
KNOW AND GROW IN CHRIST

GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

Luke 14 and 15

We have been looking at four aspects of your relationship with Christ: **Gather, Connect, Serve, and Grow** – four commitments needed by every single Christian. We gather here on Sunday morning to worship the Lord. As we sing, truth is internalized. It shapes our hearts. It's very important for you not to just observe or listen, but to engage and sing and express worship to the Lord. The word of God is taught. Faith rises up. We are strengthened. We are empowered through the public, personal, pastoral declaration of the word of God. It's not just a teaching in general. It is your pastor, your elders caring for your soul as we grow together in relationship. That's **Gather**.

Connect – We connect relationally in meaningful ways, building community, helping one another to understand and apply the truth of God. There is something that happens. You will hear a message now, but if you take time to speak about that message with your family and with other Christians and work to apply it (I'll give you an example of that in today's message), you will experience deeper and greater growth in Jesus Christ.

Gather, Connect, **Serve** --- This is a spiritual principle. You cannot have spiritual health unless you turn outward to give away everything that God blesses you with. I know that that language scares us, but to hoard God's blessing brings spiritual disease and sickness. When you understand that God will not run out, he has enough, you begin to freely share what God has given you.

And then **Grow**. By "grow" we are emphasizing here your personal walk with God, your relationship with God that centers around prayer and personal meditation and the study of God's word. Your pastors want to encourage you and strengthen you in those four commitments as you grow in Christ.

Now, part of that includes you discipling others. You might say, "I don't know how to do that!" Well, you're in the right church, because that's part of what the model is about. You bring others into these four commitments of Gather, Connect, Serve, and Grow and you help them to make those four commitments. You walk with them through those commitments.

Alright, let's look at the scripture, verses 1-6 of Luke Chapter 14.

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent. Then he took him and

healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” And they could not reply to these things.

There is a healing that takes place on a Sabbath and an interchange between Jesus and the religious leaders. The healing takes place at a meal, at a home of one of the religious leaders, and what will follow in the verses will be three speeches that Jesus gives. He gives them to the whole group and to the host, to different people you will see as we go through more of the chapter.

By way of introduction and prelude, let me remind you that last week we talked about the ABC’s of Connecting. **Let me remind you that community, relationship, connecting involves: A) a shared life, B) the bible – understanding and applying the bible, and C) caring for one another.** What we are trying to capture here with these ABC’s are just the basics, the fundamentals of what community in Jesus Christ looks like.

I told you I was going to give you an example of how we work to apply this in relationship. On the way to lunch last Sunday after the sermon, I had two of my boys here. I have five sons. There’s no way that you could know which two they were unless you know that two are in Texas and one is in DC and two are left here. But two were with me and we had this conversation. We said, “Okay, the ABC’s of relationship, of connecting: Where do you think you are strong? Where do you think you are weak? Then we’ll tell one another where we think we are strong and weak.”

So we went through it. Do you readily share your life? Or, are you a workaholic? Are you always preoccupied with what you need to do, so that you don’t want to take the time to open your life to other people and learn about other people and all that’s involved in that? Or is your area of need more obvious in deliberately talking about Christ and the good news of Christ and the things of scripture?” If you, for example, are a reluctant communicator, it might be that much more difficult for you to communicate about spiritual things, because that can seem invasive. Or is it C? You don’t mind, or you enjoy the relational aspect and sharing life and learning about others. You are capable of sharing Christ, but you tend to be selfish in relationship. The whole prospect of extending yourself without expectations of bringing back to yourself, caring for others – this is the area of your greatest need? Or maybe there’s an option D: All of the above. That was supposed to be funny. I’m struggling in all three, which is possible. Maybe if I just say it enough times people will start laughing at my attempt at humor.

The ABC’s -- now, here’s the challenge with that message. You could seek to apply these three things and really miss the heart of community and relationship found in Christ, because we moved rather quickly through the second one: Understanding and applying the bible. What does it look like to have Christ-centered relationships? How does Christ change the way you relate to other people? How does Christ change your marriage? How does Christ change your family relationships? How does he change your friendships? And how do you experience Christ through those relationships?

There was an incident that happened just a few weeks ago. This is a true story. It just happened in Kansas City. A man went in, robbed a bank, took \$3000, went out into the lobby, and sat down. The guard found this man sitting there and he goes, “Hey, I’m the guy you’re looking for.” The guard was perplexed and called the police. The police showed up and said, “What are you doing?” This is a true story. He said, “I would rather go to jail than go home to my spouse.” That’s bad, isn’t it? That’s a bad marriage. You’re just like, “I don’t want to meet her. I don’t know. I just don’t want to meet her at all.”

You know, when relationships go bad, it can be so painful. We laugh about it. All of us to some degree know that the things and the people that we treasure the most can bring us great pain. I think the challenge of this emphasis for us is that I can stand here and talk about community and relationship, but when that gets tested, it’s difficult. It’s difficult and we are really tempted to run. It’s more difficult to run from family, though we do it, and it’s more difficult to run from certain relationships that are connected in other ways, but it’s Christ that keeps us from running here and connects us.

So today we are going to look at the heart of that. When we look at the ABC’s (this is all still introduction), we say, “Okay, I’m sharing life. We are applying the scripture. We are caring for one another. But with whom do I do this? Who do I do this with?” That’s an important question, because just look at a few of the scriptural references that unpack what caring for one another looks like. Listen to these “one another” passages. I’m just going to read through a list. I’ll put them up for you.

- *Be at peace with one another. Mark 9:50*
- *Be devoted to one another. Romans 12:10*
- *Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10*
- *Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12:16*
- *Love one another. Romans 13:8*
- *Welcome one another. Romans 15:7*
- *Wait for one another when you come together to eat. 1 Corinthians 11:33*
- *Care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25*
- *Comfort one another. 1 Corinthians 16:20*
- *Be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:32*

- *Submit to one another. Ephesians 5:21*
- *Admonish one another. Colossians 3:16*
- *Serve one another. Galatians 5:13*
- *Bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:2*
- *Do good to one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:15*
- *Encourage one another daily. Hebrews 3:13*
- *Stir up one another. Hebrews 10:24*
- *Confess your sins to one another. James 4:16*
- *Show hospitality to one another. 1 Peter 4:9*

That is an exhausting list, isn't it? You are tired just hearing it. You are a little bit like the man who when Jesus said, "Love your neighbor and you'll have eternal life," – remember his question? "Who is my neighbor? I'd like to narrow the field." Right? He is saying, "Who do I have to do this with?" This is really sacrificial, demanding stuff.

It's impossible on the surface to do, extremely demanding and difficult, especially when we put it into the context of how difficult relationships can be, it's a non-negotiable. Just look at John 13:34-35. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." Jesus is redefining the love commandment according to the standard of how he has loved us. He is not watering it down. He is taking it up to an extreme level. Then this amazing statement: **"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." This is the mark that identifies you as a Jesus-follower.** If you know Jesus and he comes in and cleanses you of your sin and you are following him, this is what people will really see that distinguishes you as his follower.

We started with the ABC's. I am saying to you, "Okay, let's stop for a minute and think about who we have these relationships with. Who do we love in this way, and where does the strength come from to do something that's so impossible?" That's the value of this section of scripture.

If I could, let me just teach this passage to you for a minute – that is, give you the overall context. If you go back to Chapter 13, verse 22, this is where this section of the gospel of Luke begins. It continues to the end of Chapter 15, so it's about two and a half chapters. Do you see it? It answers one question; t's a really important question. Do you want to

know what it is? Who gets in? Who gets in to heaven? Who gets in to the kingdom of God? The entire two and a half chapters dwell on the answer to that question. And in a phrase, the answer is not who you think.

Look at verse 22 of Chapter 13: “He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” This is how the question is posed to Jesus, and Jesus will mold that question, really, into a theme: Who gets saved?

Now, if Jesus is asked the question, “Lord, is it only a few people that get saved?” how do you want him to answer that? “Oh no, no – everyone gets saved.” That’s the answer you’re hoping for. Here is Jesus’ answer: “And he said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’” Oh, I didn’t want that answer. Really, that’s a disturbing answer. That is not an answer that puts you at peace. That is not the answer you share at a funeral, right? You want to console. You want to give comfort. **Jesus is not comforting you in this minute. He is agitating your soul. He is disturbing you out of a false comfort to call you to really examine, “Am I going to get in? Am I in?”**

Then what happens in these two chapters is just amazing. Jesus goes to the house of the Pharisees. This is a big dinner. He heals a man and he gives these speeches. This is what happens. The Pharisees provide a contrast. There are individuals who are pretty sure they are getting in and Jesus turns all that upside down -- really disturbing.

Here’s the value for us in today’s study. This passage does something very unique. Jesus describes the way he changes your relationships. Today, if I don’t run out of time, I’m going to give you four principles of how we relate to one another. Instead of just coming to the religious leaders of the day and saying to them, “You know what? You’re just self-righteous. You’re pompous. You’re full of yourselves. You think you’re better, but you’re full of poison.”

He does say things like that in Matthew 23 and other places, but instead of just pronouncing condemnation, he describes what relationships look like in his kingdom, and they fall under condemnation because their relationships don’t look anything like that. Are you with me? **Here’s the value of this passage. It’s very unique in that it shows you that the power comes from Jesus. By asking the question, “How do I get in?” and answering that correctly, your relationships will be transformed. But if you don’t understand the connection between how you get in and relationships, you will never really get the relational aspect.** Did you track with that?

So how do you get in? Let’s just answer that for a second. The clear message of scripture is you come to understand that you can’t get in. It’s impossible to get in. Your sin keeps you out. You are under the judgment of God and you deserve that judgment. You have no hope of helping yourself. This judgment is not in any way unkind or unjust or

unfair, but deserved. And in his complete mercy, God gives Christ to pay the debt that you owe and gives you salvation as a gift. You freely enter when you realize “I’m in desperate need and I can’t help myself and that’s how I enter in.”

The knowledge of that, the heart knowledge of it will transform the way you relate to other people. Are you with me? It’s good, isn’t it? You are already feeling the impact. It will transform your marriage. It will transform your relationships, your friendships.

Principle #1 is found in verses 1-6.

I. Treat every person as a child of God.

Aren’t you astounded by the Pharisees? We are told that there are Pharisees and lawyers present. Okay, no lawyer jokes -- not lawyers as we think about lawyers, but experts in the Torah, in the Old Testament law. They are present when a man comes with dropsy. Some people think that the Pharisees sent him -- like they set Jesus up -- which is amazing. It’s like: “Okay, we know Jesus. He can’t help himself. He’ll heal this man.” That’s wicked on a whole new level, isn’t it? “Let’s just set him up. I know he’ll do something good here and we’ll have him!”

I don’t know if that’s actually the case, but Jesus anticipates their judgment and says, “Let me ask you a question: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” They remain silent. Jesus heals the man with what we would probably call edema – some kind of disease of that nature. The man is healed. Jesus sends him away then gives this principle in verse 5: “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” Jesus is saying to them: “You treat this man with less dignity and respect than you treat your animals.”

This is a *scathing* rebuke. But you pass over the son part. “Which of you, if you have a son or an ox...” What’s fascinating is what’s at the end of Luke 15 at the end of this section. It’s the parable of the lost son. The ox really makes the point better, right? The truth is that if you have a farm animal in peril you will help him because you financially esteem that animal and its value, but you are not getting anything from this man so you act like you couldn’t care less. But this magnificent teaching will circle back around to this powerful story of the lost son and a father who weeps for his son, and rejoices when he returns. That’s what we are called on to see here.

Here is a simple, foundational doctrine: Every person is made in the image of God and we treat them with respect.

This is why we are pro-life in all of its applications and ramifications.

I’ve told you this before, but it seems to help people so I’ll tell you again quickly. I was in another place with a man who was a leader in a church. He was not a part of this church. He had an adult daughter and his wife was feeling that he was very negative with his daughter. I challenged him to begin to affirm that daughter -- that affirmation opens the heart, as a

principle. He very genuinely said, “You know, I just can’t find anything to affirm here. She doesn’t love the Lord. I don’t even know if she’s a Christian. She is running from the things of God.” And I said, “Wait, wait, wait. She is made in the image of God.” He told me more than once how that simple truth opened his eyes to how his own self-righteous attitude was creating a massive separation with his daughter.

We will do this if we’re not careful. We will pick and choose who we will like and who we will respect. It might have to do with something as superficial as money or skin color or race, or it might be something deeper and less obvious. Every person is made in the image of God. Okay? That’s principle #1. Amen?

I’m going to call your attention to James 2:1: **“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” Before we move past this point: Only Jesus makes this possible.** No matter how much you try, you are going to have natural predispositions and inclinations. The glory of God in some people will be completely veiled to you. When you receive God’s mercy as a gift, you will find all of the ways that you divide and subtly and socially judge people will be washed away the more Jesus takes residence in your heart.

Okay, principle #2 is found in verses 7 through 11. I’m just going to phrase it like this:

II. Practice extreme social humility.

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Here is the kingdom principle in terms of how you get in: He who exalts himself will be humbled. He who humbles himself will be exalted. If you come to God and say, “God, you know, I’m okay. I’m alright. On the final Day of Judgment, things will go well with me. I’ve done enough good to outweigh the bad. I’ve got this.” Scripture says if you exalt yourself you will be humbled. But the person who sees and admits his or her need will in the end be exalted.

Jesus is doing something here when he observes their social interactions. Did you notice that? When he noticed how they chose the places of honor, he sees pride in it. He is rebuking that in a way that draws attention to the fact that they are on the outside of his kingdom. They haven’t been transformed by a relationship with him and by his generosity and

acceptance and grace. This really gets at the heart of the question of “How do I get in?” and how that then transforms the way I relate to other people.

That means I’m not so preoccupied with getting into the inner circle. Have you ever been to a church where people say, “Yeah, in that church they have cliques.” You’ve never heard that about here, I’m sure. It’s a way people express that you just can’t break in. You’re on the outside. You’re excluded and there is a concern over that. Really, if you are looking for a word that describes the sin of the Pharisee, you could say, “self-righteous” or “proud,” but relationally it’s “exclusive.” They are excluding other people.

Jesus is using common sense here. It’s really just common sense, isn’t it? If you go to a dinner where there’s a pecking order in terms of importance, don’t claim for yourself this high position then have your host demote you, because you are going to feel completely foolish. Jesus uses that as a teaching opportunity for something more than just common wisdom. **He is saying that this points to how you enter the kingdom of God, and how you then begin to interact socially with others. You begin seeing every other person made in the image of God, worthy of your value and full attention, and you are ready to share yourself with them in an appropriate way.**

Let me just say this before we move past this principle. Anytime you talk about relationships and love and unity, there is always the danger that someone will hear this and begin to think about how people should treat *them*. That’s really not the application we’re after this morning, right? This will not be helpful if you go to someone else after today’s message and say, “Listen, you need to practice extreme social humility. You need to accept me. I’m made in the image of God.” That in many ways is a violation of this second principle. It’s making it about you in a subversive kind of way, in a way where we reverse pride and turn it on its head. I act like I’m in need and I’m insecure, and I may be all of those things, but it’s still all about me. That’s not the way to apply this.

Let me just say this before I leave this second principle. Charles Colson was converted by reading [Mere Christianity](#). If you remember, Charles Colson was Richard Nixon’s hatchet man. That’s how he described himself. In the summer of 1973, right as things were beginning to unravel for Colson and for the White House and for Nixon, he went to a friend’s house. This friend was the CEO of a large corporation. He shared the gospel with Colson and told him, “Come and accept Christ.” Colson was tempted. He found it inviting, but he was suspicious.

So this man gave Colson a copy of [Mere Christianity](#), and he did something I find very fascinating. He didn’t tell him to start at the beginning of the book. At the beginning of the book you get an argument for God’s existence – a very powerful, common sense, everyday language kind of argument. If you haven’t read [Mere Christianity](#), I highly recommend it. But he told him to start on the chapter entitled, “The Great Sin,” which is on pride, and he actually read some of it to Colson. He said, “Listen, there is this sin that is in all of us, but we never repent of it. We never see it in

ourselves. In fact,” he said, “this is a sin that you will seldom hear anyone other than a Christian admit to. And the truth of the matter is the more we have this sin in us, the more we hate it in other people.” That’s such a good description of pride, isn’t it? We all have it. The more we have, the more we dislike it in other people, and we are completely blind to it. His observation is this: **Christ opens our eyes to this compulsion to exalt ourselves.**

Colson said there is a phrase where Lewis says, “As this sin takes hold of our hearts, it becomes impossible for us to love others, to share healthy relationships, or to even practice common sense.” I am paraphrasing. Colson said that in that moment he realized that described the White House. **Pride destroys community and relationship. Jesus destroys pride. And that transforms relationships. It frees us.**

Do you know when my wife and I thought, “Wow, our marriage is changing?” Would you like to know? That’s a strange question I’ve just asked you, but let me try to answer it. It’s that moment when you are arguing and the other person says, “You know, you’re right.” “Excuse me? Who are you? Where is my wife?” Or, “Where is my husband?” “No, you’re right. I do that all the time, don’t I?” We would tell you in our relationship that that only comes from the gospel, for us. Maybe we just found ourselves more prideful than all of you. (I don’t think so.) Maybe God just ordered the events of our lives so we delightfully brought it out in one another. But it’s revolutionary when you just all of a sudden realize that you’re free to say, “You know what? I’m wrong.”

Listen, we still fight once in a while. Now, we don’t really fight. We don’t fight at all. Forget I said that. I don’t want to give you this picture that we don’t have to work at our marriage or fight for our marriage. But I want to say unapologetically that Jesus Christ has transformed our relationship and we can only attribute that to him, declaring war on pride in each of us. And it’s a lifetime effort, especially in me.

Okay, I’m going to move on. I’m sorry, guys. I’m out of time and I’ve got to move quickly through these last two principles. I just want to give them to you, because this third one is really good.

III. Invite the marginalized.

In verses 12 to 14 Jesus looks to the man who invited him and says,

When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

I want to say to you that these three verses should inform the way you socially operate. If you get this and you connect it to how you get in, it will be such a blessing to you. Let me say this first. You don't take these to be literally true. If you are here and you're not a Christian, and before this service is over you become a Christian, I do not want you to go home, send an email or a letter to all of your family and friends: "Hey, you will never see me again. Jesus tells me that I'm not to invite you. You're not welcome in my house. Don't come unless you're lame, blind, or poor."

That's not the application Jesus is after here. It's hyperbole. It's a figure of speech. Jesus in a jarring way is delivering a very important truth. He does the same thing in verse 26 of this chapter where he says, "If anyone does not hate his father and mother and brother and sisters, he cannot be my disciple." It's not that in this one verse Jesus is undoing the rest of the bible. "Oh look, I don't have to keep the fifth commandment. I don't have to honor Mom and Dad. Jesus said, 'hate them.'"

No, first of all he is saying it's a message about priority. **Your love for God must dwarf every other affection and love.** So he says it in the most extreme way possible to teach that lesson in verse 26. **Here he is saying, "If you receive my gift of salvation, this gift that you don't deserve, this gift of abundance and mercy, it will transform the way you relate to other people, so that you no longer measure people by what you will get from them. You will measure what God is calling you to give."** It turns social relationship completely on its head. It's no longer, "Oh, I want to invite this person because they will invite me back and it'll be nice." No, it's not about that.

Let me, by way of quick application, just say this. We are encouraging you to connect. Scripture calls you to love one another. We are saying to share your life. Apply the bible. Care for one another. What I'm after in this message is your understanding it will be spiritual death if that becomes exclusive. Any time a home group says, "You know what, it's us and no one else..." I get it. Groups become full. There's a place where if they get any larger, they can't really function as a group. I understand there are dynamic problems, but I want to encourage everyone, it's just a spiritual principle: **Don't be exclusive. Open your life. Share it. Give away what God has given you.**

This is a challenge, because if you have been without fulfillment relationally, if you've been hurt in family or close relationships, and then in Christ you begin to experience something that's precious, you're going to be tempted to hoard that and guard it. But if you do you will kill it. There is more I could say there but I want to go to the fourth principle and just end with this.

IV. **Compel the lost to come in.**

In verses 15-24, Jesus has addressed the whole group, he has addressed his host, and now there is a guy at the table who says something. Verse 15: "When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to

him, 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom.'" This is the guy you don't like, right? The whole theme is who gets in -- how hard it is to get in in order for you to see it's impossible for me to get in, so that I will get in, because those who humble themselves will be exalted.

I see my need and that only Jesus ushers me into God's kingdom. That theme is moving throughout. Then there is some guy at the table assuming he'll be there. "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in your kingdom." He puts it in this flowery, religious language, right? Don't be that person -- like, "I've got this all figured out." Don't be the person who goes to the accountability group on humility and talks about how you used to be humble, but you've got it all figured out now.

So here's what Jesus does. He tells the man a parable. It goes like this:

A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. (Listen, stay with me because this truth brings together all the principles. It will take me two minutes, but it's important.) And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'

Three invitations go out. The first is to the expected guests. The man who is boasting would be in that group -- he would perceive himself to be. But they don't come. They have excuses. They don't come. The master is angry and sends his messenger out to get the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Now, in Jewish culture in that day, those represented the ones who were under the judgment of God. They are outcasts. They are the marginalized of society. And the servant says, "I've already done that!"

So then the master says, "Go out into the highways and the hedges. Go out where you find the homeless, out of the city, to the dangerous places where it's not even safe to go, and *make* them come in." Now, that's not telling us to violate people's wills to bring them in, but *compel* them. You have to compel them because they know, "I can't go there. I'm not invited. There's a mistake here!" Jesus is teaching us that this is everyone who enters into the kingdom of God. And

Know and Grow in Christ – Gospel Connections

Luke 14 and 15 | Sunday, February 5, 2017 | By Brian Brookins



when you see yourself as that person living on the side of the road out in the country, that's righteously where I'm at,
that's where my sin has placed me...