2 : 12 ] And so our prayer is that we're able to provide a community, a church like that. There's a number of members of Cornerstone that live in North Knoxville, that have lived there for decades, that have been faithfully reaching out to their neighbors and coworkers.

And this is just going to make it so much easier, so much easier to invite people to church when there's a church right down the road. So please pray for us. We chose the name Christ Community Church to emphasize that we are not a social club.

We're not some sort of community organization. We are a people not united by what we do for a living. Or what we look like. Or how much money we made.

Or who we voted for. We are a people united by a shared salvation in Christ. A shared experience of the gospel.

And a community that's united in Christ is always reaching out and bringing in. A community transformed by the grace of God is an insular. So our goal is not to plant this church in North Knoxville and just kind of keep to ourselves.

[ 3 : 25 ] Our goal is to expand and to grow, to bring people into gospel community. Community that's centered on Christ. It's attractive.

It's compelling. It's present here at Trinity Grace. And we want it to be present at Christ Community. And I've been so encouraged by our church planning team.

We have a number of folks leaving Cornerstone. And as we've met together, it's just been very apparent. These folks are eager to build relationally with one another. And they're excited to bring their neighbors and their coworkers in.

They're already scheming on how to get people to church. They're already brainstorming on how to make it happen. And our prayer is that as people come in, as they witness biblical, genuine friendship, that the Lord uses that to build his church.

To bring people to faith. Friendship that is born out of a shared love for Christ is a tool that the Lord uses. He uses it to advance his kingdom.

[ 4 : 28 ] And it's also a tool that he uses to shape and mold us. To produce in us a greater love for Christ as we live out the Christian life.

Christian friendship is unique. And so because of its importance, both for the mission and for our own sanctification, we're going to open up the book of Proverbs.

We're going to be instructed by the Lord on what our friendships should look like. And the reason we're going to go to the book of Proverbs for insight is because this book has a unique purpose. Proverbs has a unique purpose. Its purpose is to help us grow in wisdom. And not just any wisdom. But wisdom that flows from a desire to honor the Lord. To glorify the Lord with our lives.

And it has something to say about our friendships. It has something practical for us. It helps us live out God-centered friendships. So we're going to be looking at a variety of verses in the book of Proverbs.

[ 5 : 30 ] And we're going to start with Proverbs chapter 18, verse 24. Just one verse. This is where we'll start. Chapter 18, verse 24.

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother. I'm going to read that again. A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

A number of years ago, a couple of friends and I, we got into a new hobby. Whitewater kayaking. And I'm not sure where this interest came from.

I don't know where we got this idea, but one summer we had plenty of time on our hands. And we thought we'd give it a try. I don't know if you've ever experienced whitewater kayaking, but it's something else.

[ 6 : 27 ] So we had a couple kayaks between us. And over the course of the summer, we'd go to different lakes in the area, and we'd get used to the kayaks. Whitewater kayaks are a little different.

I have a hard time fitting in whitewater kayaks. But we were trying to get used to it. We were practicing what you would do if we got turned over. There's a certain maneuver that you perform. And so we just, over and over again, we just practiced.

And eventually, we worked the courage to try it out. And our first run actually went pretty well. We went up to the lower Pigeon River, which is up towards Asheville.

It was pretty tame. Didn't have many issues. No one flipped over, which was good. And after that trip, we were feeling pretty confident, feeling pretty cocky. So we decided that we'd graduated to Rougher Rapids.

So we set our sights on the upper Pigeon River. Now, this part of the river has a series of Class 3 and Class 4 rapids, which, if you've ever been whitewater rafting, not a huge deal.

[ 7 : 27 ] But for two novice kayakers, probably an unwise jump. But I'll never forget this trip. One Saturday morning, me and my friend, Jackson Landis, we woke up one morning, and we headed out, ready for adventure, headed out to the mountains.

And initially, when we put in, things were going pretty well. There hadn't been any rapids we couldn't manage. And to be honest, I think we were getting a little cocky. You can kind of see the theme here. And this is where things, right about here when things went south.

I don't think it was a big rapid that flipped me over. But all I remember was kayaking down. And all of a sudden, I was flipped over underneath the water. I couldn't get out. So I panicked.

All my training went out the window. I eventually was able to kind of maneuver myself out. And me and Jackson, we pulled over to the side of the river to kind of a calm area just to reevaluate, you know.

And it was in that moment that I realized I'd lost my paddle. In the middle of all that, I panicked. Training went out the window. Lost my paddle. And I'll never forget this.

[ 8 : 37 ] I'll never forget. Me and Jackson were sitting there. And without hesitation, Jackson looked at me. He unclipped his paddle. And he gave me half of his.

Without hesitation. In that moment, my mistake was now his mistake. We were in it together. We were going to have to figure it out. But we both had half a paddle.

We were ready to rock and roll. But right as we were about to pull out, as we were pulling out from this calm section, we didn't fully know what was ahead. We just knew we had half a paddle each. As we were pulling out, this lone kayaker is drifting down the river.

And if you just imagine in your head for a second someone who you think would be good at whitewater kayaking, that's what this guy looked like. He looked like a professional. We called him over, explained the situation to him, and lo and behold, he had an extra paddle just in his kayak. And he proceeded to guide us the rest of the way. It was unbelievable. Come to find out, the rapid we were about to hit, a mere 300 yards away, was one of the most technical and dangerous out of the entire river.

[ 9 : 46 ] But this guy floated down, gave us his extra paddle, and we made it. I think the Lord provided this guy. I've wondered if this guy was an angel a couple of times.

The Lord provided this dude. I don't know what would have happened. But I love this memory. Maybe you have memories like this. What sticks out to me is that Jackson, my friend, had no idea that this guy was around the bend.

He had no clue. But what he did was give me half his paddle. He stuck with me. He happily took on extra risk.

And I would say a legitimately dangerous situation for my sake. I thought about this story when I read Proverbs 18, verse 24. A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there's a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

True friendship, it's a gift from God. It's a gift from God. It's a prize worth fighting for. So we're going to ask two questions of the book of Proverbs regarding friendship.

[ 10 : 54 ] Two questions that I think we can find the answer to. The first question is, why do we need friendship? Why do we need it? And the second is, what kind of friend should we be?

We'll spend most of our time on the second question. But first, let's ask, why do we need friendship? C.S. Lewis, he wrote in his book, *The Four Loves*.

He says, I have no duty to be anyone's friend. And no man in the world has a duty to be mine. No claims.

No shadow of necessity. Friendship is unnecessary. Like philosophy. Like art. Like the universe itself. For God did not need to create.

It has no survival value. Rather, it is one of those things which give value to survival. That quote struck me. Have you ever thought about that?

[ 11 : 52 ] Friendship is unnecessary. It's unnecessary in the sense that we can survive without it. Think about that. We can work a job.

We can care for our families. We can pay the mortgage. We can get an education. We can plan for the future. We can enjoy hobbies. We can parent our kids. We can pursue retirement.

All without friendship. But, like Lewis writes, though friendship is technically unnecessary, it's immensely valuable.

And it's even foolish to live without. According to Proverbs, friendship is critical to wise living. Look at Proverbs 18.1. We should have it on the screen.

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire. And he breaks out against all sound judgment. So what the author is referring to is someone who's isolating himself because he doesn't want counsel from other people.

[ 12 : 57 ] He's talking about someone who doesn't want to be known. He's talking about someone who doesn't want other people to know the real him. He doesn't want anyone else telling him how to live.

So he isolates himself. And he keeps others at arm's length. As I was thinking about this verse, home improvement projects came to my mind.

And I'm pretty sure I'm the least handy person in this room. But maybe, maybe this is just me, but maybe you're trying to fix something in your house. And there's this sense of pride.

Like, this is my house. I'm going to fix it. I don't need to pay anybody. I don't need a handyman. I don't need any of that. I'm going to fix what's wrong in my house.

And maybe you start that home improvement project. And hours start to tick by. And your wife is watching you thinking, this ain't going well. She's seeing dollar signs going out the window.

[ 13 : 53 ] And she's like, honey, maybe you should get help. No. I'm going to figure it out. And my resolve only intensifies. This is the kind of warning that Solomon is warning us against.

This isolation. This, I'm going to do what I think is best. My decisions are no one else's business. I'm going to do what I want to do. It's dangerous.

And I think it's important to note that we can be surrounded by people and yet remain isolated. We can have surface level friendships.

We can have a lot of acquaintances, a lot of coworkers, teammates, classmates. In fact, it's possible to be the most social person in your circles.

To have a bunch of friends, yet refuse to open your life up to others. And if we do this, it forces us to live by our own judgment and wisdom.

[14:59] And Proverbs warns us. Proverbs warns us against doing this. Proverbs 26, verse 12. Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 14, 12. There's a way that seems right to a man. But its end is the way to death. You and I, we need people.

We need friendships. Now maybe, maybe you hear all this and you agree. Say, no, I don't want to be isolated. I don't want this to be my experience.

But you came in this morning. You came in feeling lonely. For whatever reason. Maybe you're new to the area. Maybe you're new to this church. Maybe there's been significant conflict.

Or difficult separation. Or difficult separation. From people who were historically your friends. I just want to encourage you. Whatever the situation. Jesus.

[16:05] Your great friend. The most important friend. Can sympathize with you. He is near to you. He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother.

If you're a Christian this morning. Whether or not you feel lonely or not. Christ is your friend and your ally. And that alone is a great comfort.

But Jesus knows what it's like to be lonely. He can relate with us. The author of Hebrews. He summarizes it in verse. In chapter 4. He says. For we do not have a high priest.

Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. But one who in every respect has been tempted. As we are yet without sin. So what's the response?

Let us then with confidence draw near. Draw near to the throne of grace. That we may receive mercy. And find grace to help in time of need.

[17:07] Jesus knows. If you're lonely this morning. This is comfort. Comfort from God's word. He knows. And he understands. Because in his life.

The Lord experienced loneliness. Most distinctly on the cross. As he hung. Suspended. Alone. Bearing the wrath of God.

That's your savior. That's your king. So draw near. Draw near. Draw near to the throne of grace.

Commit your desire for friendship to him. Commit it to him. You can trust him. Now I don't think trusting the Lord in this area necessarily means that you wait for friendships to come to you.

I think trusting the Lord means stepping out in faith. Stepping out. Being a good friend to others. So as we walk through just these different characteristics of what a godly friend looks like.

[18:14] I'd encourage you to step out in faith. Be that friend. Be that friend to others. And see what the Lord might do. Now that leads us to our second question.

What kind of friend should we be? Proverbs chapter 20 verse 6. What kind of friend? What characterizes a godly biblical friend?

Proverbs 20. Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love. But a faithful man who can find. The primary characteristic of our friendships should be faithfulness.

And you just see that over and over again in Proverbs. To be faithful means to be loyal. To be steadfast. To be steadfast in commitment.

To be reliable. To remain closer than a brother. And we're going to focus on three ways that faithfulness expresses itself in our friendship. So we're going to seek to be a friend who is faithful in adversity.

[19:21] We're going to seek to be a friend who is faithful to love. And finally, a friend who is faithful to wound. So first, let's seek to be a friend who is faithful in adversity.

Proverbs 17, 17. Because a friend loves at all times. And a brother is born for adversity.

A famous example of such a friend can be found in John Newton. John Newton was formerly a slave trader in the 1700s.

And the word saved him. And he became a pastor. And remained a pastor for the rest of his life. He actually wrote the hymn Amazing Grace that we sing today. And Newton, he became the pastor of

a church in Alney, England.

And it was there he met William Cooper. And almost immediately, the two became fast friends. Even though their personalities were totally different. Maybe you have a friendship like this.

[ 20 : 28 ] Newton was kind of the more social, life of the party guy. Cooper was a shy. He was more to himself. They enjoyed rich friendship. They wrote hymns together.

They loved Christ. They loved his church. They were brothers. Newton would go on to say at Cooper's funeral that he was the closest friend that he ever had. But six years into their friendship, Cooper, who had historically struggled with severe bouts of depression, he attempted suicide. After having a nightmare in which he believed that God told him that he was condemned. And author Scott Hubbard, he tells this story. He says, The suicide attempt had failed. Even Cooper wounded and desperate. Darkness swirled in the days that followed as Cooper teetered on the edge of insanity. Yet Newton maintained a nearly constant attendance at his bedside.

Calming the afflicted poet from the effects of nightmares, delusions, and hallucinations. For nearly 14 months, Newton and his wife Mary would care for Cooper under their own roof.

[ 21 : 46 ] Eventually, the suicidal impulse would subside. But Cooper lived with this dull misery that left them hopeless. His depression was unyielding. For the rest of his life, he struggled to be in church.

He struggled to pray. He struggled to sing. But Newton never left his side. For the next 27 years, the rest of Cooper's life, Newton would over and over and over again.

He reminded him of truth. In Hubbard's words, Newton was like a faithful lighthouse on the shore, reminding his storm-tossed friend of a harbor he couldn't see.

Newton prayed for Cooper. Newton entrusted his friend to the sovereignty of God. He encouraged him of eternal realities.

Newton wrote to him. He said, Yes, my friend, when the Lord shall break the fetters or the chains that have so long entangled your spirit, and of this happy event, you yourself have conceived and expressed a hope, then you will rejoice.

[ 22 : 55 ] And I will rejoice with you. Newton was a friend. He was a friend who loved at all times.

Who stuck closer than a brother. He was faithful to remind his brother of truth. So let's be like John Newton. Let's be faithful friends in adversity.

And based on the stories that I've heard about this church, what I've heard from your pastors, this room is filled with friends like that. So this is an encouragement.

Continue to be faithful in hardship. We could explore all the different various ways you could do this as a friend. Newton did a little bit of everything. But the most important thing Newton did for William Cooper was he prayed.

He entrusted William Cooper to the sovereignty of God. And we can have confidence to pray because of verses like James chapter 5. The prayer of a righteous person has great power in its working.

[ 24 : 00 ] There is power in our prayers. Do you believe that? Not because our prayers themselves are particularly special. But there's power in them because of who we're praying to.

When you pray for your friend, you are praying to the one who raised Lazarus from the dead. You are praying to the one who made the lame walk in the blind see.

You are praying to the one who conquered death itself. You are praying to the one who knows what it's like to suffer. And who reigns supreme over all things.

John Newton understood this. Charles Spurgeon did too. And that's why he wrote, No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me.

So this week, let's pray. Let's maybe continue to pray for doctor's appointments. For sickness.

[ 25 : 07 ] For marriage difficulties. For job insecurity. For parenting difficulties. Ongoing battles with sin. There is great power. There is great power in the prayers of the Lord's saints.

Second. Whits seek to be a friend who is faithful to love. Proverbs 17 verse 9. Whoever covers an offense seeks love.

But he who repeats a matter separates close friend. A true friend. A biblical friend. Makes love and unity a priority.

And we might say that. Remember Proverbs 20. Many a man proclaims his steadfast love. But when we've been wrong. When we've been offended.

When it's our reputation on the line. When you're on the receiving end of injustice. Then our proclaimed desire for unity.

[ 26 : 09 ] And love. Is tested isn't it? And we're forced to answer the question. Do I care more about myself. And protecting myself.

Or loving my neighbor. Loving my friend. Not Proverbs 19 tells us. Good sense. Makes one slow to anger. And it's to his glory to overlook an offense.

So according to Proverbs. According to wisdom. Overlooking an offense. Covering an offense. Is the wise route.

It's actually the route that brings more honor. To the one who does it. And why is that? Why is there more honor to overlook. And to cover an offense?

It's because it follows in the footsteps of Christ. It follows in the footsteps of Christ. And on that path.

[ 27 : 08 ] There is reward. In that path. There's joy. Jesus had the most legitimate reason in history. To hold a grudge. And to be angry.

He was the only truly righteous man. Who ever lived. And he was condemned. But in the moment of execution. What did he cry out? Luke chapter 23.

Father forgive them. For they know not what they do. That's who we look to as an example. That's who we're supposed to follow.

Does Jesus continue to bring your sin up. And throw it in your face. Does he want payback. The cross and the resurrection. Say no.

God does not hold a grudge against you. If you are in Christ. There is no condemnation for you.

[ 28 : 07 ] That's why bitterness. That's why bitterness towards others is so wicked. It's anti-gospel. When we're bitter. When we hold on to the wrongs of others.

We're essentially telling God. That the grace that he showed us on the cross was foolishness.

Bitterness makes a mockery. Of the grace of God.

Continuing to bring up an offense. Even if it's just internal. It makes a mockery. And bitterness has power. Bitterness has power.

It has power to separate close friends. It has power to destroy a church. It's like a cancer. That just quietly. Sometimes unnoticeably destroys from within.

And you don't know it's there. Until it's very serious. There's no reward for bitterness. There's no reward for continuing to bring up an offense.

[ 29 : 05 ] Rerunning it in your mind. Gossiping about it to others. There's no joy there. There's no life. Maybe you're here and you're thinking. Well you have no idea.

Easy for you to say. You have no idea what my friend did to me. You're talking about sticking with me in adversity. Well this person was nowhere near me. This person dropped the ball.

I was unjustly treated. How could I not be bitter? Maybe that's you this morning. I want the word to answer from Ephesians 5.

Therefore be imitators of God. As beloved children. And walk in love. As Christ loved us. And gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering. And a sacrifice. And a sacrifice. To God. Meditate. Think about. Memorize verses about. What actually happened.

[ 30 : 08 ] At the cross. Christ gave himself up. He displayed the love of God. For his enemies.

And he has removed our sins. As far as the east. Is from the west. And if we really believe that. If we believe that.

And lay hold of that by faith. It will change the kind of friends that we are. We'll be imitators of God. We'll be patient. We'll be forgiving. We'll cover offenses.

We'll be faithful. To pursue. Love. Finally. We should seek to be a friend. Who is faithful.

To wound. Friend. Who is faithful to wound. I get this from Proverbs. Chapter 27. Verse 6. Faithful.

[ 31 : 04 ] Faithful. Are the wounds. Of a friend. Profuse. Are the kisses. Of an enemy. I'm going to read that again. Faithful. Are the wounds.

Of a friend. Profuse. Are the kisses. Of an enemy. Now what does this mean? What does this mean?

Why should a friend. Be faithful. To wound. His or her. Companion. True friends. Faithful friends.

Biblical friends. Are willing to tell things. To you. That you don't want to hear. And not. For the purpose. Of causing humiliation. Not for the purpose.

Of causing pain. But because they care. For your soul. They care. For your soul. You see. A true friend. A biblical friend.

[ 32 : 00 ] Wants nothing more. Than for you to fear. The Lord. A true friend. Wants you to treasure Christ. A true friend.

Wants you to live in submission. To the word. Of God. And that friend. Is willing to point out. When you're drifting. Why? Because the health of your soul.

Matters. Your desire. For God. Matters. To him. Or her. And so when necessary. A true friend. Is going to correct you. A true friend.

Is going to challenge you. All so that you remain spiritually. Sharp. For Christ. Proverbs 27. Says iron sharpens iron. As one man.

Sharpens. Another. We've got to have friends. Who won't just coddle our ego. And tell us things that we want to hear.

[ 32 : 55 ] Enemies do that. But true friends. They want us devoted to Christ. They want us devoted to his kingdom. I mean thinking about the home improvement project.

If you have a friend. Help you. Who knows what the goal of the project is. You want that friend to tell you. When you're about to do something dumb.

Or dangerous. You don't want someone who's just going to sit back. And watch you take out a load bearing wall. And not say anything. That's not what you want. Kind of like man. You just do you.

It's your vision for this remodel. You don't want someone like that. You want someone who says stop. You're an idiot. You're about to take out a load bearing wall. Don't do that.

That's who you want. And someone who can direct you back. On the right path. A true friend. Cares enough. To intervene. A true friend does this.

[ 33 : 51 ] And it's so often through friendships like this. That the Lord will lovingly correct and discipline us. The Lord uses friends like this. Author David Mathis.

He writes. We'll beware resisting the reproof of a fellow in Jesus. Especially when it's echoed in multiple voices. Knowing that likely we would be resisting the very reproof of God.

When a brother or sister in Christ goes to the inconvenience. To have a pleasant unpleasant conversation. That brings correction into our lives. We should be floored with thanksgiving.

The Lord reproves him whom he loves. Count it as love. From your brother. And it's God's channel of his love for you.

Faithful friends. Faithful friends. Who wound. Are often the grace. That God uses for our good.

[ 34 : 53 ] As he makes us more like Christ. It's an expression of his love. Having relationships like this. It's not optional. It's not optional for the Christian.

The stakes are just too high. They're too high. Because every single day. Every single day. When you and I wake up.

And this doesn't matter if you're older or younger. If you're single or married. If you're rich or you're poor. When we wake up. We're lying to ourselves.

The world is lying to us. And the enemy is lying to us. Satan is twisting the words of God. And since Genesis chapter 3.

He's been asking the same question. Packaged different ways. Did God really say? Is God really good?

[ 35 : 54 ] Is he really trustworthy? Can he really satisfy your soul? Are his commands actually best for you? And faithful friends. They come alongside you.

And they say yes he is. Yes he is. And when you start to buy into those lies. They're going to come alongside you. And say stop.

It's not true. Turn around. They'll look you in the eyes. And they'll say this pride is deadly. This pornography will kill you.

Don't be afraid. Don't be anxious. Remain faithful to your wife. Continue to endure with your children.

It's worth it. Hebrews chapter 3 says take care brothers. Take care. Lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart.

[ 36 : 52 ] Leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day. As long as it's called today. That none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

So in application I think the question we must all ask ourselves. Is am I willing to wound? Am I willing to be wounded?

Am I taking advantage of this means of grace that God has provided? I remember when I was in school there was this older guy who I would meet with.

And he was discipling me. And there was one particular lunch that we had. And I'll never forget it. It was at Taste of Thai off Cedar Bluff.

And I remember we were talking about just this ongoing issue. It was a situation in which I wasn't honoring the Lord.

[ 37 : 58 ] I wasn't loving other people. And this man, before the drunken noodles even came out. He looked at me and he said, Stop it.

Stop what you're doing. You're being foolish. He just looked me in the eyes. He didn't give a rip what I thought about him. He wasn't trying to win my approval.

But you know what? That guy was a faithful friend. He cared enough to correct me. He cared about my soul. He cared about the fact that I wasn't honoring the Lord.

And I'd be lying if I said it was my favorite lunch that I've ever had. It wasn't great. But the Lord used it. And you know what happened?

I actually trusted this guy more after this conversation. I was actually more aware that he was for me. I was more aware of his love for me.

[ 38 : 59 ] His care for my soul than I was before. And it motivated me. It motivated me to holiness. It made an impact on him. Now my point in telling this little story is not that you leave here and just go rip into somebody.

The point is, faithful friends love each other enough to say hard things. So are you humble enough to be wounded? I was not particularly humble.

But the Lord used this conversation to foster humility in my heart. You see, proud people, they don't want anything to do with friendships like this. They don't want anything to do with it.

They want to be left alone. Remember, they want to remain isolated. But the humble, they feel their need for God. They feel their need for others.

They're aware of their need for strength. They want other people looking in on their lives to help them remain faithful to the Lord. And guys, these kind of friendships, they're so unique.

[ 40 : 04 ] The world knows nothing about friendships like this. These friendships are only possible because of the gospel. If you're a Christian, nothing criticizes you more than the cross. Nothing.

Nothing exposes Josh's sin more clearly than the cross. Because the cross says, your sin was the reason Jesus had to die.

And I've been forgiven of that sin. So for the Christian, there's no reason to put on a false front. The gospel, it frees us from this temptation to pretend like we have it all together.

And the gospel frees us to open up our lives to be known. It opens the door for grace-filled, honest friendship that is about helping one another treasure Christ more.

So I think a way to step out in faith is to ask, maybe your friend, maybe your spouse, community group leader, pastor, whoever, where do you see me drifting? Where do you see me drifting from the Lord?

[ 41 : 10 ] Where do you see a tendency towards idolatry? How can I grow? Open your life up to others. Because here's the promise. Here's the promise.

1 Peter 5, 5. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. He opposes the proud, and he gives grace to the humble.

There's grace and power to change in sharpening, honest friendship. Church filled with faithful people who are born for adversity, who fight for unity, who care deeply about the souls of their friends.

And this is a powerful testimony of the power of the gospel. The world cannot produce friendships like this. But the gospel, it produces friendships that are founded on spiritual realities, that exalt Christ and encourage expectation for his return.

So my prayer is for Trinity Grace, for Christ Community Church, that our friendships, our relationships, declare to the community, God is with us.

[ 42 : 17 ] So may we fight for biblical friendship. May we seek to be biblical friends. And may the Lord use our friendships for his glory. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word.

Thank you for the wisdom in your word. Thank you that we have new hearts, Lord. We love you, and we love one another. Lord, I pray that Trinity Grace Church would be filled with biblical friendship.

Lord, I pray that Christ Community Church would be filled with biblical friendships, Lord, and use these friendships in our lives for our good. Use them as we reach out to our cities, as we anticipate the return of Christ.

Lord, I pray that it would create a community that is attractive to a watching world. Lord, we need your spirit. To you be the glory. In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at