

12.14.25

Genesis

Chapter 17 - God's Commitment to More Commitment Means Now (vs. 22-27)

Genesis 17:22-27: When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him. Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son. All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

Well, with all the details of the medical exploits within the passage, I bet you missed the first verse. It's an amazing verse because it in some way demonstrates the presence of God, perhaps physically, with Abraham.

The way it reads is,

(Genesis 17:22) “When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.”

Wow. That would be amazing, wouldn't it? “Who were you visiting with today?” "God. We were talking. We were sort of sitting around.”

You see that in Genesis 3, at the very beginning, where God was walking in the garden. There was a kind of anthropomorphic revelation, God in the flesh of sorts. We call it Christophanies, that is to say Christ being revealed in the Old Testament. And it's hard to imagine exactly what was going on. In fact, there is quite a bit of ambiguity within the passage as we begin to see God's presence or God talking or God walking with.

You go a little bit further in Genesis 5 and you see that Enoch walked with God and then the Scripture says, "And he was not." He was taken up.

You go a little bit further in Genesis 6 and you have Noah and it says, "And Noah walked with God." And the phrase that is used is not simply in the sense of doing the things that God does with him; it was in the sense of a type of physicality or somebody in the presence of someone.

Even in Genesis 7, we have the Lord closing the door of the ark. It's an interesting picture. And then it goes on and says that the Lord talked with Noah and his sons. I wonder what that was like. Kind of a family gathering with the Lord and the different ones that were there.

What we're seeing within the passages as we go is that God desires to have a relationship, even when you consider Babylon itself. It says in Genesis 11 that God came down to see the city. I don't know exactly how that was revealed within the passage or in what form.

Hebrews 1 says that He spoke in many portions and in many ways. I don't know how He revealed Himself, but the relationship gets a little deeper as we go, especially as

we come to Abraham. Abraham begins to have this relationship with God. And I think one of the great draws of Abraham to us is that, as James will say in James 2, and actually he probably quotes the Book of Isaiah, "Abraham was a friend of God." You really don't see that. But this guy was His friend. And because of that, we're drawn to Abraham. We're going, "What in the world did you do to merit the name "friend"? What would cause God to call you friend?"

In John 8, many were saying that they were Abraham's children, and Jesus says, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the things of Abraham. You're not Abraham's children." They're going, "Well, what makes You the expert?" And as He closes that particular chapter, He says, "I was with Abraham. Abraham longed to see this day, and he saw it with Me." And they said, "You're not even 50 years old. You couldn't have known Abraham." And He said, "Abraham was, I AM." And so, He gives that interesting picture of actually walking and talking with Abraham in the Gospel of John. Who was that?

Well, the clarity still isn't there yet, but if you go into Genesis 12, you have that declaration in Genesis 12:7, “The LORD appeared...”

Now, he uses a word that is actually a visual. So, there is an appearance of sorts that is being conveyed within the passage.

Then if you look in Genesis 15:1, it reads,

“After these things the word of the LORD came...”

Interesting that it would speak of, “the word of the Lord came”. And there seems to be some kind of vision. How do we know that? Well, it says that.

“... the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision...”

The Word. That kind of brings us back to John 1, doesn't it? “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” So, the personification of such of the word of God within the passage.

And then it reads this way in verse 4,

(Genesis 15:4) “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him...”

But once again, there seems to be a feel here of a presence, that the word of God not just being spoken, but actually came to him. How do we know that?

Well, drop on down to verse 5,

(Genesis 15:5) “And He...”

That is the Word.

“... took him outside...”

Now, that's not just a calling outside, that's somebody taking you outside. And we begin to see, once again, this sense of relationship.

Then you come to Chapter 17, which we have been looking at, and it says in verse 1,

(Genesis 17:1) “Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty...””

Now, up to this point, I'm not really sure that Abram was fully convinced of who He was. But the declaration is, “I am El Shaddai. I am God Almighty.” And He begins to declare that.

Of course, in verse 3, because of this, Abram falls on his face. But this personal relationship that we begin to see that is fostered throughout the text, especially with Abram, and at this time, He renames him, He declares him, and He says, “And you and I are going to form a covenant, and this covenant is going to be between you and Me.” And then, of course, as we began reading, we understand that the covenant not only required God doing and promising certain things, but Abraham putting some skin in the game and being willing to suffer in the process.

If, in fact, you make a covenant with somebody, you make a promise with somebody, and there's always that picture of “*berith*,” the cutting, in which people would walk between a piece of meat that was cut or a sacrifice that was cut. And in the cutting, you would declare, “And may it be to me if I do not keep my promise.” And you would walk between the two, which was a part of the culture, really, of the Ur of the Chaldeans that God brings into the picture specifically with Abram because he was extremely familiar with that kind of promise. And God says, “This is

the promise I'm making. Now, I'm not going to renege on mine, but I want to see that you're all in." And so, He does this whole thing with circumcision. We're going, "Really? You can't do something a little bit less invasive?" And God says, "Nope. I want to know that you're all in." And I believe that in every believer, there's going to be something that God is going to call upon us to sacrifice. And there's going to be something in that sacrifice that is going to be beckoning you to do it at the risk of being shamed. The question is, is your relationship with God worth it? And so, fundamentally, what this whole thing is about is the covenant, the promise, and the relationship. And God is saying, "We're going into this thing, and we're not leaving each other, and this is going to be a forever thing." Because one of the words that's used consistently is "everlasting". It's an everlasting covenant. "You're going to have everlasting land." He needs to know that you're in this. And so, what brings about a relationship? Well, obviously, somebody can be kind and gracious and merciful to one person, but if the other person has no sense of relationship, has no sense of sacrifice, is not willing to suffer for the relationship, then where's the

relationship? It's just that sense of God's grace and His mercy upon us. And you see that clearly in the Garden of Eden. I mean, God blessed, He gave them all this stuff. They just have everything. But there was no depth of relationship towards God nor commitment towards God. There wasn't even a commitment towards his own wife, as Adam throws her under the bus when he's beginning to be accused or think that he might be accused of something. The reason for that is that there was no commitment. So, God is turning to Abram, and He says, "Now, I want you to make a commitment. And I want it to be real with you." And we'd like to think more in the ethereal, Greeks were philosophers, so they kind of brought in that whole kind of philosophical, theoretical thing. And it really has infiltrated in many respects, as Gnosticism has, the church, because there's this kind of thought that the relationship with God is all about this kind of meditation thing. And God says, "Nope, I want your body."

That's why Romans 12:1 says,

“... by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice...”

God is asking you to be willing to suffer. He'll tell His disciples, “Take up your cross and follow Me.” What do you think, that was just metaphorical? Every one of them died as a martyr, except perhaps John. And from what I understand, in his 90s, he was in a prison in a rock quarry breaking rocks as he has this great vision of Revelation. No, no, it's real. And God is wanting you to present your body as a living sacrifice. He's wanting you to be all in.

And so, the passage then begins to reveal just why Abram is a friend of God. Everybody wants to be a friend of God. I mean, “I want to walk and talk with Him. I want us to have a relationship.” And God goes, “I want to have a relationship with you too.” And you know, we know about the cross. We know His sacrifice for us. But the question is, like Jesus poses to Peter, “Do you love Me more than these?” And so, He calls upon us to make that sacrifice.

In another respect, this particular passage is about procrastination. Not about Abraham procrastinating, but about the antithesis of procrastination. And that would be

zeal, or we would use the word “alacrity,” which is this willingness to do what God tells us to do, a sense of joy to do what God tells us to do. There are many things that God might tell you to do that at first would maybe cause you to cringe a little bit. But what God is looking for is that willing spirit. God loves a cheerful giver. That's where we get the word “alacritous”. God loves a cheerful giver. God loves somebody that is desiring to do the things that he does for God. You know, somebody, hopefully a loved one, walks up to you, and says, “I love you. Do you love me?” and you respond, “Well, let me think about it,” then immediately you know that the fact that procrastination in that display of love might be a telltale sign of an unwillingness to make a commitment of sorts. When I think about procrastination, I think about the fact that if in fact a person is procrastinating, it's usually under-motivation. My uncle used to say, “People aren't lazy, they're just under-motivated.” And that is to say that they have no sense of purpose for doing something, or perhaps there may be a fear or perhaps they're overwhelmed by things. But even beyond that, what we know is that procrastination often comes as a result of passive-

aggressive behavior. Now, what that means is that because you're upset or because you don't want to do something, people oftentimes actually are consistently late to certain things. You might invite them, and this person is always late for the events that they come to. Well, that's a form, usually, of passive-aggressive behavior, a sense of control. You know, "They're not going to tell me what to do. I'm going to do what I'm going to do when I want to do it." And the sense of rebellion comes, as well as deliberate delays, or half-hearted effort. You know how they just don't give themselves all in something? Well, that would be passive aggressive behavior. "I don't want to do it, so I'm not going to do it." "Well, you have to do it." "Well, I'm not going to do it well." And we begin to see that.

What this passage does for us is that it demonstrates to us the opposite of procrastination. And I believe, in many respects, what God is declaring in this is, "These are the people that are My friends." And we're going to see that as we go. But if you look at the passage, there are a

number of things within the text that begin to reveal this to us.

It starts off in verse 23,

(Genesis 17:23) “Then Abraham took Ishmael...”

Now, God just got finished going up from him.

I think of that picture in Acts 1 where Christ then begins to go up in the sky. Of course, everybody's looking up in the sky, and the angels go, “What are you looking at? He's going to come back. Go do what He told you to do.” But the interesting picture of Him going up, now what do you do? Well, you do what He told you to do, right? “Well, yeah, but I’ve got to think about it.” Especially when you consider what He told him to do. And if you're not familiar with it, go back to the verses. But we're actually going to see that Abraham does exactly what God told him to do, right away.

The passage reads this way in verse 22,

(Genesis 17:22) “When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.”

(Genesis 17:23) Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house..."

Now, really, a few chapters back, that's like 318, and we're not even counting their kids. So, that's the men. Now, they have boys. So, I don't know. What are we looking at? Maybe 500, 700?

"Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money..."

What you're seeing is he's got to deal with those where he had a relationship with them; he has to deal with those that he had financial concerns with. I mean, he's putting some things in jeopardy here. I don't really see within the text Abraham kind of gathering everybody together, "Now, listen, guys, we're going to have a little meeting about this, and you choose what you want to do or whatever." He just starts doing it. And what's also interesting to me is not only does he take Ishmael, who is now 13, and the passage will say this, and Scripture is actually giving the age of the different ones for a reason.

“Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin...”

Watch the phrase here,

“... in the very same day...”

Now, from what I understand, as the passage goes on in verse 24,

(Genesis 17:24) “Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised...”

Now, as you back up in the passage, God says, “Okay, from now on, it's going to be the 8th day.” And of course, we talked about vitamin K and all that sort of stuff; that's the perfect time to do it. But 99 is not the perfect time. And they say that it's going to take at least two weeks to even be able to function. So, that's going to be a problem. And infection is going to be a real possibility. So, you have all these kinds of complications that are hovering over. You know how when God tells you to do something and you're thinking, “Yeah, but people are coughing in the

room.” You know how you think about those kinds of things? Okay, so that's what we're thinking about.

“Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

(Genesis 17:25) And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old...”

Now, we have maternal concerns. I can just see Hagar, “What are you doing with my son?” No explanation. He just does it. Now, I don't know how a 99-year-old who's recovering from something that same day works this process out with some 600, 700 people, but he's not stopping. Ishmael, his son, was 13. It didn't matter the relationship, it didn't matter money, it didn't matter. Nothing mattered except doing what God told him to do. And obviously, we're not dealing with issues of convenience here; we're not dealing with issues of comfort at all. There is nothing about this scene that is alluring.

You know, when you think of John 6, and Jesus brings His disciples, He says, “You have to eat My flesh and drink My blood.” They go, “This is not acceptable.” And in this

context, He is throwing up almost every non-acceptable thought that could enter your thoughts. We know that it was a big issue with Zipporah, that is to say, Moses' wife. And I don't know why Moses forgot to circumcise his son, but it was such an issue that God met him on the way. God met Moses on the way, and started taking his life. The text actually uses a word in which it conveys that Moses became deathly ill to the point where his wife had to do the issue rather than him. He almost died. Moses almost died. And God had just called him. I suppose that obedience is a pretty big thing to God. And it's a part of the promise. It's one of the reasons why in the Old Testament, if there was adultery in a relationship, it was a capital punishment. Because you made a promise. You made a covenant. And that covenant was a picture of Christ and the church, that it could never be broken.

“And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old...”

He has to deal with a wife.

(Genesis 17:26) “In the very same day...”

Isn't that the second time it's repeated?

“In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son.”

So, we know that all of this happened in one day.

(Genesis 17:27) “All the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.”

Humanly speaking, this is not going to make you “Mr. Popularity.” And humanly speaking, this is not going to be a good day for anybody. But not a question asked; not a hesitating moment in any of this.

Now, what's interesting to me is that God is testing the limits of Abraham's devotion to Him in a very tangible way. I mean, you willingly inflict pain on somebody, that causes a rift. And you inflict pain on somebody's kid, that causes a rift. Why would God do that? You see, Abraham has one major flaw. I'm sure he has a lot of them, but one major one. And that is, he's very concerned about being liked. He's concerned about Lot. When God told him, you've all read it with me, in Genesis 12, “What I want you to do is I want you to leave Ur and I want you to leave your relatives.” I mean, we got the message, right? “Leave

your relatives.” And he took Lot. What that's telling me is, “I'm working on it.” Now, we know shortly after that it happened that they began to squabble about land issues and they were separated. Then after they separated, if you remember, God met Abraham after that. But there was kind of a hole in the relationship between Abraham and God until that began to happen. And Abraham becomes concerned about what his wife's thinking about. So, he acquiesces to the things that she says. And there are all kinds of concerns that we see, even his willingness to put all his people at risk to go rescue Lot at a time in which God didn't necessarily say that he needed to do that. When God said, “I want you to trust in Me,” and then you go down to Egypt and you try to work things out in your own power, that's you working on it, isn't it? So, you couldn't really say at the early stages that Abraham was rebellious. He was just slow. He was working on it. How are we going to separate? We don't want to make this tear too quickly. This passage just changes everything. It's almost like at the moment that he hears God say, “I am El Shaddai.” And he falls on his face. He goes, “I realize who You are. Whatever You tell me to do, I'll do now.”

And he does. I mean, it's a magnificent text. And you realize that as you go through, especially the Old Testament, you see the different individuals that you have. You have Eve. I mean, we all have certain things that God's going to call upon us to give up. For Eve it was appetite. It was something gorgeous, pretty, the visual alone, but she saw that it was good to eat and she longed for it. And for Abel, perhaps it was being willing to be hated by your brother. Because in order for him to bring a better sacrifice, there had to be a show that would be offensive to Cain, especially if he was lackadaisical in the things that he was bringing before God. He knew in some way that he was putting that relationship in jeopardy by virtue of giving a better sacrifice than Cain did. It was going to cost him his life, but his devotion to God was far greater than that. And with Noah, perhaps it was just peer pressure. I mean, think about it. You're the only one on the planet that's doing the right thing. And you're doing it in front of everybody to be seen. And I'm sure you're being mocked. I know, for some people, the whole peer pressure thing, they've got to surrender that, but that's probably the hardest thing that they'll ever have to tear

away from them, because it's part of their flesh that they've held on to and they've said, "This is more important to me than anything."

I mean, when you think of Jacob, I think of control. I mean, the very fact that his name means "supplanter." How many control freaks are there out there? You know, "I've got to be in charge of this. I've got to..." So, he goes into a whole manipulation thing, and God goes, "Okay, we'll take care of the manipulation thing." I would say that one year with Laban would be enough to take care of the manipulation thing with me, but it was quite a bit longer than that.

You have Joseph, and wasn't he the favorite kid? Wasn't he the kid that was given everything? So, of course, you have a sense of acceptance and perhaps elevation.

I've oftentimes reflected upon Jeremiah. And there's no doubt, as you begin to read that wonderful prophetic book, one, he's young at the very beginning of the book. Two, he's a part of a family that are priests, and he's got to go and correct them. And then he's going to be hated by the people that are looked up to the most. And his

whole family's going to be against him, and they're going to nail him to the door. And he's going to wish that he'd never been born. But God will bring him through it. But can you imagine the pain? I mean, there's nothing about the pain and the shame of going through something like that is alluring in the least. When James and John say, "I want to sit on the right and one on the left," Jesus goes, "You have no idea what you're asking for. Because in order to display the kind of love that I'm about to display to you, there's going to have to be a sacrifice."

Moses is going to have to sacrifice a tremendous amount. I mean, especially, and you wouldn't think of this to be a sacrifice, but just the whole sense of feelings of inadequacy. Have you ever sensed that God was calling you to do something, and you go, "That's just not me. I'm just not, it's not going to happen." And God says, "I want you to surrender that today. Put that behind you." Moses said, "I can't speak. I can't talk. I'm not the guy." You know, much like Jeremiah says, and God says, "You're going to surrender those inadequacies today." I mean, Paul will even say, "Who's adequate for the stuff that God

has called us to do?" But God is going to call you to surrender that.

And a person like David is going to have to surrender his dreams and aspirations. That's a biggie with a lot of people. "I've got plans." Oh, good. Us older folks know that all those plans don't always go just the way we think they are going to. And you can be miserable and bitter about the way that the plans unfold, or you can realize that that's the sovereign hand of God protecting you from certain things and calling you into things that you would never have dreamed, but God is doing something better. But you've got to surrender those things, and that hurts. It hurts to give up things like this. I mean, can you imagine Esther giving up her position and perhaps her life in one day? God doesn't always call upon you to do it in the sense of it coming to fruition, but God will ask you to be willing. And I don't know if many of us are at the point to where there's that willing aspect. God loves a cheerful giver. Well, once again, what that's talking about is not only somebody that is happy to give, but somebody that is doing it quickly. It's that whole quick thing, that whole

fast thing, that whole immediate, that whole phrase, “the same day,” that really sets this passage apart. And when God says, “I'm looking for people that have a relationship with Me,” He's saying, “I'm looking for you to be all in this.”

Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians 9:24,

“Do you not know that those who run in a race...”

Why would he call it a race? Why would he say “run”?

“... those who run in a race all run...”

In other words, if you're running a race, guess what?

Everybody in the race is running. Well, that makes sense, doesn't it?

“... but only one receives the prize? ...”

What is he talking about? One guy just has a stronger desire to win. I mean, he's going to push everything into it. I mean, no true runner gets in the race, and goes, “I hope I can be in 9th place today.” I mean, if he's a true runner, he wants that first place.

That's why he goes on, and says,

“... Run in such a way that you may win.”

In other words, if you're going to run, run to win. Don't run to sashay. We don't need ballerinas out there. We need a racer.

And he goes on and says this in verse 25,

(1 Corinthians 9:25) “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control...”

Self-control. That's one of those things that kind of hurt. Ouch. Self-control. And not only does it hurt, but it's you depriving yourself of something. And in some cases, people may even laugh at what you're doing. You may be the only one that people are making fun of. Everybody else is having a good time, but you're not. Jeremiah will say, “I did not sit with merry makers.” “Jeremiah, why aren't you sitting with him?” “Because I have an obligation, I have a plan, I have something that I want to do that's greater than what they're doing today.” And it's greater than immediate gratification.

Paul states this in 1 Corinthians 9:27,

“but I discipline (beat) my body...”

Sometimes it's translated "to buffet" your body, but it's the Greek word that makes reference to subduing the body of its passions for the specific purpose of pushing it to the limit. "Wow. I'm doing all I can to push my body to the limit." You go, "Well, Paul, that's not good for your health." He goes, "The purpose of my body is not that I might live healthy." See, so many people live in such a way that they think that the whole purpose is to live long and be healthy. That's not your goal. Your goal is to use your body as a sacrifice to God. And that might mean getting your body stoned. It might mean getting it shipwrecked and being in the water night and day. It might mean that you're getting it beat by somebody.

I remember our youngest, we noticed that he was taller than most as he was growing. And I looked at him, I said, "The Lord has made you big for a reason. He's made you big to protect people. You think of others. You help others. That's why He's made you big." We think in terms of ourselves and our selfish desires. But God says, "This is your body. You present your body a living sacrifice."

Therefore, 1 Corinthians 6:20,

“... therefore glorify God in your body.”

He will actually state that. What we're dealing with is a relationship with God. So, how do you get close to God? Abraham, Scripture says, was a friend of God. He's a friend.

Jesus will say to the disciples in John 15, “No longer do I call you servants, I'm calling you friends now.” Do you remember the rest of the passage? “A friend will keep My commandments.” Well, so You're asking me to be a friend to You, too?” “Oh, yes, it's about a relationship.” So when He goes on, He says, “And this is My commandment. This is the commandment, that you love one another.” Have you ever had a day in which you knew that another believer, well, just plain irritated you or bothered you, said something that was offensive to you? Do you know that you actually don't have the option to not like them? You have a commandment given to you. You say, “Well, I just don't feel like today.” God goes, “Well, buffet your body, because today you're going to feel like loving your brother.” “I don't know if I want to do that.” “I thought you wanted to be My friend.” You hear God saying that?

God will reveal Himself to those that will walk in obedience with Him. God has saved you by the grace of His Son. You don't earn your salvation. He's going to do His part regardless of whether you do yours or not. But you want a relationship with God? You're going to have to be His friend. And you're going to have to put some skin in the game. And it's going to be hard. It's going to be difficult. You're going to have shameful moments in which you're embarrassed about the things that you're doing. You're going to be called to do things that are inconvenient and clearly not pleasurable. I mean, if in fact you were thinking in terms of timing, this is not the time to do it. But God's going to say, "You're going to be My friend? Then none of those things will get in the way of you doing what I tell you to do."

Now, here's the caveat in all this. And I think probably, to me, one of the greatest things about the passage is that this passage is directly followed by Chapter 18. Now, you might say, "Well that's not a miracle; 17, 18, that just comes right there."

But the miracle of the chapter following is this,

(Genesis 18:1) “Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre...”

It will be in this chapter. See, up to this point, God appeared to him, God talked to him, God walked with him; up to this point, there's some ambiguity in what happened. Was it a vision? In this text, He's a man. And he's taken on a human form to such a degree that Abraham doesn't even recognize him as God. He's just one of three men. And he'll start talking to Him. And as he begins to talk to Him, he'll begin to realize that He's more than just a man. And he'll begin to ask Him, intercessory prayer, “If there are just 50 in Sodom and Gomorrah, will you spare it? 45? 40? 30?” He'll go on. He'll have this and he'll realize that this is an agent of God. Now, all the while, he addresses Him as “Lord,” which is a title of respect. But every time you see the man respond to Abraham, His name will be “LORD,” which always, always is “Yahweh”. It'll literally be God in the flesh, visiting him, talking to him, and doing that which meant the very most to Abraham, and that was sparing his loved one.

Do you want a friend? Then when God tells you to do something, do it now. Don't say you're thinking about it. You start thinking about it and you do it later on, you know what you're proving? You're no friend. I mean, yeah, you did it. I get it. You did it. But you're not a friend. A friend to God is somebody that doesn't delay in the things that they do for Him. "Do you love Me?" "Let me think about it." You don't say that. Immediately, you say, "Yes, I love You." And it's in that act that you bind with God. There are going to be difficult things He's going to ask you to do.

I was thinking about 2 Corinthians 6:14. It says, "Don't be bound together with unbelievers." "I'm thinking about it." What does it say? "Forgive one another." "I'm thinking about it." I talked to somebody a while back. I said, "You know what your problem is? You need to forgive that person." "I'm just not there yet." You know what I heard? "I don't want a relationship with God." That's what I heard.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and for the truth of Your word. Lord, we have a strange way of defining relationships, but You have a better way. And we realize that a true relationship doesn't hesitate, but it's immediate because it's what's on our hearts. With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you to be a friend of God.