



GREATER RELATIONSHIPS

SERMON NOTES

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02/22/26

FOUR DAYS AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY which initiated 40 days of Lent, CCO's second installment of GREATER RELATIONSHIPS fully explored a multiplicity of relationships ranging from singles to married folk. There was an excitement in the air, an expectancy which at times veered away from the *solemnity* of Lent, thank the Lord, an anticipation which featured an amazing hope in the midst of our brokenness and shattered ways. The Lord stood ready to heal. He would use everything in His *arsenal* to call us to attention.

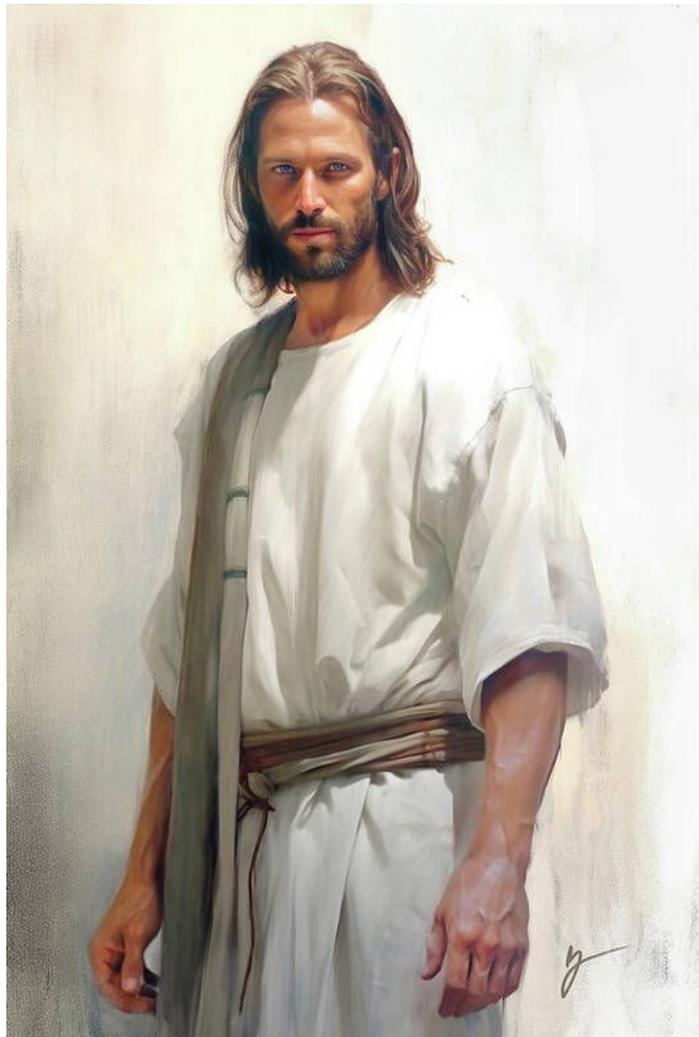
Let praise be a weapon that silences the enemy
Let praise be a weapon that conquers all anxiety

Let it rise, let praise arise
We sing Your name in the dark and it changes everything
We sing with all we are and we claim Your victory
Let it rise, let praise arise

We'll see You break down every wall
We'll watch the giants fall
Fear cannot survive when we praise You
The God of breakthrough's on our side
Forever, lift Him high
With all creation cry, God, we praise You
Oh, we praise You
Oh (Oh, come on, let faith)

Let faith be the song that overcomes the raging sea
Let faith be the song that calms the storm inside of me
Let it rise, let faith arise (Let it rise)

We'll see You break down every wall
We'll watch the giants fall
Fear cannot survive when we praise You
The God of breakthrough's on our side
Forever, lift Him high
With all creation cry, God, we praise You



Alleluia! Alleluia! Will you worship Him in this place? came an uplifting and excited question. Yes, we were ready to lift our praise to God. Our hands were raised. Our hearts were open. Pastors Tara and Marc quickly stepped forward, as Pastor Paul warmly welcomed the fellows from Fresh Start. *Did you know we are about to celebrate CCO's 29th anniversary?* asked Pastor

Marc. *This is a powerful testimony to Pastor Paul's faithful ministry through the years.* The congregation erupted with applause.

Pastor Tara was excited about the upcoming Easter *Eggstravaganza*, a glow-in-the-dark Easter Egg Hunt on Holy Saturday. *This event includes tons of kids and if you go online to the QR code, you can contribute candy and plastic eggs for this event. More details will follow. Also, know that we are beginning a special program for kids not old enough yet for CCO's youth ministry. We are looking for volunteers. More details will follow.*

Hearts were moved by a brief video of CCO's past baptisms. Faces of brothers and sisters in Christ *glowed* as each rose from immersion in the waters of baptism. There is a connection, isn't there, to those who have come to the water, have given their heart to Jesus, sisters and brothers through generations past to this very moment? Such images bless us. As we witness baptism we are inspired, encouraged, hopeful. Next week at our 11am service there will be more baptisms! May God abundantly bless each person about to be baptized.

Romans 12:10 NIV

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Somehow we take longer to grow in the area of finances yet the Lord is calling us to utilize our support of His Mission. said Pastor Marc. Eventually Pastor Paul took over, praying: Lord, You expand our world where it becomes not just about ME but about WE. Lord, help us to take a step of faith. We set our eyes on You, Lord, only You! And, Lord, we are here for You! This morning! Always!

Jesus we are here for You
We want to see Your Spirit move
Lord we surrender
Worthy are You
Chorus
No one in Heaven
No one on Earth
Is like You God
No one above You
You stand alone
We stand in awe
We sing with the angels
That You have no rival
For You are beautiful and true
So we will worship Worthy are You

He is worthy! God is worthy! Today God is making a way in your life. You need to know without any doubt that God is here in your life, for you! We are in the midst of battle though so I'm gonna ask you to have enough courage to step out into the aisle for prayer. Right now! Have courage. It's time. In the Name of Jesus we invite DELIVERANCE into this place this morning. We invite SALVATION. We invite FORGIVENESS and MERCY. We invite the angels too. Hallelujah! Somebody praise Him this morning!
 prayed Pastor Paul who was *on fire*. With this, loud applause segued into GOD, TURN IT AROUND.

I'm praying, God come
 And turn this thing around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

God, turn it around
 Oh oh
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

All of my hope (yeah)
 Is in the name (the name)
 The name of Jesus (of Jesus)
 Said, breakthrough will come
 in the name
 Come in the name
 The name of Jesus

I'm calling on the name
 That changes everything, yes
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

He is up to something
 He is up to something
 God is doing something right
 now
 He is up to something
 He is up to something
 God is doing something right
 now

All of my hope (is in the
 name)
 Is in the name (said)
 The name of Jesus
 Said, breakthrough will come
 Come in the name
 The name of Jesus

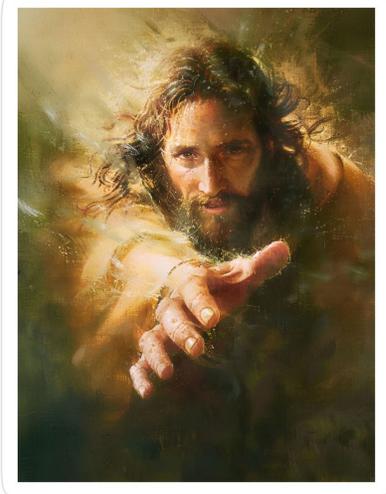
All of my hope
 Is in the name
 The name of Jesus
 Breakthrough will come
 Come in the name
 The name of Jesus

He is healing someone
 He is saving someone
 God is doing something, oh,
 right now
 He is healing someone
 He is saving someone
 God is doing something
 right now (right now)

God, turn it around
 Turn it around
 Oh, oh

I'm praying, God come
 And turn this thing around
 Oh, yes
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

He is moving mountains
 Making a way for
 someone
 God is doing something
 right now, right now
 He is moving mountains
 Making a way for
 someone (yeah)
 God is doing something
 right now, right now



I'm calling on the name
 That changes everything
 Oh, yeah yeah
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

He is moving mountains
 Making a way for
 someone
 God is doing something right
 now

God, turn it around
 Turn it around
 Turn it around

'Cause all of my hope
 Is in the name
 The name of Jesus
 Breakthrough will come
 Come in the name
 The name of Jesus
 God, turn it around
 God, turn it around

We will call on the Name of the Lord that changes everything! He will break through your walls! He is up to that! All of our hope is in Jesus! said Pastor Brooks, on fire in faith. All across this place we thank You, Lord! We see Your Majesty and Might! Hallelujah!

Yesterday the internet was down. Our PA system flickered throughout the entire day! But our tech team eventually straightened things out! Give a hand to our amazing tech team! smiled Pastor Paul who had more to say.

There are, of course, things we don't say, not just in polite company but any company:

- *When we smile although we are only just surviving.*
- *When something is simple for some but confuses us instead.*
- *When our relationships involve burying scars and pain to get along.*
- *When others carry on but we don't even want to move ahead, at all.*

Today we're gonna talk about some things which might help wherever you are right now. Widowed. Engaged. A complex relationship or a lost desire to do anything about relationships or just plain don't want to talk about it! Today the goal for me is to help you have great relationships! announced Pastor Paul. For a better marriage or for those dating, healthy relationships, that's it. You see, Jesus can actually heal relationship(s) which are broken!

CONSIDER THIS:

- Why relationships which start out good ultimately break apart!
- We say, "It's meant to be. I like chocolate; so does he! He wears shoes; so do I."
- And somehow we think that's enough!
- We are convinced that *chemistry*, which is real, is all that matters.
- Yes, chemistry is wonderful; it is made of sparks.
- But if all you have is sparks, the house (*relationship*) you're building may eventually burn down!
- **Stop obsessing about finding the "right" person!**
- **Rather, concentrate upon becoming the "right" person yourself!**

**STOP OBSESSING ABOUT FINDING
THE *RIGHT* PERSON.
*BECOME THE RIGHT PERSON INSTEAD!***

What you do will follow you! YOUR PAST WILL VISIT YOUR FUTURE! The past will sneak up from the past! Position yourself and your relationships to be completely guided by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

WISE ADMONITIONS

1. YOUR PAST WILL VISIT YOUR FUTURE.

- All seasons of life leave seeds.
- Some seeds can cause insecurity
- Other seeds may cause pain.
- Seeds of control may foster fear of intimacy.
- We ask: *Where did that (relationship or fear) come from?*
- Honest relationship in marriage will reveal the source of fear.

2. UNHEALED PLACES DON'T DISAPPEAR AT THE ALTAR.

- Unhealed places can multiply in marriage!
- We all bring old *baggage* into relationships, especially marriage!
- Yet, there is hope, of course, in our surrender to Jesus.
- Ask: *What decision am I now making that I really don't want to expand in to the future?*
- Ask: *Are my current habits becoming wounds which others can see?*
- Ask: *Am I listening to others' concern(s) about how I'm living life?*
- Ask: *Am I ignoring the loving and well-meant advice of others?*

3. THE RIGHT PERSON MYTH IS A TRAP!

- Searching for the *right* person is based on a lie.
- We think there is only one kind of person for us.
- We think that *chemistry* is a confirmation of a right relationship.
- We often confuse soulmate with chemistry. Think about that!
- Based on a lie from the enemy, we think we must *test drive a relationship*, especially when it comes to intimacy.
- Chemistry itself will never give you a *covenant (Biblical)* relationship!
- When chemistry breaks down we think: *Maybe I just married the wrong person! We'll try to fix things then. LET'S HAVE A BABY!*
- Sure, you can see how sleep deprivation and lots of dirty diapers can help! What a combo! Healing a relationship? Think about that!
- What's the next unfortunate step then?
- Well then, *I'll just look around for the right person!*
- At the gym. On social media. *There's gotta be some chemistry out there!?*

- And so, the cycle continues where the same brokenness present in the first relationship is easily carried into the next.

4. **AM I BECOMING THE RIGHT PERSON?**

- **Love is a skill you practice.**
- Love can enable others to feel safe.
- Love can enable significant growth in a relationship(s).
- In relationships we must be patient.
- In relationships we must create space to grow together.
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV
- **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. [5] It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [6] Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [7] It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. [8] Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.**

INSIGHT: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 defines love not as a fleeting emotion, but as a selfless, action-oriented choice characterized by patience, kindness, and humility. It states that love does not envy, boast, act arrogantly, or behave rudely. It is not self-seeking, irritable, or resentful, refusing to rejoice in wrongdoing while upholding the truth.

Key Aspects of Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8):

- **Active Traits:** Love is patient, kind, and rejoices with the truth.
- **Things Love Avoids:** It does not envy, boast, act proudly, dishonor others, or seek its own way. It is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs.
- **Endurance:** True love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things.
- **Permanence:** Love never fails or ends, making it the highest virtue.
- This passage instructs believers to prioritize selfless, godly love in all relationships, as it is the foundation that holds, endures, and outlasts all other gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, the Apostle Paul provides a definitive blueprint for love (agape), shifting the focus from fleeting emotions to deliberate, selfless actions. This passage serves as a critique of human ego and a guide for building healthy, enduring relationships.

The 15 Characteristics of Love

Scholars identify 15 active verbs used by Paul to describe what love does and does not do.

What Love Is *(The Positives)*

- **Patient:** It is "long-burning," slow to anger, and willing to wait for others to grow.
- **Kind:** It actively seeks to be useful and helpful, treating others better than they may deserve.
- **Rejoices with Truth:** It finds joy in what is right, honest, and aligned with God's word.
- **Always Protects:** It "covers" the faults of others rather than exposing them for harm or shame.
- **Always Trusts:** It gives the benefit of the doubt and chooses to see the best in others.
- **Always Hopes:** It refuses to see failure as final, maintaining a godly optimism for the future.
- **Always Perseveres:** It is a "military" kind of endurance that sustains the assault of trials without bailing out.

What Love Is Not *(The Negatives)*

- **Not Envious:** It is content and does not resent the success or blessings of others.
- **Not Boastful or Arrogant:** It does not "toot its own horn" or consider itself superior to others.
- **Not Rude:** It has good manners and is sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.
- **Not Self-Seeking:** It prioritizes the well-being of others over personal rights or ambitions.

- **Not Easily Angered:** It does not have a "hair-trigger" temper and is not touchy or irritable.
- **Keeps No Record of Wrongs:** It does not store up a "laundry list" of past offenses to use in future arguments.
- **Does Not Delight in Evil:** It never finds pleasure in injustice or seeing others fail.

Conclusion: *"Love Never Fails"*

Verse 8 concludes that love is eternal. While other spiritual gifts (*like prophecy or tongues*) are temporary tools for an imperfect world, **love will outlast them all because it is the nature of God Himself.**

5. LOVE DOES NOT USE PRESSURE TO GET WHAT IT WANTS!

- Patience takes a season of time to mature and develop.
- Patience, not pressure, or giving in to pressure, is key!

INSIGHT: Based on 1 Corinthians 13:5, Christian love is not self-seeking and does not insist on its own way, meaning it **rejects manipulative pressure to achieve personal desires**. It focuses on the well-being of others rather than selfish, coercive demands. True love respects free will, allowing others space rather than forcing compliance.

- **1 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV):** Defines love as not "insist[ing] on its own way".
- **Not Self-Seeking:** Love focuses on serving others, not on using, pressuring, or manipulating them to get what you want.
- **Avoids Coercion:** The Message translation highlights that love "doesn't force itself on others".
- **Rejects Control:** It is the opposite of a selfish, manipulative, or "me-first" attitude.
- **Patient Kindness:** Instead of pressuring, it operates with patience and kindness, which are key characteristics of biblical love.

LOVE IS KIND. LOVE PUTS OTHERS FIRST!

CONSIDER THIS:

- Being kind instructs our *tone* of voice.
- Being kind *instructs* how we act.
- Being kind instructs when *touch* is most appropriate and effective.
- If you are patient, God will *birth* inside you skill sets to cultivate your relationship(s).
- Marriage reveals what's inside you!
- Cultivate a *heart of kindness*, whether you are married or single!
- Kindness is love's response to weakness.

**LOVE DOES NOT ENVY.
IT DOES NOT COMPETE.
LOVE FULLY CELEBRATES OTHERS.**

6. REAL LOVE APPLAUDS WHEN THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON OTHERS.

- Real love celebrates others before oneself, always and in all ways!
- If you want a deep-seated relationship, practice apologizing.

7. PRIDE SHOWS UP IN OUR INABILITY TO ADMIT WHEN WE ARE WRONG.

INSIGHT: Pride often manifests as an inability to admit being wrong, treating apologies as weakness rather than strength. This ego-driven behavior damages relationships, builds emotional walls, and hinders personal growth by causing individuals to defend, justify, or deny mistakes. Overcoming this requires humility to value connections over being right.

Key insights on pride and the inability to admit wrongdoing:

- **The Ego Trap:** Pride turns admitting mistakes into a threat to self-worth, leading to a "defend-justify-blame" cycle that hinders reconciliation.
- **Relationship Damage:** A refusal to admit being wrong is a major, often fatal, obstacle to sustaining intimate and professional relationships.
- **The Role of Fear:** The inability to say "I'm sorry" often stems from a fear of looking weak, losing authority, or damaging one's reputation.

- **Humility as a Solution:** True strength is demonstrated through the vulnerability of admitting faults, which builds bridges and fosters connection. a
- **Psychological Mechanisms:** Cognitive biases, such as self-serving bias, help individuals rationalize their behavior, making them feel justified in avoiding responsibility.

Ultimately, *swallowing* pride to apologize is seen as a crucial step for personal growth and maintaining long-term, healthy relationships. Pride fosters an inability to say “I’m sorry!” Ultimately, unbridled pride can destroy families and prevent deep-seated relationships from ever forming.

You can’t talk as much as I do...said Pastor Paul. ...without making mistakes or saying something which demands an apology! So, I practice making apologies, heart-felt apologies. When called for, we need to be prepared to defeat pride by saying a heart-felt “I’m sorry.” Practice that apology.

Some people have advised that one should never apologize to staff but here’s an example to clarify things:

EXAMPLE: *Years ago, as I served elsewhere as pastor and music director, there was a very talented bass player who was having trouble correctly playing a section of his bass part. Over and over he would go. Every time he’d blow it. I would point out and suggest what he could do to correctly play his part but again, he’d try once more, but, unfortunately, to no avail. Can’t I practice on Saturday? he suggested. No, right here. Now! This is what you need to do. I said. He replied, I got it, Pastor. He didn’t! At our final rehearsal he blew his part again and I corrected him and I did not mince words. It was wrong to correct him before his peers. I was wrong. I had acted poorly. I apologized and I meant it. The situation here demanded an apology.*

INSIGHT: Apologies make sense when you have caused harm, breached trust, or acted in a way that violated your own principles, regardless of intent. They are crucial for taking responsibility for mistakes, repairing relationships, and validating the recipient's feelings. Effective apologies focus on acknowledgment, remorse, and action to prevent future occurrences.

Specific times when apologies make sense:

- **You Have Inflicted Hurt or Pain:** Whether intentional or accidental, if your actions (*words, behavior, or omissions*) hurt someone else, a sincere apology is necessary to acknowledge their pain.
- **You Violated Expectations or Boundaries:** When you fail to keep a promise, breach a trust, or cross a personal boundary, an apology helps rebuild that trust.
- **You Acted Unfairly or Disrespectfully:** Judging someone too harshly, behaving rudely, or engaging in disrespectful behavior warrants an apology to restore mutual respect.
- **You Made a Mistake** (*Regardless of Intent*): Even if you did not mean to cause harm, taking ownership of the outcome shows maturity and empathy.
- **To Acknowledge Your Part in a Conflict:** In a dispute where both parties are at fault, apologizing for your specific contribution can de-escalate the situation and open the door to resolution.
- **To Offer Support** (*Sympathetic Apology*): You might say "I'm sorry" to express sympathy for someone's misfortune or hardship, even if you did not cause it, to share the emotional burden.
- **When You Realize You Were Wrong:** The best time to apologize is immediately upon recognizing your error, rather than waiting for the guilt to pass.

Components of a Meaningful Apology:

- **Take Responsibility:** Use "I" statements, like "I was wrong" or "I made a mistake".
- **Acknowledge the Impact:** Clearly state that you understand what you did and how it affected the other person.
- **Show Remorse:** Sincerely say you are sorry without using "but" to justify your actions.
- **Offer Restitution or Future Action:** Explain how you will fix the problem and prevent it from happening again.

When NOT to Apologize:

- To manipulate or control someone's emotions (*e.g., to silence them or get out of trouble*).
- When you have not actually done anything wrong and are just trying to appease someone else's unreasonable anger.
- When the apology is insincere and you intend to repeat the same behavior.

James 4:6 NIV

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

CONSIDER THIS:

- Love does not dishonor others.
- Love does not create *regret* in others.
- Do not be someone else's *regret story*!
- 1 Corinthians 13:11 NIV
- ***When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.***
- Dismiss *fairy tale* ideas and expectations (*e.g., live happily ever after.*)
- There are no perfect people. Everyone has flaws.
- We have to make *grown-up decisions* about our behavior!
- Pray in the stillness of your day or night.
- Pray: ***Help me, Lord, to become the person I'm supposed to be!***
- Psalm 147:3 NIV
- ***He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.***

Are we among the walking wounded? Perhaps. Have we lost trust? Have we sought peace but only received trauma in return? There is an answer. If there's one thing to remember from today's message it's this: ***JESUS FORGIVES AND RESTORES YOU TO BECOME THE PERSON YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE!*** Let us then pray for your healing. Pastor Paul was on fire, aglow with the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, God, for this day! Lord, you walk among us and you love us. Help us to be the people you have called us to be. Surrender our hearts to You. We say YES! to You. Yes, Jesus! Come into my life! My heart! Give us clarity, especially as we reject culture's lies which crowd into our lives. Send

your Holy Spirit upon us, we pray. We pray for all those abused, maligned and broken. Lord, heal us. We choose Your healing. Our hearts are open to You, only You. We choose You. Save us.

With this, today's profound prayer segued into a confirmation of hope which underscored our shared mission in life, while God inhabited our praise, as He placed an amazing joy in our hearts, something which would propel each of us not only into the new day, but into the unfolding of the rest of life itself, offering us a brand new chapter, a wondrous God-given opportunity to forgive, to love, to abandon culture's lies, to build Godly character to His glory, to become the *right* person according to God's leading, to direct that heart-felt apology to anyone we have offended, yes, when all was said and done today, to become that person God created us to be. Hallelujah!

This is my desire
To honor You
Lord, with all my heart
I worship You
All I have within me
I give You praise
All that I adore

Is in You

Lord, I give You my heart
I give You my soul
I live for you alone
And every breath that I take
Every moment I'm awake
Lord, have Your ways in me

Lord, I give You my heart
I give You my soul
I live for you alone
And every breath that I take
Every moment I'm awake
Lord, have Your ways in me

Lord, I give You my heart
I give You my soul
I live for you alone
And every breath that I take
Every moment I'm awake

Lord, have Your ways in me

