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[00:00:00] The Bible says in verse 15, we're talking about the creation of humans and human relationship. Of course, we know the Bible says, let us make man in our image. So we're made in the image of God. Verse 27, chapter 1. Verse 15, chapter 2 says this and the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. Let's read the next phrase together. For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. And the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him out of the ground. The Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called a living creature, that was its name. Pretty impressive. Points for Adam on that one, for sure. So Adam gave names to all the cattle, to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field, but for Adam, there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam. He went, nighty night. And he slept and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man he made into the woman and he brought her to the man. And Adam said, This is now a bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

[00:01:33] She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. Let's all together say Amen. Father, thank you for your word. Today we pray that you would guide us in your truth. We pray today that your truth would be met with faith. We pray today, God, as we begin this series, that your abiding presence would be upon us. God, this will be a useless exercise, unless you are present moving in our hearts, God's setting us free, healing us, clearing the confusion that exists within our minds, untangling the knots that we get ourselves in, bringing revelation to the areas of dysfunction and cycles of toxicity that sometimes we ourselves are blind to. God, please. We humbly plead with you to help with that, to help us be present with us, Lord. That from this time in your word, we would come forth. As image bearers, living our lives, living our relationships in a way that not only honors you, but brings us joy in Jesus name, amen, you can have a today for real, for reals. You know, Charles Dickens, Dickens, he started his classic novel, The Tale of Two Cities, with these timeless words that you probably know, he said it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. And, you know, the novel is written in pre revolution, pre French Revolution era. And, you know, it really takes the cities of London and Paris and it does a deep dive on the contrasts that were happening in both of those cities at the same time. I mean, what was happening from an experiencial level was so it was in such great contrast, it seems almost difficult to imagine that these things were happening simultaneously.

[00:04:00] In fact, after that classic introduction, he described some of the great contrast in these cities. He says it was a time of wisdom and it was a time of foolishness. It was a time of belief. It was a time of incredulity. It was a time of light. And it was a time of darkness. It was a time of hope and it was a time of despair. I mean, really, you know, such far ends of the spectrum, sometimes you wonder how can those things even be happening at the same time? And yet I think sometimes our relationships are like this. I think sometimes in one relationship you can have two radically different experiences. For some of us, sometimes, you know, we experience trust and we also experience betrayal. We experience joy and we also experience sorrow. We experience pleasure and we also experience pain. We experience and want to walk in love. And sometimes we just want to strangle. Right. I mean, honestly, who in this room has absolutely perfect relationships? Like let's let's just say I'm asking you a question today. You have handled your relationships all across the time of your life with total perfection, right? That's exactly what I thought, you know, because relationships are hard, are they not? How many of you are married today? All right, is that easy, has it been easy for you? Have you handled it perfectly? No, relationships are difficult, I think in this mini series our hope over the next six weeks is that we would laugh, that we would cry. I will make you some you cry, that we would learn, that we would be encouraged, that we would be challenged, that we would be convicted. We are praying that during this time that we would be set free, that we would be healed.

[00:05:53] I mean, the truth is this, that just across this room today, there are all sorts of experiences that we have had. Some of us have had very, very difficult experiences. And in relationships, we've been victimized and there are still wounds that exist. When we talk about relationships, I mean, this really is a touchy subject. But, you know, God is present with us and God can heal even today, the most wounded heart among us. We want to experience Jesus during this time and we want to be able to, over the course of the next six weeks, really learn what it means to have Christ like relationships. The pattern that these teachings are going to have, it's pretty simple. I'm going to be in the first section talking about truth. You know, that comes from the word of God. This is, you know, the information that's gathered and is going to be taught is not derived from self-help books. It's not really going to be psychologically oriented or focused on humanistic psychology. It's going to be rooted in the word of God, because all of the truth that you need for your relationships, your relationships to be healthy are found in this book, in this book. They're found in this book. And listen, I want you, I think it's our desire for you to be able to go to the scripture and to be able to discover what it is that God desires. It's important for you to know the truth. But listen, it's also important for you. And when I say you, I mean me. I'm talking us. It's important for you to live the truth as well. So the first section we're going to hit is biblical truth. The second section, the final section is going to be called Live Truth.

[00:07:49] And that's where we're going to be exhorted to live out the truth that God speaks to us. Because, you know, not only does the Bible have all the answers, but the power of scripture is experienced when we choose to live it out in our lives. In other words, it's not just enough to know what the Bible says. Are you with me? It's not just enough to know what the Bible says, hey, you can have 30 years of Bible knowledge crammed into your brain, but if you're not living it practically in your life, it means absolutely nothing. It means absolutely nothing. I'll tell you right now, some of the people with the most dysfunctional relationships are people who have walked with God for 30 or 40 years. And and I say that as a warning to myself. I've known the Lord for 30 years and I don't want to be in a place where I stop growing in how to have good, solid godly relationships. So we're going to end each section. We're going to end each teaching with a section that's called Live Truth. And they're just going to be solid principles from the word of God that really exhort us to live out what we're learning. The truth is this the way you live bears the fruit of what you actually believe. The way you live bears the fruit of what you actually believe. Sometimes there's a disconnect between what we say we believe and how we actually live our lives, like we'll affirm and acknowledge theological or biblical truths. But then, you know, sometimes we'll live our lives in the complete opposite direction. And if that's the case, we have to ask ourselves the question, do we really believe what we say we believe? Hey, the Bible says Jesus, speaking to his disciples, teaching them about prayer.

[00:09:38] He says this. If you forgive men their trespasses, so also will your father in heaven forgive you, yours. And then he goes on to say, if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father in heaven, forgive you yours. Now, listen, we can say, hey, he said it and I believe it. But the question is, are we living it? You know, if we live, this is just an example. But if we live in chronic unforgiveness and we're bearing grudges against people that we are absolutely unwilling to let go of, we can say that we believe what Jesus said all day long. But the truth is, we're not living in a way that is in alignment with it. So important for us to be living out what we say that we believe. I want to start today very simply, OK? And so while this may be very...simple truth is important truth that I do believe even as Christians, we need to continually come back to. So this is where we're going to start. We're going to start in this place. You've been made by God to receive his love, to love him and to give his love freely to others. This is our starting point for everything else that we're going to be talking about over the next six weeks. It always starts here. This is the epicenter. This is the point that we either have to come to initially for the first time maybe today, or we have to come back to as believers to remember that we've been made by God to receive his love, to love him and to give his love to others. Genesis Chapter two verses fifteen to twenty five. Why did God do what he did? Why did he make Adam? Why did he make Eve? Why did he plan two trees in the midst of the garden?

[00:11:32] Why was there a choice? Well, fundamentally, we know it's not because God was lonely. It's not because God was empty. It's not because God was missing something. God wanted humanity to experience the love that exists within the Trinity. So the purpose of our existence is to receive the love of God, to love God in return, as a response, as a reaction by faith, and to share that love with other people. Now, evolution, you know, says something different about relationships. Evolution says that relationships are just a matter of adaptation or survival of the fittest. The best thing that's for your species, altruism is about making sure you can prolong survival and keep those genes moving on. Evolution teaches social evolution. It teaches that love is nothing more than chemicals. We're going to talk about that. You know, there are people who actually believe that love is not about giving yourself unconditionally to people. It's about hormones that course through your body in different ways. And I'll just tell you, if you go home and say, hey, babe, you know, I love you so much and I'm thankful for all the chemicals that God has placed within my body that provoked me to love you the way...you're going to get slapped in the face. All right. But let me start with this, let me start with this. The Trinity is the beginning and basis for all the relationships. The Trinity is the beginning and the basis for all love relationships. The Bible says that God is love. The Bible says that God is love. How do we know that God - and by the way, you might be thinking, why are we starting with the Trinity? Because remember, in Genesis, everything starts with God, everything starts with God.

[00:13:17] And God was a God of love before he made a single thing. In theological terms, the attribute of love is essential or necessary. It's not contingent. God didn't just start loving when he made Adam and Eve, God loved before Adam and Eve or the angels were ever made. You say, well, how in the world did did God do that if there was only God? Well, God did that because God is a trinity, because in the Godhead you have the father, you have the son, and you have the Holy Spirit. One substance, one essence, yet three persons. The Trinity is an eternal relationship that is founded on love. So we know that God is a God of love because this love has been the foundation or the basis of the relationship in the Trinity for all of eternity. Why is that important for us? Because remember Imago Dei, we are made in the image of God. This was just the beautiful thing. On day six, the apex of everything was not how complicated the physical body of mankind was, but the fact that we were made as image bearers, that we have this great privilege of not just having a will, not just being creative, but also being able to live in community we're made for community. We know that that's the case because the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live in community. We're made for roles. How do we understand how relationship roles work? Well, we look to, not the culture, we look to the trinity. We know that we're made for unity. The heart of God is that we're unified in our family with respect to our friendships. Absolutely in the body of Christ, because the the Trinity lives in unity.

[00:15:06] We know that we're made for love because fundamentally the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit love one another. In fact, Jesus was speaking to his disciples and he was, you know, John, Chapter 14. This was just days before his crucifixion. And this was precisely what he said. He was talking about the purpose of his crucifixion. And I know like rightly so when we talk about the crucifixion, we think about the love of Christ for us. And somebody say amen to that, because that for sure...did you affirm with an amen, OK? Sometimes it's hard for me to hear. Because absolutely, you know, this is a demonstration of the love of Christ for us. He was willing to go to the cross for us. But even more than that, even more than that, the cross obedience to the cross was a revelation about the love that the son had for the father for all of eternity. In fact, this was what he said, as he's talking about going to the cross and being obedient to the command of the father. He said this is the reason that the world may know that I love the father. This love relationship between the father and the son has existed for all of eternity. And because we're made in the image of God, we know that we are engineered for loving relationships. Interestingly enough, Jesus defined all biblical revelation-ships in terms of a love relationship. Jesus defined all biblical revelation. So we're talking about the whole of the Bible. He defined it in terms of loving relationship. I know sometimes when we think about the totality of revelation, revelation that comes through scripture, all sorts of different things that we can think about. We can think about ecclesiology or eschatology or soteriology or one of the other ologies of theology.

[00:17:02] But really what Jesus does is he takes all of it, the law and the prophets, and he boils it down to love. How important is love? How important is love? Listen, I asked this today in this current Christian culture, because sometimes love the most important thing is the thing that's actually missed. We can be so consumer oriented when it comes to relationships in the body of Christ and how we handle other people. And our religious life fits within this compartment of like a marketplace service. It's a marketplace service. I go in, I get served, I get served. Sometimes I like it, sometimes I don't. Sometimes it gets a plus. Sometimes it gets a minus. Sometimes it's a happy emoji. Sometimes there's a frown depending on, you know, how I'm serviced. And then we go out and we just live like we have always lived. We just live our lives the way that we're used to living our lives. And yet there is something that's missing. And I would say to all of us today, the most important thing sometimes is missing. It's love. You know, if you were to survey the culture in America today and and say, hey, listen, from a positive perspective, how would you describe the church? Big C? Would the nonbeliever say, and I'm not saying you can always trust with a nonbeliever says, but it is important. Would the nonbeliever, say, man, the church, that the church is loving the church is so sacrificial. You know, the church is preemptive in its mercy and its grace. It's always going after those who have been marginalized and cast off. This is what we see concerning the church. We see love. Jesus defined all of revelation in terms of love relationship. He says this in Matthew, chapter twenty two, verse thirty seven.

[00:18:46] And remember, a lawyer comes to Jesus and he is trying to trip him up. You know, he's trying to catch him. He's trying to find a little, a little loophole that he can get Jesus entangled in so that somehow Jesus loses favor with the people. And so he says to him, hey, Rabbi, what's the greatest of all the commandments? And this was what Jesus said. He said, You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it. You shall say the word just to say it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And then he goes on to say on these two things, on these two commandments, excuse me, hang hang all the law in the province, everything else. Like you're asking Jesus. Like, if you could ask Jesus the question, what would you ask him? I think it's a great question, maybe with really bad motivation. Nevertheless, I'm glad the guy asked him, hey, what is the greatest of all commandments? What sits at the top? What is at the epicenter? What's the thing that we should never forget? What's the thing that we should always consider? And Jesus says this. Number one, to love the Lord, your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, that God himself is at the center of your life. He is the epicenter. He's not an afterthought. He is the only God that rules on the throne of your heart. He is not a God among many gods. He is not just within a compartment that's been set aside for, you know, when you feel convenient, when you get around to it, if in fact there's a need that you have, you can call out on him.

[00:20:27] Otherwise, he's just the forgotten God. That's not what he's saying. He's saying you've come to a place where your life has been totally revolutionized. Christian, right. So what we're talking about, you've come to a place where your life has been totally revolutionized and now sitting at the center of your life is not yourself, it's not your family, it's not your it's not your goods. It's not what you own. It's not the car you drive. It's not your ambitions. It's not your success. You know, it's not fulfilling your dreams. It is God, the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That's what sits at the center. And then he ties, listen, he ties to it and to love your neighbor as yourself. You know, some people have kind of viewed this like like the cross right. There's the vertical relationship that we have with God. God has his rightful place in our lives. We love him. He's not just a pal or a friend or, you know, the big guy in the sky. He you know, he is the center. We love him. And as a result of loving him, we love other people. We love other people. Well, you might be saying today, what is love? What's it got to do, what's it got to do? And if you've been a Christian for 20 years, you probably heard 20 different definitions of love, but I want to give you a definition here. So you have twenty one people in your Rolodex of definitions. When we talk about the love of God, this is what we mean. We mean the unconditional self giving-ness of God, the unconditional self giving-ness of God he gives himself that springs naturally from his being. Right. It's not hard for him to do.

[00:22:12] It's his natural disposition and is eternally displayed within the Trinity and to all this creation through Christ. When we talk about the love of God, you know, we're talking about more than just a feeling. We're talking more than a partnership or an arrangement that he has with you. Like some business transaction. We're talking about how God unconditionally gives himself. To all of humanity that springs naturally from his nature, we know that that is existed within the heart of God for all of eternity because that's how the the Trinity relates to one another. And we also know that's how his disposition is towards all of humanity, because the father gave his only begotten son. It was an act of love. It was an act of love. It was an act. It was an act of love. It was love being demonstrated in real concrete ways in such a way that we never, listen, we never have to question again. Some of you today, you're all torn up in your relationships and your spinning because this is it. Does he love me? Does she love me? Do they love me? And you you spin in this cycle, right? You're like you're you're on you're on the spin cycle. And, you know, the only thing that's going to stop the spin cycle is when you take your eyes off of whether or not he, she or they love you and set your heart steadfastly on the fact that God does love you, that God does love you. You know, I think when we talk about love, we talk in terms of feeling and somebody said this a long time ago, they were talking about love and they defined it like this. They said, well, love, you know, love is a feeling you feel when you feel the feeling you've never felt before.

[00:24:01] Love is a feeling you feel when you feel a feeling you've never felt before. By the way, if that's your definition of love that you're going to fall in and you're going to fall out of that right. You're going to fall in and you're going to fall out of that based on your emotional state, based on whether somebody fulfills or doesn't fulfill your expectations. I'm not a stoic I'm not saying that love is without feelings because love is full of feeling. Absolutely. But love goes further than feelings. It goes further than feelings. Love, I believe the scripture defines from the framework of God's love as his unconditional self giving-ness. God gives himself to us when we love. We are engaging in that same love it's empowered by, it finds its root and source in God, but it is a willingness to give ourselves to other people. Now, I think this might be difficult for us as well, because sometimes we define love not just in terms of feelings, but we use the word for everything. We use the word for everything. You're going to go out and you're going to go to beyond coffee and you're going to get a gold standard and you're going to have it in your hand, the extra ice, extra shot. And you're going to say, I love this, I love this drink. Do you really do you just, is it unconditional self giving? You know, you're like or I love chocolate or I love my iPhone and I hate Android. It's now like I get that. All right. That one I understand. But the word is just used. The word is just used and abused. It's used and abused. It's like roadkill. You know, it's been run over so many times, it's hard to even understand what love is anymore.

[00:25:49] And if you get, we're going to talk about this in two weeks. If you take your cues from the culture, you will never really understand what biblical love is. This type of love, this unconditional self giving, is the language and purpose of relationships. In fact, Paul said in 1st Corinthians, Chapter 13, he's talking about how he could be the most spiritual man, how he could know all truth, how he could speak with the tongues of angels, how he could give everything he had a way to the poor, how he could even give himself to be martyred. Paul said, I could do all of that. I could do all of that. But does all of that mean that I that I'm in the right spot? No, because he says without love, all of those things profit me nothing. Sometimes we don't know whether or not we're really loving with God's love until we're confronted with the choice. Now, look, you may disagree with me on this, but I do think this is one of the reasons why there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. I believe God placed two trees. Well, the scripture says God placed two trees, the tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One, you said eat freely. The other he said, don't don't eat. We said that together because in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die. It'll be disobedience and there will be consequences. I do believe that God placed that choice in the garden so that Adam and Eve could demonstrate this type of self giving love. Because how do you know if you're loving with self giving love unless there is a choice? You know, oftentimes it's not until we're confronted with something difficult.

[00:27:34] It's not until there's an expectation that's not met. It's not until there's harm that's been done as the spirit of God is speaking to our hearts. And we're called to be preemptive in our love or preemptive in grace and preemptive in mercy. It's in that moment of choice that we discover whether or not we're really loving with God's love, because sometimes God's love will direct us to do something we don't feel like doing. Somebody say amen to that, today. Jesus said it. He said, hey, you know what? You love tax collectors and et cetera, you know? What good is that, you will be perfect, you'll love everyone unconditionally because God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. You'll be perfect in love just as your heavenly father is perfect. So, listen, today, I think we we fit into one of two categories with respect to love. We're either loving transactionally or we're loving transformationally. With the way God designed it, I believe he has designed us for transformational, not transactional relationships. Let me explain this to you. A transactional relationship is economic and functional. It's based on the exchange of money, goods, services or fulfilled expectations. When you're not getting what you're expecting at that point, you determine the relationship doesn't make any sense any longer. So you modify the relationship or you just end it. When you and I live transactionally, when it's just about other people fulfilling expectations that we have, this oftentimes is the root for all sorts of toxic behavior, whether it's revenge or a passive aggressive attitude or blame shifting or manipulation or emotional blackmail. Sometimes we'll get to a point where we cancel the relationship, we'll defriend a person or even sometimes in marriage,

[00:29:43] it will end in divorce. When we feel that there are irreconcilable differences, expectations are just no longer being met. Some of us are living transactionally, that for sure is not the will of God. Transformational relationships, on the other hand, are self giving relationships emulated on and empowered by God's love. Transformational relationships are self giving, relationships emulated on and empowered by God's love. They're characterized by trust, by mercy, by grace. And, of course, like I said, by love. Now, which one of those categories do you fall into? Which one of those, before you answer, I want you to look at this table up on the screen today and I want to describe what these relationships, or the framework for these relationships is like. Now transactional can also be called unbiblical. Transformational would, of course, be called biblical. If you're living transactionally in your relationships, it's about you and what you can get. If you're living transformationally, it's about others and what you can give. If you're living transactionally, they're human patterned relationships and they're human powered, you took your cues from the culture. You're living your relationships like everybody else does. And because none of that is supernatural, all of that is something you can do just by the exertion of your will, they're human powered. On the other hand, biblical relationships are God patterned. You've gone to the scripture. You know what the Bible says. You understand what God's expectation is for human relationships. By the way, human relationships matter to God, right? Human relationships matter to God. There is so much time that God spends through the authors of the epistles on human relationships because they matter to God. The people in your life have been divinely placed there by the Lord.

[00:31:54] There's a providential work of God, even the people you don't like. Even the people that get on your nerves, there's a providential work of God has placed people in your life, and one day you and I are going to stand before God and we're going to give an account for how we handled those relationships. Do you know what God's expectation is? Are you able to go to the scriptures? You know, sometimes when we're doing marriage counseling, like, we'll, you know, we'll start with something like this. It's a total trap. It's a total trap. We'll start with something like, hey, do you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God? And, you know, of course, who's going to have a unless they're totally unsaved, who is going to say, well, no, I don't think it's stupid. You know, they're not going to they're not going to say that. They'll say yes. And of course, they will open the word and we'll say, OK, let's talk about what God says concerning marriage and God's expectations and the purpose of marriage. From God's perspective, we need to understand how our relationships are supposed to look from God's perspective, not ours, not the way we've just been handed down from generation to generation. And I'm telling you, like, those relationships can only be experienced through the supernatural power of God's Holy Spirit. Transactional relationships are maintained if there's a personal benefit. So, hey, as long as I'm getting something, as long as expectations are being met, you know, as long as you're meeting my needs, as long as you're filling the boxes, et cetera, et cetera, we're good to go. But when you stop doing that, we out. Transformational is willing to sacrifice, you know, you're willing to like I said earlier, you're willing to be preemptive with love, you're willing to step out, you're willing to be preemptive with grace.

[00:33:41] You're willing to be preemptive with mercy. We're going to talk about boundaries on this later on. But you're willing to take the first step and you're not taking the first step just to manipulate somebody into a reaction or a response. You don't if you don't get the reaction or response that you're looking for, you don't punish them for it. No, you understand what what God desires. And so by faith, what you're doing is you're expressing your trust in God, not just your trust in him or her or them. You're saying God, I believe what your word says. And so I'm going to trust you. I'm going to take this step of faith. I'm going to be reminded that as I do it, I'm being obedient to you and I'm placing this person's response in your hands. If they don't respond the way I'm hoping they respond. God, I know you're still faithful to do the work. And I'm going to rejoice in knowing that I've simply been obedient to you. Transactional relationships are built on fear and lack of trust. Transformational relationships are built on faith and mutual trust. Trust is built over the course of time and it can be lost in a moment where we're going to talk about that, too. And in a transactional relationship, you're totally unwilling to change. It's always about him changing or her changing. It's always about, you know, what they really need to hear this message right now. Right. You always have somebody else's change in mind because you're God. Right, and you know what everybody else needs, but you are absolutely blind to your own personal need. Like, it's crazy the ship can be sinking. That ship can be sinking. And then we're looking at the holes in everybody else's boat.

[00:35:29] And it's like, hey, listen, man, you don't bail that business out, you goin'down. You're going down. Like, let's take a little self-evaluation. If it's transactional, you're going to always be concerned and demanding that everybody else around you changes. By the way, by the way, if you have a whole bunch of people around you that say to you the same thing and are experiencing the same thing through your life, chances are they're not wrong and your right. Chances are you are wrong and they are right. Just wanted to say that I have no idea why, but it just it just came to my mind. Transformational relationships embrace and experience change. They embrace. Look, if you really want to grow in your relationship with God, guess guess what God's going to use. Guess what he's going to use? He's going to use your relationships. He's going to use your spouse. He's going to use your spouse. He's going to use your spouse. He's you know what he's going to do? He's going to use your spouse. Because he's going to use him or her. In fact, I would say for us for sure that Rachel is the greatest tool used by God to shape me into the image of Jesus Christ. Like without without a doubt. We're going to talk about singleness, we're going to talk about friendships, and so this whole thing is not going to be oriented around marriage. But I do want to say this, because marriage is like a mirror. Marriage is like a mirror. Like you can live with yourself your whole life and just reinforce poor behavior. But when you get married, it's like, wow, am I really that selfish? Answer? That's not nice.

[00:37:18] It's not nice at all, but it's true. Transactional relationships are like business partnerships. And, you know, when when you study relationships, the word partnership appears over and over again. And I'm not saying that there's not an element of partnership in relationships, but you can't just define relationships as partnerships. I mean, we're talking about covenants in just a second, real briefly. But there are some people who define covenants as just this partnership. And it's like, well, well, wait a minute. The whole foundation of that is love. Can you imagine having a marriage that's just like a business partnership or like you're hanging out with your friends and they're like, hey, tell me about your marriage. And you're like, well, it's kind of like a partnership. You would get kicked underneath the table, I think, because that just demeans ultimately the real value. Transformational relationships are about love. Transactional relationships reinforced toxic cycles, transformational relationships break unhealthy patterns and they begin new ones. So we're talking over the next six weeks about transforming your relationships, but it will never happen unless you choose to live transformationally. It will never happen if you continue or I continue to live in this transactional framework for relationships. And I'm just going to say, like, we're going to get really challenged during this time. And I know that relationships are a sensitive issue and we don't like to necessarily come to church to be challenged. But if you don't get challenged at church, there's really no point in going. Right, there's really no point in going. And so we have to we have to make a choice. We have to make a choice. Transformational relationships start with God. Obviously, transformational relationships start with God. Where do we begin? Maybe for us,

[00:39:09] you know, we've we don't even have a relationship with God. And we're going to talk about transformational relationships. Well, we can't talk about that until you get right with God first. We can't talk about it till you get right with God first. The way that God wants to wants you to live your relationships, will only happen if he is sitting at the center of your life. Otherwise, it will just be transactional, maybe from time to time, maybe from time to time, you'll have this transformational moment. I'm just saying to you, it'll be just a moment. It will be just a moment if God is not the transformational relationship that you start with first. The Bible is all about God's love. Let me let me just read to you today some of the different verses that talk about the love of God. In this is love, not that we love God, but that God loved us. And these are all different phrases. For God so loved the world. Bible says God is love. The Bible says perfect love casts out fear. The Bible says God demonstrates his own love. The Bible says greater love has no man than this. The Bible says they will know you are my disciples by your love. John said this of Jesus as he wrapped up his gospel account, he says that he loved them to the end. Jesus never stopped loving his disciples. John says this, in 1st John chapter three, verse one. Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us. Looking back into the Old Testament, Moses, talking to the children of Israel, said the Lord didn't choose you because you were more in number, but because he loves you. And then Jesus said to the Church of Laodecia, that thought they had it all together, right? They knew their Bibles.

[00:40:59] They had thirty years of biblical knowledge. But Jesus said to them, You know what? Your wretched, poor, blind and naked, you don't even realize it. And then he says, as many as I love, I chasten. In other words, listen, even in all of that, I've not given up on you. Even in all of that, I've not given up on you. Next week, we're going to talk about the fall and the condition of Adam and Eve in the garden and identifying what the problem really is. And I think in that context about the love of God right? You've got this perfect environment. You've got the harmony and unity between Adam and Eve and God. You got the presence of God walking in the midst of the garden with Adam and Eve. And then then there's the fall the face plant straight out of the gate, straight out of the gate. And there the Bible says they in fear were hiding themselves from God. What was God doing? What did God do? God came to them. God came to them. He pursued, God sought after. God called the name of Adam. Even while Adam was in all of his disobedience, God went after him. Not only did God go after him, yes, there were consequences for sure. We'll discuss that. But God himself clothed them in a tunic. God himself made the promise that of the seed of the woman, the adversary would be overcome. God was the one that that reconciled. God was the one that preemptively loved. Listen, God is always moving towards you in love, even in your sin. Show this next slide. We've had a lot of great artwork. This is my artwork, all right, so like we have artists on our team, I obviously am not one of them and you don't want to know how long this took me to do.

[00:42:49] But this is us broken and hopeless and lost and toxic and dysfunctional and in total chaos. Right. A cloud of confusion hovering over our head. We don't know which way is up, what is what is the disposition of Jesus towards us. Always coming to us. Always coming to us. Listen, before you even knew him, he was coming to you. His disposition was for you, not against you. He was orchestrating certain circumstances providentially like you see some of it now through a glass and that dimly. But on the day you stand before him, you're going to be like, oh, God, I had no idea. Oh, God, I had no idea that you were shaping circumstances, that you were bringing all of those people into my life, that you were pursuing me. You know, we sing this song, that reckless love of Christ, reckless in the sense that he gave himself to the extent of the cross. He pursued you. He sought after you, not while you were just knee deep in your sin, but while you were neck deep, while you had taken the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and you are devouring it with a slobber all over your face. He still loved you in the midst of that. He still loved you in the midst of that. He preemptively pursued you. He preemptively pursued you when there was nothing lovely about you. Look, it wasn't sorry. But it's not because you've, like, fixed your life up that somehow now he's been triggered to respond to you or react to you and love that because, hey, you started going to church and you've cleaned up some of these immoral areas of your life and you're not going to the strip clubs and drinking anymore.

[00:44:30] And because of that, now, God, you know, now I'm lovable. I'm lovely. You owe me. You owe me God. No, that's not Grace. That's not Grace. No matter how much you clean your life up, you will still be covered with a dirt of sin until you're washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Period, period. And I don't say that today to to to to make you feel like you're being attacked. I say that today so that you know that you're loved. He knows you. He knows what you've been through. He knows the wounds and the hurts. He knows the failures and the dysfunction. He sees all of those things. And yet he wants to unconditionally, as you put your faith in Christ, give himself wholly and completely to you. And so what you do and what I do is we respond. We humble ourselves. We acknowledge that we've sinned against God and we put our trust and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And then what happens is this, next slide. What happens is, it's a great stick figure, isn't it? Listen, what happens is you're filled, you are filled with God's love. You are made complete in the love of God. What was missing now has been fulfilled. The need that you had had been satisfied, the hole that was in your heart, the great vacuum that nothing that this world had to offer could fill has now been filled by the Lord. Listen, why is this important? Because he fills you. He completes you in his love. We're going to talk about 1 John 4:18 in just a second. And then he sends you he doesn't send you half fixed he doesn't send you half full. He doesn't send you with this idea that you're going to get some sense of purpose and satisfaction from him and the rest from everybody else.

[00:46:25] No, he sends you complete so that you're not looking to other people to do for you what only God can do for you. Right. He sends you so he sends you to other people. So that, filled in complete with his love, you're not looking for other people to give to you what only God can give to you. 1 John 4:18 says this. There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love, not been made perfect in love. Listen, your you sometimes in relationships, it's like you're dependent, you're dependent on what other people can give to you. And when whenever you're living in that state of dependency, where your own emotional state, your own sense of stability fluctuates based on those around you. Listen, you are not being made complete or perfected in the love of God. Because you know, when you are what he is given to you is enough. It is enough. It's enough when you're single. Listen, if you're single today, how many people are single? Raise your hand. It's OK. Don't be...raise it high. Raise it high and proud. That's right. All right. That was the connection today for all the single people. All right. Now you know what up. Now you know what up. And I got no issue because we'll do wedding ceremonies with great joy. All right. But you don't have to live, you don't have to live your single life pining for this thing. I'm not saying that there won't be loneliness. I'm not saying that there won't be times of difficulty. You might be thinking today. Well, what do you know, Pastor? You're married. Well, I haven't been married my whole life, all right.

[00:48:16] I've been single, too, as a Christian. And I know the challenges of that. But at the end of the day, you can come back to God and say, God, you are sufficient. I'm trusting you. I will seek first your kingdom and your righteousness, knowing that all things will be added to me in your timing. So let me wrap up by saying this, this is our live truth section, OK? It's great to know what the Bible says, but, you know, it's got to be met with action. Number one receive God's love and live in it daily. Number one receive God's love and live in it daily. If you've never put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, you've never experienced the love of God. Today we're going to give you an opportunity to take that step of faith. But in addition to that, it's not just a one and done thing on a daily basis. And over the course of the next six weeks, we're going to be giving to you good, solid, healthy spiritual rhythms that you can engage in that will really strengthen you to be complete in the love of God. And one of those is to start your day in the book, start your day in prayer, start your day saying, God, today I receive your love, fill my cup. And God, not only that, but today I'm choosing to extend your love to the people around me, even to those who don't deserve it. To have transformational relationships, you have to first be being transformed by God's love. Don't expect from others, but only God is able to give to you. Number two, choose transformation, transformational over transactional relationships. You know, I want to remind you today that other people are not responsible for your happiness.

[00:50:04] Other people are not responsible for your happiness. And you know what? You're not responsible for theirs. Now, now, listen. Do I want people to be blessed and happy in a relationship with me, whether it's a friendship or whether it's our kids or whether it's my wife? One hundred percent. The last thing I want is to be miserable for people. But but we also don't live with this burden like other people's happiness is our responsibility. And if people treat you that way, listen, that just opens the door for emotional blackmail and codependency. And that's something that you just it's not right to enable that. We're going to talk about how you navigate those difficult relationships. Relationships aren't about keeping people happy. They're about receiving God's love and giving it to others freely. Final thing today, relationships leave a mark. The fact is, relationships leave a mark is love. The mark that you leave is love the mark that you leave. Let's pray together.