

True Community, Part 2

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! 2 Timothy 4 verse 9.

This is the word of God. Do your best to come to me soon, Paul writes. For Demas, in love with the present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia. Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Verse 13. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas.

[1 : 19] Also the books and above all the parchments. All preachers love that one because of the books and the parchments. Verse 14. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.

The Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. Verse 16.

At my first defense, no one came to me to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, that all of the Gentiles might hear it.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. That is the sufficient word of God. I believe in many ways we're all born with an insatiable and unquenchable desire to be on the inside.

[2 : 36] To be a part of the in crowd. To be in the inner circle. To be in the know. Right? As a young boy, for me, this was pretty simple.

I wanted to be a gangster. I mean, who doesn't? What other boy from South Carolina doesn't want to be a gangster? I mean, who doesn't want to be Al Capone or Vito Corleone or John Gotti?

I spent countless nights as a young boy reading about gangsters and dreaming what it would be like to be one of them. I mean, imagine the power and promise.

It was my very first school project, in fact, on one of those old Mac computers with only one game. Oregon Trail. All your parents knew that.

Was on the St. Valentine's Day Massacre with Capone. I couldn't help but be fascinated. When I got in middle school, I wanted to be popular. I mean, I think every middle school kid does when they're in the most awkward season of their life.

[3 : 38] Middle school. I wanted to be well-known. I wanted to be liked. I would do almost anything to attract attention to myself, gain the acceptance I craved from the important people, right?

The people that I wanted. In high school, I fell headlong into this. I joined a social club in our little high school. Really a drinking club.

We were called the Farmers, although we didn't do anything to do with farming. And it was just to impress people with an exclusive t-shirt that came with the do's and exclusive friendships.

I wanted to be better than people. And I wanted to boast of my weekend exploits. In many ways, my life continued to swing from here or there, trying to find a place to fit in.

A group of people who liked me. A group of people who wanted to be with me. And my guess is your life is a lot like mine. Maybe without the gangster thing.

[4 : 40] But how many decisions have you made that have mainly been driven by what others think? How many days have you spent struggling to know where you fit?

Every Lego has a place, but where do you fit? How many nights have you regretted a comment you made or a joke you told or a foolish thing you did to get some props from the people that matter?

How many times have you been alone wondering why you weren't invited? Why everybody else on Facebook is out doing this thing, but you're not.

All of us are born with this longing for true friendship. For someone to be honest with. For someone to be ourselves around. For someone where we don't have to be afraid anymore. And we were made to be restless until we find it.

As we continue this true community series this morning, there's so many places we could go in the Bible to find out about this. Or to understand what it means to be created for this type of friendship.

[5 : 46] We could talk about the purpose of God all throughout the scriptures and his salvation. Not primarily of individuals, but of a people. That's what he's all about. Or we could go to Proverbs and talk about the definition of a friend.

You know, better is a friend because he does this or that. Or we could even go to Acts and we could see the joy and fellowship of the early church. The friendship, right? Was exploding. But this morning, I want to take a closer look at some very surprising, honest, final words from the Apostle Paul to help us commit ourselves to true Christ-honoring friendship.

That's where we're going today. I want to call you, commit yourself to true Christ-honoring friendship. We're going to break this out with three convictions I'm commending to you.

You know, convictions are what drive our lives. They're beliefs about God and what he's called us to do. And I'm trying to commend three convictions to you. The first is, I need friends. I need friends.

This is personalized because it's for you. And for me, I need friends. You know what? Friends are friends forever was to one generation. The theme song to friends was to mine, you know, I'll be there for you.

[7 : 02] We could probably sing it and I won't do it right now. But it captured a generation who watched the goofy characters of friends and dreamed about being involved. In fact, one of the actors on the show once commented, it's a fantasy for a lot of people.

Having a group of friends who become like family. That's what sold. That's what got people by an end. But when the Bible talks about friendship, it doesn't underline our dreams.

It underlines our need. For anything else. And I love the way this passage captures it. So this passage we talked about several months ago when we were in Philippians.

Paul is writing from Rome. This is his last letter that we have in our possession. And he's writing from a prison cell about to be killed, executed.

And he's writing to his friends. He's writing from a place of need. I love it. The way it opens. Look, do your best to come to me soon.

[8 : 04] You ever wanted to say that to a friend? Would you come soon? Yeah, look down there. In 11, he says, Luke alone is with me. Now, there's a lot behind that.

If you know Acts, Luke was with Paul throughout much of his journeys. Luke was a close personal friend. Luke was a physician. And Luke cared for Paul.

Many people believe Paul had very bad eyesight. That's what they think is the thorn in the flesh. It's very bad eyesight. And Luke helped him. So he said, Luke alone is with me.

Luke is his personal friend. But then he continues, get Mark and bring him with you. For he's very useful to me. Paul had an established conviction.

I need friends. And God wants us to have the same conviction. I need friends. I need friends to see. You know, all of us have friends who tell us what we want to hear.

[9 : 04] But we need friends who tell us what we need to hear. Have you ever noticed that much of what is obvious to you? Or much of what is not obvious to you is obvious to your friends? That you talk too much.

You know, some friends want to say to us, that's why God gave us two ears and one mouth. Or that you sneeze too loud. Have you ever noticed that that's like the loudest sneeze in humanity?

You know, or that you chew with your mouth open. I mean, that's not something you know. We don't eat with a mirror in front of us. But our friends remind us. Well, the Bible says the same thing goes on spiritually.

Sin has so affected our lives that many of the flaws and sins that are obvious to others remain hidden to us. We may see and know many things about ourselves. I mean, we've lived with ourselves our whole life.

And yet have pockets of spiritual blindness. We may have, and we do have, blind spots. I mean, somebody gets caught in that little position between close in our side mirror and far away to where we miss it.

[10 : 09] We have blind spots. Hebrews 3, 13, which we have for you, says it like this. 3, 12 and 13. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, as long as it's called today, that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. So look at what he says there. Take care, brothers. By implication, sisters.

The point is that everyone, even those who have come to Christ and have trusted in Christ, can be deceived. Everyone is in need of help to see.

There's no haves and have-nots. There's no one who's arrived and just offers help to everybody else. All of us can be deceived, tricked, duped, and misled by sin.

Sin blinds us. The crazy thing about sin is it blinds us, and then we're blind to our blindness. Sin blinds us, and we think we see.

[11 : 17] But we think that because we're blind to how blind we are. We can be sailing along thinking all is well when, in fact, we're drifting. We can be convinced that our unforgiveness is right without realizing how hard our heart has become.

We can be at peace, content, and happy with a decision that is clearly wrong. We can be convinced of something about ourselves that is thoroughly untrue. I don't know if you've ever watched the show, like The X Factor or American Idol.

You know, I was reading a story about one X Factor contestant, and, you know, you kind of fear the worst when those contestants get up, and they say that their dream in life is to be the next Beyonce. And so you're like, man, you are not starting out on good ground, sister.

I mean, Beyonce, I don't know. She's great, right? And so then she sings without hitting a note and keeps going despite the chuckles of the judges, right?

And a few say things like, have you ever considered something else, you know? Well, maybe something where you don't have to open your mouth, you know, or perhaps singing isn't for you. And then one judge, I can't remember his name, but he's always, Simon.

[12 : 29] Yeah, he's always this judge, right? He said, do you realize you sound like a cat wailing? It's not a good sound. And then maybe she responds, I'm a brilliant singer.

You're wrong. And this author was describing this scene. Wait until I get famous. But the author writes, how did she become so deceived? And he said the video kept going to the back room where her family and friends assured her, you are a brilliant singer.

You are good. They think it's kindness, but they're furthering her deception. We need friends. Don't tell us what we want to hear.

But tell us what we need to hear. Do you have a friend like that? Same thing happens in our life.

You're a great singer. You know, sometimes we can think with friends that if we have Jesus, that's all we need. I mean, look down at 16. I just love the way Paul says this. You know, at my first offense, no one came to me, but all deserted me.

[13 : 39] May it not be charged to them, but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. The point of these verses is not that if you have Jesus, you don't need anybody else. The point of these verses is that having Jesus does not replace the need for friends.

He's on death row. The Lord is standing by him, but he's saying, I need friends. I need someone here.

Jesus stands by him when no one else does, but Paul nevertheless longs for him, fills a deep need for friends. I need more than my Bible prayers and family to grow. I need friends to grow.

Ephesians 4 says it like this, rather speaking the truth in love, we're to grow up in every way into him who is the head. We grow, is what Paul's saying, we grow in the church as friends speak to us, as they encourage us and challenge us, as they help us.

They speak the word. They speak the word of the gospel. They build us up. The church is not a discipleship factory where we meet one-on-one, but it's a discipleship factory where speaking is going on all around us to build us up into Christ.

[14 : 48] The background of that passage is once we were like children who were tossed to and fro by the waves, but we need to grow up. And how do we grow up? By friends who speak.

We need this to be a functioning conviction. I need friends to not just see, but to grow. I need to invite people.

If this is a functioning conviction, I invite people into my trouble. Proverbs says, whoever isolates himself breaks out against all sound judgment. I need to share my burden.

Met with somebody last week who just said, I'm sharing my burden. I didn't have anything to say to it. Well, I didn't have much to say to it. I said, I can share your burden.

I need to ask questions. I need to seek counsel. I need to get prayer. I love the way Ed Welch says it. A rule of thumb is that when you are stuck in hardships and sins, or sin, you keep enlarging the circle of those who know until you're no longer stuck.

[15 : 58] That's all. I mean, that's something I can do. I don't know about you guys. Okay, I'm going to keep enlarging the circle until I'm unstuck, until I'm no longer stuck, so that I grow.

I want to be like Jesus. I need friends who share Christ. You know, I just love Acts, and we are launching into Acts, and so you can tell it's in the back of my mind, but, you know, they're just sharing everything they have, and what's going on in the early church, it's not that they suddenly adopt communism, or socialism, or something like that, but the idea is that they share Christ, and so they share everything else, and they share everything else because they share Christ, and so they do.

They share their food, their drinks, their money, their houses, their prayers, their singing. All of it's about sharing Christ. Not a political philosophy going on. It's Christ, and they want to share Him.

Life is not a solo mission. It's meant to be lived for something greater, to share something greater. It's meant to be lived, to share, and to spread Jesus Christ.

One of the saddest stories of someone realizing this deep need is the story of Christopher McCandless. It's captured in the book *Into the Wild*.

[17 : 21] Christopher McCandless was from, I think, the Atlanta area. He graduated college. He donated all his money to charity. He headed west on his own to live off the land.

He chases the greatest adventure that he could imagine. He chases his dreams. He eventually ditches his car and hitchhikes. He makes all sorts of stops, and he eventually makes it all the way to Alaska and lives off the land.

Things are going well for him for several months, but life grows harder. If you've ever camped out on a cold night, the weather is cold.

The wild is harsh. In the midst of that, he's reading a book called *Dr. Spago*, and on his solo mission, he discovers something profound about life.

He writes in his journal, it's a little bit poetic, but he says, only a life similar to the life of those around us, merging with it without ripple, is a genuine life.

[18 : 39] So a life alone is not a genuine life, is what he's saying and what he's found. A life, only one that merges with others around him is a genuine life, and an unshared happiness is not happiness.

He wrote in all caps in his journal, one of the final journal entries, happiness is only real when shared. Sadly, after this entry, he seeks to return, and he can't.

He tries to cross back over the stream, but it had, I don't know if you say swelled, swollen, it had gotten larger, and he was stuck.

He grew more and more anxious, and his journal entries reveal that. He was hoping for help from others, but there's no one around. Like, his mission was to get away from everybody. Eventually, he's forced to eat roots and plants as he runs out of food.

He confuses the roots, becomes sick, he eats something poisonous, and died. His last entry is in all caps, extremely weak, fault of pot, seed, much trouble just to stand up, starving, great, jeopardy.

[19 : 54] I don't tell his story to make light of his story or anything like that or just to use his story, but I use it as an illustration to say his life dream of being alone brought him only to the painful realization of his need for others.

Let's not go there. I need friends. Second, friends need me.

Friends need me. You know, we need friends, and if that was like widespread, that this deep need that we need friends, why aren't friendships easy to find? Aristotle said, the desire for friendship comes quickly, but everybody knows friendship does not.

And I think sometimes we're so focused on choosing the right friends that we never pause to ask, what kind of friend am I? Or even better, what kind of friend do my friends need?

Friends need me to move towards them. You know, the Bible says again and again, you know, welcome one another, greet one another. It even says, greet one another with a holy kiss. Thankfully, we retired that one, but the idea is don't just stand there.

[21 : 04] When you gather, when you see people, you move towards them. You go to them. The whole idea is that we welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.

As the Lord Jesus, the King, welcomed us. think about this. Kings don't welcome people. The kings are not out in the Buckingham Palace lawn welcoming people to London.

You won't see Trump on the lawn welcoming you to Washington. They receive people. People ask for an audience with the king and are escorted into his presence, but the point is, Jesus Christ is not like any other king.

He doesn't just leave the castle door open. He doesn't just extend office hours into the evening. No, he comes after us. He seeks us. He finds us.

He moves towards us. He knew we were not moving and so he moves. And so we welcome people like that. That's the point. We welcome, the accent is on our initiative because the accent is on, on imitating Jesus Christ who welcomed us gladly.

[22 : 19] Praise the Lord. He didn't just say, just come on in. No, he says, come on in. Enter into my joy. And so if we get this, we'll be stunned by the privilege to move towards people.

Now I am what you would call an introvert. I am a little bit awkward around people and moving towards is not my favorite thing to do, but we will do it.

If we get this idea, we'll greet. We'll welcome. We'll ask questions. We'll pull up a chair. You know, we'll push through the awkwardness. I was thinking about this this week.

I think every conversation that matters to me began with awkwardness. I mean, who's good on the first date? You know, it's just, it's always hard and we want to move towards people.

Friends need me to move towards them. They need me to listen. They need me to listen. You know, if you had one last phone call, if you were on death row, one last phone call, who would you call?

[23 : 24] Why? It's probably somebody who listens. That's the reason you're calling them. Listening is one of the greatest gifts.

Peter, I mean, James tells us to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Good listening slows down, sits down, and sets down the phone. Good listening doesn't look for a place to talk.

You know, if you're a talker like myself, you can tend to do that. Good listening doesn't just try to fix it. Now, this is a really hard one. When you get married, you'll figure out that not every problem that your wife wants to talk about is a problem she wants you to try to fix.

We just talk about the problem, which is still a little bit confusing to me, but nevertheless, it's the way it works. You know, good listening, ask more questions, and then ask more questions.

When you get five questions out, ask five more, and maybe you'll be ready. Good listening doesn't assume they know what the other person is going to say. Now, some couples can finish each other's sentences, and that's a wonderful, beautiful thing because they know each other so well, but good listening, the point is, is a tremendous gift.

[24 : 34] Bonhoeffer calls it a ministry. When you think about your ministries, you know, your spiritual gifts, is there a place for listening?

When you think about your qualities for being a friend, is there a place for listening? I confess, I don't know that there is for me often. Friends need me to listen.

They need me to speak. After listening for a while, every conversation has a turning point in which we'll speak, and we know this, you know, sometimes the only way we'll speak is we'll just celebrate, or we'll weep.

Our speaking, we'll just be identifying with them. Sometimes we'll just pray, right? But we will speak. Sometimes we'll speak truth. Sometimes we'll proclaim scripture. The idea is that listening is a precious gift, but only listening falls short of love.

Love refuses to remain silent, or to say something equivalent to, I'm sorry for you. Love does not leave us there.

[25 : 42] And so conversations, the idea is that I think we begin to speak because we must not let our trouble and our sin have the last word. The Bible says it must not have the word.

God has a better word for us. I'll never forget. So many times I've been built up by the speaking of others. I've needed it. I remember talking to a guy one time, a guy, I was a minister on the campus of UT.

I was a campus minister. And this guy said to me, kind of after dinner, he said, have you ever noticed that most of your conversation is mocking me?

I was like, I just thought we were having a good time, you know? But it just so provoked me. I called the guy this week.

It's been about 15 years, 13 years to ask him more. It was a turning point in my life because he spoke the word to me.

[26 : 48] In the midst of a normal conversation, he just said, you just don't know how it feels to be around you. When you're coarse and when you're mocking all the time.

He's like, I want to have a good time. But that's all you talk about. It was, I mean, it was. I hope it's been bearing some fruit.

But it was a changing point. Not everybody's having as much fun as I am, joking. And that's what friends need us to do. I'm so grateful he would say it and lay it out there.

I think the idea is that will you commit yourself to be this type of friend? Will you? Will you commit yourself to being a true Christ-honoring friend?

You know, sadly, we talk about friendship. We talk about community. But when it limits our freedoms and choices, we're afraid. We run the other way.

[27 : 59] To get this right, to get this conviction right, we have to get over our fear and commit. That's what friends need from you. Better is a friend who's closer than a brother who's far away.

Or maybe I've gotten that a little bit different. The point is, like, a friend who commits and sticks with you is better. You need true friends and you need to be one. And it always brings commitment.

You know, for us, that context with these types of friendships, where our little church builds these friendships, is in community groups. If you haven't given it a shot, and I mean really give it a shot, I challenge you, I encourage you to.

Sometimes we've been doing this church thing for a long time, but may not be the friend that we need to be. In the end, giving ourselves to this, being this type of friend will mean we're giving ourselves to the church.

Church is not a building. It's a people. We're giving ourselves to a community. We're giving ourselves to her, to build her up, to protect her, to help her, to keep her doors open.

[29 : 13] And I love the way preacher Charles Spurgeon says it. He says, give yourself to the church. You that are members of the church have not found it perfect, and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not.

If you had, if you had never joined a church till you had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all. He says, if I had never joined a church till I found one that was perfect, I would never want to join one at all.

And the moment I did join it, if I found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church anymore. Still, he writes, as imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth.

He says, give yourself to the church to maintain her. Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than the church. Therefore, being his, let us also belong to it that by our prayers, our gifts, and our labors, we may support it and strengthen it.

If those who are Christ's refrain, even for a generation, from numbering themselves with his people, there would be no visible church, no ordinances, and I fear very little preaching of the gospel.

[30 : 29] And it happens. Massive revival in Wales. It's down to like 3% are believers. In 100 years, the church has lost its foothold.

Point three, but I must remember friends fail, but Jesus never will. This is the third conviction. I must remember friends fail, but Jesus never will.

I mean, Paul just goes to this laundry list. He says, Demas departed. Crescent, Titus, departed. Friends desert. Friends depart. Tychicus, I've sent to Ephesus.

Friends damage. Alexander, the cop said, did me great harm. Friends not only desert, they not only depart, they harm us and they disappoint us. Whether it's a friend who turns against you or slanders you or a close friend who remains silent in a deep moment of pain.

Paul says, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. Friends fail. That's the point. I love the way author Ed Welch says it.

[31 : 43] Relationships are the best and the worst part of life. They are the worst. Friends are the worst. Maybe tell that to one of your buddies next week.

You know, friends fail. They stink. Sometimes they just stink. No one disappoints us like friends. The point is, friends are a precious gift, but they're fragile.

But Jesus will never fail. One of the reasons I think friends fail is that we want them too much. We want them too much.

C.S. Lewis said it like this. I think we have this quote for you. That is why those people who simply want friends can never make any. I'm sure you've met people that just, I just want friends and this may be the clue as to why.

The very condition of having friends is that we should want something else besides friends. There would be nothing for the friendship to be about. And friendship must be about something.

[32 : 53] Even if it were only enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. That's a little strange. But, uh, those who have nothing can share nothing.

Those who are going nowhere have no fellow travelers. The point is, true friends are not people we turn toward and kind of cling to them too much.

True friends are friends we remain side by side with and run towards something else. Like, if our friends are all about Christ, if that's what we share, then we run alongside them.

You know, they're not selfish friends where we kind of guard our territory and guard our flock and don't let the guest list include anybody else. They're godly friends where they, where anybody can get on board.

Like, we're going to Christ. I mean, that's what we're all about. We share Him and we're racing to Him. And so, come on. Let's share Him. He alone, that's the one we're focused on.

[33 : 56] That's what we're trying to share because He alone will never fail. Verse 17, but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through the me, the message, might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So, I was rescued from the Lord's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from everything else. The Lord stood by me. I recently read a story about the life of Ira Sankey that captures well the Lord standing by.

Sankey was the song leader for the famous evangelist D.L. Moody in one of the revivals. And he was traveling on a Delaware River steamboat when he was recognized by some folks.

He's kind of a celebrity in that day. They asked him to sing one of his hymns. He declined and said, I'll sing another hymn. He sang a song I've never heard called, Savior, like a shepherd, lead us.

The stanza concludes, We are thine. Do thou befriend us? Be the guardian on our way.

[35 : 12] He tells a story that when he finished singing, a man stepped forward and asked, Did you serve in the Union Army? He said, Yes, in the spring of 1860.

I did. He said, Can you remember doing picket duty on a bright, moonlit night? in 1862. That's a very direct question.

He said, Yes. No doubt. Surprise. He said, So did I. Except I was in the Confederate Army. When I saw you standing your post, I thought to myself, That man will never get away alive.

I raised my musket and took aim. I was hidden in the shadows where you would never see me in the full light of the moon. At just that moment, you raised your eyes to heaven and began to sing.

I said to myself, Let him sing to the end. I can shoot him after. I cannot miss him anyway. But the song you sang was the song you just sang now.

[36 : 22] I heard it perfectly. We are thine. Do thou befriend us. Be the guardian on the way. Those words stirred memories in me. He's standing there with his musket saying, Those words stirred memories in me.

I thought of my childhood. I thought of my mom. And how many times she sang that to me. When you finished, it was impossible for me to take aim again.

I thought, The Lord is able to save that man from certain death. He must be sure and great and mighty.

And my hand dropped limp to my side. The Lord will be your friend when no one else will. The Lord will love you at all times.

The Lord will never leave. I mean, isn't life just the leaving of everybody? I mean, gradually, everybody's leaving.

[37 : 25] We're going to get older. Everybody's leaving. The spouse is going to leave. The kids are going to leave. So everybody's gone.

And we're alone, but the Lord won't leave. He'll never leave. He'll deliver. He will fight for you. He'll defend you. He'll deliver you from certain death.

He'll deliver you from every trouble in this life. Just test Him. Just lean on Him. I mean, do you have a friend in Jesus? Is what the Scripture would say. Do you have a friend in Him? I mean, is He more than just a toe deeper?

Do you have a real friend in Him? I mean, do you confide in Him? Do you have such a friendship with Him that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He knows you and loves you with His everlasting love?

If you don't have that friend, I invite you to have that friend in Jesus. What a friend we have in Jesus Christ. All our troubles He will bear.

[38 : 27] All our cares He will carry. And He will never leave. He's here to be His friend.

Would you hide in Him? What a friend.

What a word. Friend. Of sinners. You know, I pray these convictions establish our lives I need friends.

I'm not on solo operation. But staggering as it may be, friends need me. And though friends fail, Jesus never will.

I pray we commit ourselves more and more to friendships like these and to Jesus who will never fail. Let us pray.

[39 : 34] Father in Heaven, we thank You that You are indeed the friend that is closer than a brother. Even when our mother and father forget us, You will never forget us.

The scriptures tell us again and again, You will never leave us or forsake us. You will provide for us. You will sustain us. You will supply all that we need for life and godliness.

Lord, You don't cast us out in our weakest, most frail moments. And You don't love us only in our strongest, most impressive moments.

You are our friend because You love us with a deep, and Your Word says, everlasting love. Love.

I pray that You would root us more deeply into friendship with Jesus Christ and link our arms more heartily and more fully with friends that are friends of You.

[40 : 43] We need You. We love You. And we follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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