Friendship With God - Session 3

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[0:00] October 16th, a very important year of the Reformation in England was 1555. This was eight months after Mary Tudor earned her new name, Bloody Mary.

She earned that in February, as your pastor will tell you. On October 16th, two men were led to the stake in Oxford. They knew what was ahead of them.
They had seen it happen before. The first man, his name was Hugh Latimer, a little bit older. He was born in 1487, one of the greatest preachers of the English Reformation. He was one of the more popular preachers.
He was beloved by the people. The second was Nicholas Ridley, born 1500, and he was the Bishop of London. And he was an academic more than a preacher, but he gave the liturgical shape and some of the pastoral warmth, theological clarity to the Reformation.
And together, these two men had pastoral courage. They had theological conviction, and above all, they had loyalty to Jesus Christ in common. And that was what led them to have wood piled around their bodies.
[1:11] They were chained to the stake, and gunpowder was hung around their necks. And they were put back to back as they were burned for the sake of Jesus Christ.

And as the fire was lit, Latimer famously turned to his friend, and he said to him these famous words, Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man.
We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, I trust, shall never be put out. That is loyalty to the end. And I've stood in Oxford on Broad Street in this humble place where these men were martyred.
You wouldn't even know just a few cobblestones are missing, and otherwise you wouldn't know if you weren't looking for it what you were looking at. You wouldn't be able to find it. And a memorial stands nearby, and it reads, To the glory of God and in grateful commemoration of his servants, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, prelates of the Church of England who near this spot yielded their bodies to be burned, bearing witness to the sacred truths with which they affirmed and maintained against the errors of the Church of Rome and rejoicing that to them it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.
This monument was erected by public subscription in the year of our Lord, 1841. Tell that story for two reasons. One, if you can't find any friends in this world, you might try incarceration and being martyred back to back with, it's a quick way to become friends.
[2:44] These men were already best friends, but nothing than going to your own death and martyrdom made them ultimate friends. And more seriously, to introduce the theme of covenant, to introduce the theme of covenant and covenant loyalty and to show you just what being loyal to Jesus Christ might cost you.

Now, we've already seen loyalty mentioned. It was pictured in John 15, John 15, 14. Jesus said, you are my friends if you do what I command you. And so this is our loyalty toward him, but of course God never asks us to do anything that he hasn't already done for us.
So he asks us to be loyal, but in those same words he said, famously, John 15, 13, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. So Jesus laid down his life for us, his friends, and now us being friends of God, we willingly lay down our lives for him.
And so in the upper room, immediately after the metaphor of the vine, Jesus tells them in the next verse, the world is going to hate you because of your friendship with me.
And turn there, we want to pick up in John 15, 18, exactly where we left off this morning. Turn and we'll read together.

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[4:02] John said, if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Verse 20. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.
If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have not been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.
But now they have seen and hated both me and my father. But the word that is written in the law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause. John 15, 18 to 25, Jesus is saying to them, Now that you are my friends, you're going to have every opportunity to demonstrate your faithfulness and your fidelity and your loyalty to me.
You're going to have every opportunity now to demonstrate this steadfast love. And you hear the same language as in John 15 that we just read in our bonus verse of James.
[5:17] James 4, 4 says, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Very next verse, James 4, 5, Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the scripture says he yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?

Back to John 15, the very next verse of the passage we read in John 15, 26. But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.
And John says of the spirit that the spirit will be with you and the spirit will be in you. And so here you see our third point being worked out in scripture. Our friendship with God is by his Holy Spirit.
Third and final session. The first, it's so logical. You've seen the formula all through scripture. We saw it this weekend that friendship is from God the Father. Friendship is through Christ Jesus, his son.
And then friendship is by the Holy Spirit. And so we know that the work of redemption, the work of friendship, the way was made by Jesus. And now that work is applied by his Holy Spirit.
[6:32] Redemption was accomplished by Jesus Christ. It is applied by his Holy Spirit. And we have to remember this language of covenant, the grounds for our friendship. Friendship being the kind, the quality of relationship that we have.

We relate to God through covenant. You are either in Adam or by the power of the spirit, you are in Christ. And you are in one of those two places.
You are his friend or you are his enemy. And so when the Holy Spirit unites you to Christ and you are so found in him, then you become reconciled to God.
And he calls you his friend. That's how it works. You are united with Christ. You are called a friend of God. And that friendship is defined by the final truth that this metaphor of friendship reveals.
It's revealed by loyalty. It's teaching loyalty. A famous name when you talk about biblical friendship, I have to look up every time how to pronounce it. Eilred of Rivox.
[7:30] Hands up if you've heard of him. That's kind of what I was thinking. He's one of the most famous writers of biblical friendship. He lived in the medieval ages between 1110 and 1167. He was a monk in England.

And he wrote the book, Spiritual Friendship. And all these guys today that write on friendship, they go back and they quote Eilred. And he says in this book, in friendship, nothing surpasses loyalty.
He says, for it seems to be the nurse and the guardian of friendship itself. He says, it's a comrade in every circumstance, whether joyful or sorrowful, whether bitter or pleasant.
Loyalty is the defining mark of friendship. And so this is our final friendship. We've seen it to review. Friendship was first what? Friendship as...
It's exclusive. Thank you. Who is listening? Second one, friendship as communion. Or friendship as revelation. Thank you. You're paying better attention than I am. Friendship as exclusive. Friendship as revelation.
[8:29] Friendship as communion. Then you have friendship as a shared purpose. We continue the work of Jesus Christ. And now, finally, friendship as loyalty. And we share this with God.

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When the Bible authors wrote and they wanted to tell you what God is like, they said this word, chesed. Chesed. Chesed. You can write it down. H-E-S-E-D.
There's one way to write it. I want you to say it with me. Chesed. Loyal love. Covenant love. Love. And faithfulness. And the word is hard to translate into English because it's bringing a lot of different nuances into the meaning.
It means several things at once. It's combining love and generosity and enduring commitment all into one word. And it's so important. I'm going to say this again to make sure you understand it. It's combining love and generosity and enduring commitment into one word.
And so Moses was inspired to write of God in Exodus 34, 6. He's compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and overflowing with loyal love and faithfulness.
[9:33] And this is what Jacob was considering of God. And he says, I am not worthy of this loyal love that you have given to me. And maybe you feel that as well, that God is overflowing in this love. And you say, who am I that I am an object of your loyalty, an object of your covenant faithfulness?

And so he's loyal and he's faithful because this is who he is by nature. And so it is God's nature, but his example also helps us reimagine what covenant love might look like for us.
Yes, he's God. Yes, he embodies this perfectly. But by looking at him, we see what loyalty might look like for us. And so the same word is applied to God's people in Hosea 6, 6. The verse we're going to look at several times as we go through here.
It says, I desire chesed, loyal love and not sacrifice. The knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. And when Jesus comes and Matthew's recording his ministry, he shows Jesus as quoting Hosea 6, 6 twice.
Once in Matthew 9, 12, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. He says, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.
[10:45] Mercy is the New Testament equivalent word of chesed or that loyal love. He says, I came not to call the righteous, but I came to call sinners to repentance.

And he quotes it again in Matthew 12, 7. If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. He quotes it twice.
And David Guzik, maybe mispronouncing that. You guys have all read the Blue Letter Bible commentary. He says this in his commentary. God's covenant relationship with his people results in his loyal love and faithfulness.
He says, God's chesed manifested in forgiveness makes a relationship with him possible. So this is what makes the relationship possible. And it's extremely important for you to understand this, that loyalty to God goes beyond purely religious terms.
Loyalty to God is not defined merely in religious terms. And so if you say, I'm loyal to God because I come to youth group and because I pray every night before I go to sleep and because I read my Bible, you may be giving God activity instead of allegiance.
[12:00] You may be giving him rituals instead of a shared heart. And you may be giving him religion instead of friendship. Because loyalty is not only loyalty to the external things of religion like sacrifice and prayer.

And it goes beyond that. Loyalty is actually loving the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And loving your neighbor as yourself.
And when we say that the Holy Spirit has come and empower us, we say this is what he's come to empower us to do. To be friends. It's friendship as shared participation.
He comes to help us continue the work of Jesus Christ. And so it helps us stop and say, well, what was the work of Jesus Christ? And if you come to God with just external religious activity of the teaching of Sunday school or whatever it is you do, you may be guilty of the same sin as the people of Israel in Isaiah 58.
Where you've done religious things and God's going to have to say to you, and you missed my heart. You've done all these good things and you've missed the best and the weightiest things. And so when the Spirit dwells within you and your character resembles his character, then your chesed begins to resemble his.
[13:12] And so centuries before Jesus was born, Isaiah began to tell you the kind of works that Jesus was going to do. It says he prophesies that the Holy Spirit is going to rest on this person.

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And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, Isaiah 11-2. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding. The Spirit of counsel and might. The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And then the Son of God comes and this Jesus in Luke 4 gives this programmatic passage for all of Luke.
It's recognized. He tells you exactly what he's come to do. The Spirit of the Lord is on me, he says. In fulfillment to all that was written, he's anointed me and here's his mission. To proclaim good news to the poor.
He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. And to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He says that in Luke 4, 18 and 19.
And so you see Jesus quoting Hosea 6-6 twice when his people are guilty of coming to him with loyalty that's just external religious terms.
[14:15] And he quotes at the outset of his ministry. When he's defining his ministry and what he's going to do and it reveals the heart of God, he's rebuking a people who are defining loyalty in religious terms.

And you see the same, you live in a society where people define this friendship with God and faithfulness to it according to external religious activities.
This is solidified in my mind. I was evangelizing a guy outside of Santa Fe restaurant. If you're waiting in line for your food, you have nothing to do, so I'm going to ask you about Jesus. And I went to him and said, tell me, what do you make of Jesus?
And he says, I'm good. We don't need to talk about this. I'm a Christian. I said, well, how's that? He said, I've never been to jail. I've never killed anybody. I'm basically a good guy.
And so, you know, me and the guy upstairs, we're fine. And I wish I had the wisdom I have now to ask him, what do these external religious things have to do with your friendship with God?
[15:15] What a horrible way to define friendship. Is this your best friend? Well, yeah, I've never killed anyone, so they want to keep being my friend. No, this is the way that the Pharisees defined their friendship.

They held the law wonderfully. They even went above in their religious activities. And God said, you missed my heart. You've completely missed true and undefiled religion. He says, you tithe, but you neglect the weightier things.
That's what I want to talk about. Loyalty is you being faithful to the weightier things of the law. Justice and mercy and faithfulness. The Pharisees followed the law, but they missed the heart of the law.
God said through Hosea, where they were offering sacrifices. They were doing these proper external things that God would have them to do. And then he says, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. The sacrifice was a means to an end. They've neglected the weightier thing of mercy. They followed the law, but missed the heart of God. And you go back to Isaiah 58. You get these people and God says from the outside, they look like wonderful Christians.
[16:17] He says, they seek me daily. You could say, they seek me daily. They seek me daily. They're after his heart. They're fasting and they're observing the Sabbath. And Isaiah comes to him and he says, you've missed the true fast.

You've missed the true Sabbath. This covenant loyalty. And so God condemns them. And what did they miss? They missed chesed. This word that combines love and generosity and enduring commitment all wrapped into one.
The essence of friendship is love and it's loyal love. Even Aristotle sums up what God's people have missed from the beginning.
Aristotle says, now since friendship depends more on loving and it is those who love their friends that are praised, loving seems to be the characteristic virtue of friends so that it is only those in whom this is found in due measure that are lasting friends and only their friendship that endures.
And so Jesus' example helps us to imagine what it might look like for us to embody loyal love. And so a lawyer comes to him and tests him on this exact thing.
[17:30] And he asks him about eternal life and how he can have it and Jesus points him to the law, which may be surprising. And he says, what's written in the law and how do you read it? And the lawyer says, you know the story.

You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus doesn't argue with him. He says, you have

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answered correctly.
He says, that's right. And then he gives an illustration of what it looks like to follow the law and to not miss the heart of the law. There's a story. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was and when he saw him he had compassion.
He went to him and he bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying, take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.
[18:41] Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers? And he said, the one who showed him mercy. Mercy is our New Testament word for the Old Testament, chesed.

And then Jesus gives these words, you go and do likewise. And so here's the point of the Good Samaritan. The point of the Good Samaritan is a visual picture of what the law is actually requiring of you.
And what it means to, if there is no way that you can do the law, the whole point of the Old Testament law is to make you recognize, I can't do this. This is too much for me. Part of it is to put this weight on you so that you have to cry out to God and say, I can't do this, Lord.
You're going to have to do this. And so what Jesus is doing with this parable is he's showing you in the modern day for them then, no one can live like this.
Who can live like this Samaritan man did all day, every day, for a lifetime? And I was surprised to know we used to work at the coffee shop, the gathering place downtown.
[19:46] And sometimes you just need to get away from that place. And so I would always use that as an opportunity to go to the far end of downtown and go to a little sandwich shop and eat. And I was walking one day and came across my buddy Jeremy, a man who's experiencing homelessness chronically.

And I said, have you eaten recently? He says, man, I haven't eaten in a couple days. And I said, well, I'm going to get a sandwich. You know, why don't you come with me? And as we're going, he pulls out his phone and he's playing on his phone and he's got a brand new massive iPhone Max. And I was like, where'd you get the phone, man? He's like, man, you're not going to believe this. Like this family came the other day and just came up to me downtown and said, do you need a phone? He's like, yeah, I need a phone.
I'm trying to get an address and a phone and get back on my feet. And he said, they took me to the Apple store or the AT&T store and they bought me this phone. And he said, they got me a plan and it goes forward just in perpetuity.
And the plan is covered and the phone is covered. And I'm just, I'm not supposed to worry about it. I was like, wow, that's incredible. And I'm beginning to feel like I'm going to buy him a sandwich and look what this, look what this family did for the guy.
[20:53] He goes, yeah, and you're not going to believe that. Then they, then they asked me if I wanted to go out and eat with them. He said, so I went out with them and their kids and they took me to Buffalo Wild Wings and I got to order whatever I wanted. And I was like, man, that's, that's pretty cool.

He goes, well, then they asked me if I wanted to go see a movie with them. So we went to the movie and I got to spend the whole evening with them. And wow, right? Who could, who lives like that? With that kind of generosity to just hand a phone and a plan over to this guy and say, whatever happens, happens.
I've got you. And even that family, whoever they were, they can't live like that every second of every day with that kind of love, with that kind of charity, with that kind of compassion.
But that's our standard. That's the standard of our loyal love for our neighbor. And we see that the point of the Good Samaritan is that there is only one person who ever lived with perfect covenant faithfulness.
There's only one person who ever loved God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind and all their strength. And there's only one person who ever lived like this every second of

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every day. And it was Jesus. Jesus Christ lived this way.
[21:58] He demonstrated the heart of the law. I'll remind you of these passages. Hosea 6, 6. I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. Micah 6, 8. He told you, oh man, what is good.

You know this verse. What does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Isaiah 58, 6.
Is not this the fast that I choose? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into your house. And when you see the naked, to cover him, and to pour yourself out for the hungry, and to satisfy the desire of the afflicted.
Jesus quotes the first passage, Hosea 6, 6. Twice, he quotes Micah 6, 8. And then he quotes Isaiah 58, 6 as the defining purpose of his ministry in his first sermon in Nazareth.
And so we see what's required. We love the Lord our God, and we love our neighbor as ourself. What do we do? What does loyalty to God look like? It looks like, to those who are suffering, alleviating their suffering.
[23:04] And loyalty looks like, to those who have no family, you make them your family. And one member of our church is showing our whole church what this means. They had just adopted their neighbor.

They had a neighbor who became disabled. They moved that neighbor into their own home. And they gave them a room, and they've been taking care of this lady for several years, actually. And to those who have no friends, this is so important for our weekend.
To those who have no friends, you be their friend. If you know someone who has no friends, you're their friend. There's another couple in our church who adopted their elderly neighbor. And it's a man who actually died this past week, but for years, they took him every week to the grocery store.
And they brought him over for dinner, and they were a friend to one who had no one. And he said, Mike McKinley wrote in his book, Friendship with God, that there are some who are suspicious of anyone who talks about the Spirit's work.
And he says, the Spirit simply has nothing to do with the lives of these people. They take comfort and consolation in their own morality and in their achievements, rather than in the Spirit whom God gives to His children.
[24:09] So there's some people who just under-emphasize, you know, this work, the salvation is by the Spirit. And then he also says, when there's some people, you know these people, then there's some people that kind of over-emphasize the Spirit.

He says, at the other extreme, there are those who are only interested in powerful manifestations of the Spirit. Miraculous power, speaking in tongues, supernatural healings, resurrection from the dead, prophetic knowledge.
And he says, what they miss are the real hallmarks of the Spirit's ministry. You know, what does the Spirit of God actually empower you to do? The Spirit of God empowers you to be a friend.
John Owen says, the Spirit abroad in our world is a spirit of cruelty and reproach toward others. Ours is a spirit of adoption and consolation. It makes you a friend of God, and it makes you a friend of your fellow man.
And you can hear the words of Jesus again in this most powerful metaphor of friendship anywhere in the Bible. John 15, 12 to 17, he says, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
[25:13] There it is. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends.

For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. So, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
These things I command you so that you will love one another. So, loyalty to Jesus is multifaceted. We do want to have the boldness to never deny him and to hold up these truths when it's inconvenient and even when it's costly to ourselves.
And maybe even if necessary, to give ourselves over in martyrdom. And it may be that some of you will do that. James 1.27 says that pure and undefiled religion is, you know, in part is to keep yourself unstained from the world.

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But part of pure and undefiled religion, he also says, is caring for the orphan and the widow in their affliction. And so, loyalty is not only dying for Christ.
[26:24] Not many will die for Christ, but for most of us it will mean living for Jesus Christ. So, your loyalty to him will be in life and he's made known to you by his spirit.

You know, being united to him by his spirit. Being conformed into his image by his spirit. And participating in his ministry and continuing it as he sits at the right hand of God in heaven. We are called to covenant loyalty.
And I want to give one last aspect of this because this is so bold that we would go out there and love God perfectly and love our neighbor perfectly. But I also want to show you, scripture goes out of the way in John. It's the only book of the Gospels where it tells you what happens with the disciples.
And some of you know that. Some of you have never realized this. This is the only book that goes back and shows, you know, all the other ones. We said the work that Jesus did, he did alone. Well, what happened to the disciples?
Did they just fall away? And then Jesus said, well, no, I want nothing more to do with them. I'm going to find new disciples because these have left me and abandoned me and betrayed me. No, we see there's grace when we fall short.
[27:28] Because there was one who was perfectly loyal to us. There's grace when we fall short. If you remember John 21, Peter failed Jesus three times. And in all the other Gospels, that's the last time we see Peter.

But in John, we come back and we see that Jesus doesn't desert him and get new disciples. When you fail and you are not loyal, he doesn't abandon you and go find some other Christian that's going to fulfill his will more perfectly.
We get to see John comes to him and he makes him confess his loyalty to him three times in the same way that he denied him three times. And he says, do you love me more than these?
Christ, meaning the old life and all that this world has to offer. Do you love me more than this? And what does Peter tell him? Lord, you know that I love you. He tells him three times.
I love you. I love you. I love you. John uses the word phileo to describe his love. Phileo is the verbal form of the noun philo, which means friend.
[28:31] Friend simply means friend. And he's affirming his loyalty to Jesus Christ. And then amazingly, Jesus gives him a promise. It doesn't really feel like a promise at first, but he says, truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

When you're old, you'll stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. He records, this was to show him by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, follow me.
And so here's what you need to understand about this is that what Jesus is doing when he's failed him in his loyalty, he's extending grace to him. He says, men are going to take you and carry you where you don't want to go.
And this is telling him by what kind of death his arms are going to be stretched out. And he's saying, you're going to be crucified in like manner unto your Lord. And you can say, well, that doesn't sound like a very good promise.
But you have to think about where Peter's coming from. He's denied his Lord three times. He pledged his loyalty and then he failed and God comes to him in the form of Jesus here on this little island and he makes him breakfast and he's saying, you know what, you will never deny me again.
[29:38] You're going to go to your own death and you're going to go to your own martyrdom and you're going to be loyal You're going to be loyal and you're going to be loyal to the end. You will never deny me again. And so how can he say that now when he couldn't before?

Something's happened that changed everything. And what's happened is he's received the spirit. He's received this promise of God now. He's seen his own faithfulness and God assures him he will never fail him again.
And then comes the command that Jesus gives to every one of you at your conversion. He says, follow me. Come and be faithful. And so in the garden, Adam was created for friendship and communion with God and sin ruined that friendship.

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You too were created for friendship. But through this Trinitarian work of the Father and the Son and the Spirit, by their work and by their mission towards you, you have become amasitia dei.
You have become a friend of God. You've been reconciled. You've entered into all the warmth and intimacy that God has designed for his people. This was the great covenant refrain of the Bible.
[30:47] It's in Jeremiah 31. God promises that he's going to send his spirit onto the church. And he says, on the day that that happens, they will be my people and I will be their God. And we say, praise God, that's happened.

The day has come. When you put your faith in Jesus, you receive the spirit of God and you get to be his friends. It's the reversal of Genesis 3. You get to commune with God.
And so what you need to do in light of that is cherish that relationship. You are a friend of God. You have access. You can close your eyes and pray to God through Jesus Christ.
Think of Charles Wesley, bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ my own. You have access to God. You are friends with God. You can commune with him. You can show your loyalty to him.
This is what you were designed to do. Enjoy the warmth of the fellowship and give back to him what he desires and what you desire. Worship him and sing to him and pray to him and read your scripture and share the good news.
[31:45] Engage in the ministry of reconciliation. And never forget that the fellowship that you have with God was blood bought. And it was blood bought from Jesus Christ.

He bought you back from bondage to sin and death and hell. And you need to be loyal to him and faithful to him. And I leave you with the same words that Jesus left the apostle John and Peter. Take up your cross and follow him. Please pray with me as we ask for the power to do this. Oh Lord God, what a privilege.
We are so privileged to get to have a whole weekend where we can come and study your word openly. And we can build each other up. And what a privilege that we can pray to God the Father through you.
We can come to you now and say, Lord, we come before your throne and we ask for the boldness so that we can be loyal in the midst of a world that's hostile to you. As you've said that the days are coming where by being my friend you will encounter enemies in the world.
[32:52] And by swearing our allegiance to you and bowing the knee to you, we have all kinds of enemies, Lord, in this world. Give us courage and conviction and bravery to stand for you and be loyal to you when things are difficult and when it's not convenient.

And Lord, give us courage to live for you. And when other people are walking by on the other side of the road and other people are leaving and they're too entrenched in themselves and in what they're doing to see those around them who are hurting.
God, give us eyes to see. Give us boldness to move and to act and to engage in this ministry of reconciliation, which isn't just preaching the good news, but, Lord, embodying your ethics. Preaching your name and your character, but living it out so that people can see this is what covenant loyalty is.
This is what God is like. And God, give us grace time and time again when we fall short. I pray that you would apply all of these truths to the students' lives, to myself and to all who are in the room, that we would understand a little bit better what it means that you call us your friend.
And God, teach us these truths, impress them on our hearts so that we will have them with us where we go forever. God, thank you for this moment in time where we got to spend just a couple sessions together, Lord.
[34:06] May it be eternally rewarded. We ask all this in Christ's name. Amen.

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