

MBC WOMEN'S STUDY

RELATIONSHIPS: A MESS WORTH MAKING

WINTER/SPRING 2025/26

Class 8: Chapters 10-11

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMESTER

- This year is going to be about relationships and how God desires His people to come along side one another for more than just surface level conversations and relationships.
- Specifically, we are going to be talking about biblical relationships and friendships that Christians have with one another.

CHAPTER 10: HOPE

- “It is always harder to live in the middle of something than it is to live at the beginning or the end. When you are at the beginning of something, you are filled with a sense of hope and potential. You are engaged by a vision of all that can be. People at the start of something tend to be dreamers; they want to get started fulfilling the dream. People at the end tend to be filled with relief, gratitude, and a sense of accomplishment. The hardships along the way don't seem so hard anymore. The sacrifices all seem worth it, and they are glad the work is over.”
- “In the middle, thankfulness often degrades into complaint, and hope decays into resignation. It is hard to live in the middle of something, but that is exactly where all of our relationships take place.”
- In the middle of our relationships is where we find ourselves on a daily basis interacting with one another.
- It is here, in the middle, that the Lord works in and through us to make us more like Jesus.

Love's Difficulty

- “The problem with relationships is that they all take place right smack-dab in the middle of something, and that something is the story of redemption, God's plan to turn everything in our lives into instruments of Christlike change and growth. You and I never get to be married to a fully sanctified spouse. We will never be in a relationship with a completely mature friend. We will never live next to a neighbor utterly free of the need to grow and change. We will never have self-parenting children. We will never be near people who always think, desire, say, or do the right things. And the reason for all of this is that our relationships are lived between the already and the not yet.”

- Tripp then says that as we live in the middle, we are living as broken people who are being repaired.
- Not only that, but we are being repaired in the middle of others who are also being repaired.
- We are aware of our need for someone else...something else to work in our hearts and minds.
- But living in the middle, while sin's power has been broken, its presence is still very much real.
- In other words, as God is working to conform you into the image of Christ and every other Christian relationship that you are involved with; but sin is still active in each person's life.
- We are already saved, we are already destined to be with our Savior for eternity...but we have not gotten there yet.
- We are neither free from sin nor in our final dwelling place.
- As Tripp points out, "Our life with others is always life in the middle. We are always building community in the tension between God's "already" and "not yet" grace."
- Our job, as he further points out, is to learn how to live in the middle. To learn how to live knowing that the Lord is, at the same time, changing our hearts *and* the hearts of those whom the Lord has put us in relationship.

Relationships in the Middle

- There are four experiences that Tripp points out that all people living between the *already* and *not yet* will encounter in their relationships.
- *Our relationships will never work according to our own plans.*
- "This means that God will take us where we have not planned to go in order to produce in us what we could not achieve on our own. He will lead us through the hardships so that we will become more and more like him."
- Important for us to remember is that through this whole process, God is in control; He is the One who is leading us through these relationships and the One who is making us more like Christ because of them.
- God not only leads us through the hardships, but He also brings them upon us because He knows what they are going to produce in the end.
- *Our relationships will never live up to our expectations.*
- "Our dreams tend to forget that our relationships are being lived out in the middle of the already and the not yet."
- When our expectations are so high in a relationship, we will set the other person up for failure and also be constantly disappointed in ourselves.
- We must, at the same time accept who the other person is...and accept who we are.
- This act of humility allows us to trust God and not try to fulfill our own expectations for any relationship.

- *Our relationships will always grapple with some kind of difficulty.*
- There are no relationships that will be able to completely avoid difficulties.
- God does not send these trials into our life so that we will be crushed. Tripp points out, “they are there to mature and refine us. As we are realistic about difficulty, that needs to be our hope.”
- All of our life is under the control of a loving and sovereign God. What He brings to us is there for His glory and for our good. This includes our relationships.
 - How many times do we thank God’s loving providence for the good things...but ignore it when hard times come?
 - **Job 2:10** “But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”
- We have a tendency to “forget” that God is also over the hard times; He is no less loving.
- *Our relationships will always need to improve.*
- No matter how long you have been with someone or known someone, “there is still work to be done and changes to be made.”
- We have not yet escaped our sin; nor have we made good enough strides to just coast until heaven.
- Our prayer should be to keep doing the work, to keep seeing the fruit and to keep growing more and more into the likeness of Christ.

Character for the Middle (103)

- “Because our relationships are always lived out in the middle of some kind of difficulty, good relationships demand character. Remember, your relationships have not been designed by God as vehicles for human happiness, but as instruments of redemption.”
- We should not be looking for relationships to fulfill something that only God can fulfill. While we will gain happiness and satisfaction from our relationships, as Tripp points out, that is not God’s design for them.
- That is a “me” focus in the relationship.
- What we need is an *others* focus in our relationships.
- We need to seek God’s grace so that we are able to share God’s grace with those whom God brings across our path.
- There is a large amount of growth that we must pray for in our own hearts so that we are able to see past ourselves and how we can then minister to one another.
- Tripp goes through the list of character traits that can really help a relationship move through any and all circumstances it may find itself in.

- “It takes humility to live with a sinner in a world of difficulty. It takes gentleness to be part of what God is doing in someone’s life and not get in the way. It takes patience to deal with the sin and weakness of those around you. It takes perseverance to be part of change in a relationship because that change is most often a process and rarely an event. It takes forgiveness to move beyond the times you have been mistreated by another. It takes forbearance to continue to love a person, even when you are being provoked. It is hard to respond in kindness when you are treated unkindly. It takes remarkable love to serve the good of the other person and not be distracted by daily needs.”
- **Galatians 5:22-26** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. {24} Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. {25} If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. {26} Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”
- **Ephesians 4:1-3** “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, {2} with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, {3} being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- **Philippians 2:1-4** “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, {2} make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. {3} Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
- **Colossians 3:12-14** “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; {13} bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. {14} Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”
- Our hearts can easily drift into fear, hurt, anger, bitterness, resentment, and a whole host of other ungodly emotions and reactions in our relationships.
- Our prayer should be for the continued grace of the Lord to grow us in our character so that we are then able to be used by Him in the lives of His people.
- This really makes the point that our relationships are really more than what we see on the surface. There truly is spiritual warfare that takes place.
- The devil does not want us at peace with one another. He does not want the body of Christ to be whole and loving one another.
- When you can’t get along with someone, there may be more time needed in prayer than trying to find out the right communication techniques needed.

The Hardship of Relationships in the Middle

- “Here is the point. The hardship of relationships is not just that they can be difficult. The hardship includes what God calls us to be and do in the middle of the difficulty. God calls each of us to be humble, patient, kind, persevering, and forgiving. God calls us to speak with grace and to act with love, even when the relationship lacks grace and we have not been treated with love.”
- Our reactions in the middle of our (and others sanctification) is vitally important in relationships.
- There needs to be a dependence on God, perhaps like never before. Some relationships are going to call for great faith, strength, and patience as you deal with the sins of someone else.
 - It may mean they must have great patience when dealing with you.
- All of our hardships in the middle of our walk with the Lord and there precisely because we are in the middle of our walk with the Lord.
- No hardship has come upon you by accident. “When you give up on yourself, you begin to rely on him. When you are willing to abandon your own little dreams, you begin to get excited about his plan. When your way has blown up in your face again, you are ready to see the wisdom of God’s way.”
- The Lord is using other people in your life to take your eyes from yourself and your own self-sufficiency and put them on Him.
- Not only do you and I need others in our life, but we also need to be dependent upon the Lord.
- Our failure will continue to manifest itself the more and more we keep searching for a self-sufficient way to face our relationship issues.
- When we know what we have in Christ and what is available for us, when we are blindsided in our relationships, we can receive strength through Christ.

Encouragement in the Middle (104)

- “Encouragement is an essential skill of a biblically healthy community.”
- We all need encouragement from time to time. We all like to have someone come alongside us and say something that helps us up and over the hill that we are facing.
- But are we encouraging people (or looking for encouragement) in the right ways?
- Tripp points out that we tend to make 2 mistakes:
 - **Our first mistake** is that we view encouragement as “primarily about trying to make the person feel better.” This comes out when we say things like:
 - Hang on, you can make it...it’s not really as bad as you think...this too will pass...it’s going to be okay...you’re not the only one who has faced this...

- There are several other virtually empty platitudes that are offered to the person who is suffering or discouraged.
- As Tripp points out, “These statements may offer temporary comfort, but they never lead to lasting change.” They may give some temporary comfort and that may last for a time; but they may fade into the distance when that problem is faced again.
- **Our second mistake**, as Tripp sees it, is that we may try to encourage someone by explaining to the person what the problem is and why it’s happening to them.
- In other words, if someone can just understand what is going on, they are less likely to feel anxious or have bad thoughts.
 - While Tripp says that it is important to gain understanding of a situation, this is not necessarily what encouragement is in a relationship.
- Then what is real encouragement in a relationship?
- Tripp points out that we need to have *sightedness* in our relationships if we are going to have any lasting encouragement or real hope.
- He says that “Spiritual sightedness is a precious gift and an essential life skill. The reason we get overwhelmed and discouraged in relationships is not because we don’t understand what is going on. We are discouraged because we don’t see Christ.”
- Where do you go in times of weariness and discouragement? Where are you pointing people to go to? When you don’t know what the future holds and where life is going...when you don’t know what is going to become of relationships in your life?
- We need more Jesus and less of the world’s information.
- **Hebrews 12:1-3** “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
- “This is a truth that the Puritans understood, and one which has been largely lost in our day. They have volumes and volumes of sermons of Christ¹:
 - Isaac Ambrose wrote more than 600 pages full of Christ in *Looking unto Jesus*.
 - Thomas Goodwin devoted volume 5 of his works to the sacrifice of Christ and his work as mediator.
 - *The Works of John Owen, volume 1*, is on the glory of Christ.

¹ Quote and list taken from Jared Mellinger, *Think Again*, 157.

- John Flavel wrote *The Fountain of Life opened up: or, A Display of Christ in his essential and mediatorial glory. Containing forty-two sermons.*
- Robert Asty wrote *Rejoicing in the Lord Jesus in All Cases and Conditions* to help us fix our eyes on Christ.”
- In our day, we rely too much on what we can research and what we think to be true...then we worry about the future. We put our hope in what we can see and think, not in what we know to be true about Christ.
- **Here’s what Tripp says**, “In our own strength, we see the husband who barely communicates. We see the friend who has been consistently disloyal. We see the child who rebels against every command. We see the boss who is unrelentingly critical. We see the relative who breaks every promise she makes. We see the wife who is bitter and angry. We see the small group frozen in casual relationships. We see neighbors more concerned about boundaries than community. Our relationship problems can loom so large that they obstruct our view of the one thing that can give us the hope and courage to go on. That one thing is Christ.”
- Here’s the problem, since we are all in the middle of being made more like Christ, we need more than just understanding and heavy emotions.
- We need to look past all the “noise” of our daily life and look to Christ.
- “His amazing resources of grace are constantly at our disposal. In him we find wisdom, strength, and reason for hope that we have been lacking. Far more than happy feelings and accurate understanding, Christ gives me reason to continue in something that would have long since defeated me.”
 - Our hard and unfulfilling relationships are worth it because it causes us to go to Christ that much more. Christ has allowed us to be in these hard places so that we would learn to go to Him more and more for our full satisfaction.
 - Our status may not change, our circumstances may even get worse, but we must never forget that we are not the focus of our lives...we are not the purpose in our lives...we are being made more and more into the image of Jesus.
- Tripp then gives us three ways we can encourage one another in the middle of our relational hardships:
- *Christ’s Presence*
 - **Psalm 46:1-2 NASB95** “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. {2} Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea...”
 - As Tripp points out from the Psalm...just image standing around and watching this take place.
 - Imagine seeing the mountains slipping into the sea, falling and crashing down all around you.
 - As the Psalmist says, he will not fear even in the midst of this.

- Even when the world is falling down. Even when all of our hopes and dreams are crushed and our expectations for anything in this life have been thrown away.
- God is with you, God is your refuge and your strength. He is not far off...the Psalmist says that God is a very present help in trouble.
- He is there where the world is falling apart. There is nothing that we ever need to fear when we have God on our side.
- As Tipp points out, “My hope no longer rests on the shoulders of my own wisdom, strength, and character. When I can see Christ, I realize that I have more than myself to rely on. He is here and able to do what I could never do.”
- Personally, where you find your hope is where you are going to point other to find their hope as well. Cultivate a heart for Christ and then you are able to encourage others in the same direction.
- *Christ’s Promises*
 - The promises of Christ through the gospel are not just for heaven.
 - They are not empty or mystical but they are real for us today as we live life with one another.
 - Christ’s promises are not there so that we can learn to cope or just live with some sort of difficulty and just “get through” this life.
 - His promises are all about our new identity in Christ. They are all about who we are **now** as we work our way through the middle.
 - When we remind ourselves and others about what the Bible says, it is not just a covering over an open wound but true healing balm that is meant to restore.
- *Our Potential in Christ*
 - **Galatians 2:20** “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
 - Christ now lives in you so you are continuing to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ.
 - This is real encouragement. We are not what we once were nor are we going to stay where we are currently are.
 - We are able to say with great confidence, that we can get through our hard circumstances not because we have the potential to do so, but because of Christ in us.
- For yourself, are you more focused on the earthly and temporary problem...or on who you are in Christ and your eternal home?
- We cannot find hope in this world...we were never supposed to...that’s how God designed it.
- We won’t find hope in our earthly relationships either, they are all tainted with sin and all our relationships involve sinful people...chiefly ourselves!

- Speaking of the great men and women of faith, the author of Hebrews writes in **Hebrews 11:13-14** “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. {14} For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.”
- We know that there is nothing on this earth that can satisfy our longing for a perfect and fulfilling relationship. We know that we are all in the middle of becoming who we truly are in Christ.
- Don’t lose hope for you or hope in the other person.
- The Lord is using, especially the hardships, to draw you closer to Him for His good purpose.

CHAPTER 11: BURDENS

- **Isaiah 42:3** “A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.”
- “Words can be powerful or they can be cheap. What makes words powerful is the action that flows from them. Theology also can be powerful or cheap. What makes right thinking about God powerful is the life that emerges daily from that theology. I must confess that this is one of the hardest things about the Christian life for me!”
- We often times forget that our head knowledge and our heart convictions must lead us to live the life that we believe in and profess.
- We don’t want to say all the right things and believe in all the right doctrine but then fall short when we need to put our words into action.
- This was Jesus’ one thing against the church in Ephesus.
 - **Revelation 2:2-4** “I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; {3} and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. {4} 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.’”
 - How often do we know the right things and even “do” the right things, but our love for Christ is not in our service.
- We can have a tendency to see people as projects that need to be fixed or think that people exist for the ministry of the church.
- People are not a summation of their problems...but they are created in the image of God and even though they may be difficult, they are worthy to be served.
- What we believe will always come out in how we act. If we are like the church at Ephesus was, we may look the part but our hearts are cold towards Jesus.

- If we are only thinking of ourselves, then our service will be lacking and the church will suffer.

James and John before Jesus' Death and Resurrection

- “Our theology is on display not in or words, but in how we treat others.”
- The pathway to greatness in Jesus' kingdom is by serving; a lesson the disciple would need to learn by example. (Mark 10:35:45)
- If they wanted to be great, they would need to learn how be like Christ. They would need to learn how to put themselves below others.
- “If our relationships are going to produce Christlike character in us and if Christian community is going got flourish, it is going got take lots of people who relish being demoted in the eyes of the world.”
- While the world seeks self-glory and affirmation; servants of Christ seek to serve one another.
- When thinking of serving one another, it is the fulfillment of all the one another passages in the Bible.
- This is how we can get our hands dirty as we come alongside one another, take our eyes off ourselves, and get to know people and the details of their lives.
- “If our professed commitment to Jesus does not lead us to resemble him in or actions, then we are mocking him and not representing him accurately in the world.”
- Our relationships are more than having our needs and desires heard or met.
- How much personal comfort do you give up in order to serve someone in the church? When was the last time that you set aside how Christ gave up everything in order to serve the ones who hated him?

The Character and Actions of a Servant

- This kind of character does not come natural or easy for anyone. We all have perceived needs and personal desires that we want met by others.
- But, this is exactly what living in Jesus' kingdom looks like.
- In John 13:1-17, Jesus gives the ultimate example of what it meant to be a servant.
- **4 Stunning Facts about Foot Washing²:**
 - **This was for the lowliest of the low:**
 - Foot washing was a practical necessity because people walked in sandals on unpaved roads filled with dust and animal waste. Because it was considered so demeaning, the task was strictly reserved for the lowliest household slaves—specifically non-Jewish slaves. By

² List taken from multiple websites using Gemini.
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performing this act, Jesus didn't just act like a servant; he took the place of someone at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

○ **A Task Deemed Too Low for Jewish slaves:**

- Rabbinic tradition (such as in *M. Ketubot 96a*) suggests that the task of foot washing was so demeaning that even a Jewish slave could refuse to do it. The idea of a Rabbi—a revered teacher—performing this task for his students was completely unheard of and fundamentally "unthinkable" in that social matrix.

○ **There was no host:**

- In a typical Jewish home, the host was expected to provide water for guests to wash their own feet as a basic sign of hospitality. However, since this was a "borrowed room" for a private meal, there was no host and no servant present. This created a glaring social tension: according to the cultural background of foot washing, entering a meal with dirty feet was a serious breach of etiquette, yet none of the disciples were willing to volunteer for the "slave's job".

○ **There was a reversal of the honor-shame dynamics:**

- First-century Mediterranean culture was governed by an intense honor-shame system. Peter's violent protest—"You shall never wash my feet!"—wasn't just about humility; it was likely a reaction to the social impropriety of his Master losing "honor" by performing a slave's work. Jesus shattered these conventions by demonstrating that in his kingdom, greatness is defined by the standard of lowly service rather than rank.

- I don't know if there is anything today that would be as shocking as seeing Jesus or having Him wash our actual feet.
- There was no act that He could have performed that would have made His point any clearer...He came to serve and those who desire to follow Him must also be servants...even of the lowliest kind.

Circumstances Don't Determine Whether You Serve

- There is no greater excuse for not being loving and not serving than the circumstances that I am presently living in.
- But, as Tripp points out, Jesus in John 13 has the most horrific circumstances. He knew that He was about to die a death that was not just excruciating but also for people who (at that time) hated Him.
- He also knew that beyond the physical pain, the full wrath of God for all sinners who would be saved would fall upon Him. He was going to be crushed.
- What does Jesus do? "He takes a towel and a basin of water and begins to wash their feet."

- While the crucifixion was certainly on His mind, His priority was to serve others in the midst of what was going to be coming upon Him.
- How often is serving others on our mind when we are in the midst of our trials and impending doom? How many people do we think about serving when all we want is someone to come and meet our needs?
- To be a servant in the kingdom, we must learn to put others first; especially when our life is not in the order that we think it should be.

Someone's Worthiness Does Not Determine Whether You Serve

- Jesus, in the midst of His greatest earthly crisis, serves the ones who are not worthy.
- “It is tempting to use my circumstances as an excuse to avoid service. It is equally tempting to size someone up and decide not to serve because you don’t think he deserves it or will appreciate it. You don’t have to be in ministry very long before you meet self-centered people who think it is your job to respond to their every beck and call. There will be people for whom you pour out your life, who then turn around and say you haven’t done enough. Those kinds of people really don’t deserve my service. In fact, they drive me crazy!”
- Instead of thinking of others as “worthy”, our desire should be to simply display the love of Christ in ways that bless those people.
- If our heart is for appreciation, then we are no longer serving like Christ for the people.
- When we serve others selflessly, we model the love that Jesus showed. By doing that, it also gives the world “evidence” that we are in the Jesus’ kingdom.
- “Jesus served because it was the right thing to do, but he also knew it was the only way his disciples would be freed from the hollow pursuit of personal glory and the enslaving nature of self-love. What an impact this had on the disciples and the world!”

Your Position Doesn't Determine Whether You Serve

- Jesus did not own anything to anyone. He did not need the disciples.
- But, Jesus chose to wash their feet to be an example for them. Not only an example, but also to show them how much He loved them by His service to them.
- The world says that we need to climb the ladder, that we need to find our self-worth in the external accomplishments that all can see.
- This idea is no doubt the exact opposite of what Jesus has called His followers to exhibit.
- Jesus’s kingdom and the world’s kingdom are on a crash course for each other. They can’t exist together and they can’t both be in our minds,
- Do you think that your position over someone gives you a “pass” to serve them?

- We have the privilege to serve others; even those who may be more inclined to serve us.

Power for Servants

- “Are you seeing how pervasive your self-centeredness is in your relationships? Every time I read John 13, I see my heap of daily failures. I see how “me-centered” I am, even when I think I am serving. Nevertheless, despite our self-centeredness, in verses 14 and 15 Jesus still calls us to this kind of humble service. This can be overwhelming, but it can also help us see that we are not sufficient in ourselves to behave this way. We see our need for God’s power and grace to change.”
- This was not a power which was going to come to them because of some external change.
- The external change was only going to happen because of an internal change.
- In fact, since they were radically changed on the inside (through spiritual transformation), these disciples understood they could live like Jesus.
- We too, when we are born again, when we have new hearts and minds, are then able to live like Jesus. Not because we now have the right information or the right education, but because we have been changed through the Spirit.

Foot Washing and the Cross

- The foot washing pointed to something greater...His ultimate sacrifice on the cross.
- “Jesus tells Peter that if he will not humble himself and receive what he is about to do for him on the cross, Peter will have no part with him. Jesus knows that, unless these proud men humble themselves to receive grace, they will never be able to give grace in the way Jesus has served them. Proud sinners who can’t receive grace as a gift from God will not be likely to offer it. You can’t serve other sinners if you don’t receive Jesus’ service for you. There is no way you will be up for the task.”
- The power to serve others with grace only starts because we have received God’s grace in our lives.
- Unless we see our own need, we will never be able to serve others how Jesus served His disciples.

The Need for Daily Grace

- “mean? He is speaking about their relationship with God. They have been bathed, meaning they are in a relationship with God by virtue of their simple faith in Jesus, their Savior. In other words, they are justified. But Jesus says that a bath, as important as it is, must be accompanied by daily cleansing. They need the daily grace of sanctification. You and I need the cleansing work of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection applied to our lives daily. You can’t live on past grace. You need present grace.”
- Our present grace is vital in our walk with the Lord.

- It is not just for us, but for us to serve others and love them as Christ does.
- “Repentance and faith must be your daily lifestyle. Why? Because it lays you low and lifts you up at the same time.”
- When dealing with our own hearts, it is important to see the work of Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 15:10** “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”
- Jesus knew, Paul knew, and we should know that it’s only by God’s grace that we are saved...but it’s also only by God’s grace that we can serve Him at all.
- We need that daily grace to keep serving Him for His glory.
- “We are not just promised life after death, but life before death! You can remember this as you face the realities of life in a broken world.”
- In other words, don’t live your life as if you are already dead. You will miss out on all the Lord has for you, not just to bless you but for you to be a blessing to others.

Promises of Blessing

- “Jesus says that when we serve another person, we experience God’s pleasure.”
- It is amazing that when people serve others, they experience something that is outside of themselves.
- It is not a magical or mystical experience, but they **stop looking at themselves!**
- We can get so caught up in examining ourselves, trying to figure out the future, trying to make sure that we have all our ducks in a row...just to have our actual life pass us by...never having experienced true blessing from the Lord.

Serving Others

- “Take a moment to reflect on a few specific relationships in your life. You may want to consider three; a loved one, a difficult person you usually avoid, and an enemy.”
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- Evaluate your service to them. Think about Christ’s grace to you and how you have shown that same grace to these people whom the Lord has placed in your life.
- Can you start by praying for them? Maybe praying for your own heart so that you can start to see them and serve them as Jesus?
- It is only when our hearts and minds seek to serve Christ that we can serve others.

- **Romans 12:10** “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.”
 - Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...
 - We treat people in our Christian family with a mutual love. We display the love of Christ even in times of despair.
 - ...give preference to one another in honor.
 - We treat others seriously; we value them and seek to lift them up.
- **Romans 15:7** “Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”
 - Accept one another...we will disagree with one another about a lot of things that really have to eternal value or earthly significance.
 - Accepting one another doesn’t mean that we conform to one another but that we allow others to be different and yet still love and serve them.
- **Galatians 6:2** “Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”
 - Bearing one another’s burdens is one of the most practical and longsuffering ways we can serve our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - “In the context of another Christian’s struggle, we are called to struggle alongside him. It may cut into your lifestyle and require sacrifice.”
 - This is where the real “rubber meets the road” in our relationships.
 - This will cost you...time, freedom, money, maybe even your reputation.
 - Jesus lost all of that when He was on earth to set an example for us to follow.
- **Ephesians 4:1-2** “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, {2} with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love...”
 - Your patience with others when you want to get irritated only comes from a strong relationship and dependence upon Christ.
 - When someone “bugs” you, not necessarily sinning, to show them love is to overlook that, knowing that you too have weaknesses and idiosyncrasies that “bug” other people.

Serving Others is Practical

- “Serving others is the way we put feet on our faith.”
- How are you known in the Christian community? A lot of head knowledge and not a lot of serving?
- Are you known to seek out ways to serve or as someone who has so many rigid expectations that serving others is well away from reality?