

# Our Solution Pictured: The Law

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 22 February 2015

Preacher: Chris Thornton

[ 0 : 00 ] It's only a lot. I've eaten more than my fair share of turnip cake and chestnut cake and everything else, enough to cause a heart attack.

So I hope you guys have also had a great New Year. And I like New Year because if you've broken your New Year's resolutions from the first New Year, you've now got another chance.

So it's good. But we've been going through a series in God's story, Our Story. And we're coming to the point where we're going to look at the law.

Now, when I was younger, my parents used to give me, well, they thought Sunday was a special day. And they wanted to be different from other days.

And so what they did, they made a rule that on Sundays, you are not allowed to watch television. And so the problem with this rule was that all the best televised football games were on Sunday.

[ 1 : 04 ] And this caused some kind of crisis in conscience for me because sometimes in the evenings, my parents would go out and I would be left at home and there would be an amazing game on TV.

And at that point, obedience didn't seem particularly attractive. So what I would do was I would draw the curtains and I would turn on the TV, turn the sound down.

And every few minutes, whenever I heard a car coming past, I'd kind of quickly look out of the curtains just to see that my parents weren't there. This went on for year after year. And I'm hoping my parents don't listen to this because I haven't even confessed to this day.

So please, if you ever meet them, don't tell them about this. But I thought that obedience for me was a meaningless way to spoil my fun.

Because football seemed far more attractive than obeying my parents. And I think that many of us can see obedience a bit like I did with my parents.

[ 2 : 12 ] You know, it's a way to spoil my fun. After all, even if I disobey, God will forgive me. So it's okay, isn't it, to just disobey a little bit. You know, it's not that bad. Otherwise, we might sometimes think about obedience or religion in an opposite way.

If I do keep the rules, if I do obey my parents, then they'll be pleased with me. And maybe they won't come and punish me. I'll avoid the consequences.

And God becomes a bit like a parent who's always looking over your shoulder, ready to sneak up on you, just when you're not expecting, catching you in the act. And then they're going to come down hard on you.

Those are two ways, I think, we often think about obedience. But we're going to look at how the Bible deals with it. And we're going to see the Bible deals with obedience in a very different way from both of those two ways.

So let's kind of recap some of the story we've been looking at so far. And on your bulletin, you'll also see there's some little icons at the bottom. Those are just reminders for you of where we've gone to in the story.

- [ 3 : 15 ] So the recap is, if you look at the first icon, you see that God is the king over all of creation. And he makes this incredibly beautiful world and a garden which he places humans in where they're to satisfy every longing, every desire.
- And the thing that they need to do is just trust God, obey his word, and everything goes well with them. And God gives them a command to go out and to fill the world and multiply.
- Then what happens is people decide, actually, we don't really want to obey you, God. Actually, it looks more attractive to kind of make ourselves the one who decide what we're going to do.
- So we're going to disobey. We're going to decide that we're going to run our world the way we want to run it. We're going to center life around ourselves. And the problem is, things begin to break apart.
- The relationship with God breaks apart. The relationship with each other breaks apart. People, shame comes in. Fear comes in. Hatred comes in. Murder comes in. Arrogance, where people start trying to make themselves great, comes in.
- [ 4 : 29 ] And it's devastating. They're no longer concerned about looking outward. They're only concerned about making themselves secure and looking inward on themselves. And just as you get to the point of the Tower of Babel, where people are trying to make themselves great, everything seems to be right at rock bottom.
- Then God comes along, and he makes a promise to a man called Abraham, and he says, I will make you great. I'm going to promise you three things. Three amazing things.
- I'm going to give you a land. I'm going to give you a people. I'm going to give you a blessing, which is going to go out to the whole of the world. Because I'm going to recreate what your original purpose as human beings was.
- And you're going to be my people. And we saw last week how God had begun this process of multiplying these people in Egypt. They were in slavery.
- And God brought them out and saved them through sacrifice, through the blood of a lamb on the doorposts.
- [ 5 : 34 ] And he brought them out, and he took them through to a mountain. And that's where we come today, to a mountain to give his law to people.
- And we're going to think about this idea of law in just three stages, really. A distinctive relationship. A distinctive people. A distinctive savior.
- Okay? Distinctive relationship. Distinctive people. Distinctive savior. So let's think about distinctive relationship. When God brings his people out of Egypt, he brings them to this mountain.
- And what he's doing, he's bringing them into a kind of marriage ceremony. It's what's called a covenant. It's a formal relationship between two parties, two people of commitment and responsibility.
- This whole thing that we're reading is like a big marriage that God is doing. And if you notice what God says, first of all. He says, and you can look in chapter, verse 4.
- [ 6 : 36 ] You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. How I bore you on eagles' wings. And I brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession.
- You will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now, did you notice what God said? What's the first thing he says? Does he say, okay, now you've got to obey me?
- Okay? Is that the first thing he says? He says, if you've met my standard, if you've lived well enough, then maybe we can kind of work out some kind of relationship here. He doesn't say that.

The first thing he says is, you've seen how I rescued you. You've seen how I've saved you. You've seen how I swooped down like an eagle, and I came and I rescued you.

You were slaves. You were suffering. I heard your cry. I snatched you out. I brought you to safety. It's a bit like if you've seen The Hobbit.

[ 7 : 41 ] There's a point in The Hobbit where hobbits are basically cornered into an area. They're chased by orcs, these monsters who are running after them, and they're right on the edge of a cliff.

There's no way out. They're backed in. They're helpless. They're powerless. They're just about to be struck down dead when suddenly these eagles swoop in, snatch them out of danger, catch them up, and carry them off to safety.

That's what God is saying he's doing here. He has swooped down, taken them away from danger. He has come, and he says, I am a mother eagle who sees my sons, who sees my children.

I've swept down. I've carried you to myself. Notice where he was carrying them? He wasn't just carrying them to drop them off somewhere to kind of make it by themselves.

He's carrying them to himself, to relationship with him. You see, he takes the initiative. God takes it.

[ 8 : 44 ] You know, do you see? It says he carried them. They didn't walk out. They didn't say, okay, God, we'll walk out. We'll meet you on the other side. They didn't do anything. They didn't run. God carried them.

They contributed nothing to their salvation. And from that point, then God says, now obey me. Now obey me.

In response to what I have done for you, now obey me. Because the law was never meant to be given so that you could actually get right with God.

It was never meant to save you when God gave his law. That's not its purpose, because it can't. The purpose is God saves you by his grace, so you respond in obedience to his law.

Think about it. What's the beginning of the Ten Commandments? What's the beginning of the Ten Commandments? Anyone? No one wants to get it wrong.

[ 9 : 48 ] Anyone? Anyone? No. Alfie says, no other gods. No. None of you wanted to look stupid, did you?

No. The beginning of the Ten Commandments is, he says, I am the Lord your God, who redeemed and rescued you out of Egypt, out of slavery. That's the beginning of the Ten Commandments.

Look what I've done for you. Now here's what you're to do. We get that so wrong. We think God says, here's the commandments, now obey me. He doesn't.

He says, I save you first. The commandments and the law is so that you can be free. It's not, I've taken you out of slavery, I don't want you to be left in slavery. I want you to be free in relationship with me.

So obedience to God is always a response. And you know with a response, in relationship, good relationships need to be reciprocated.

[ 10 : 48 ] You know, when I started dating Fiona, first of all, you know, you're trying to get to know what each other likes, yeah? And so the first birthday present that I bought Fiona, I think, was a book.

A good theological book. Because I like getting books. Now she was thrilled by this. She wasn't. And then later on I decided, maybe I'll try flowers because that seems like a good idea.

And I got her some flowers. And actually the response still wasn't overwhelming. And for the next two years, I think, probably pretty much every present that I got, I think I ended up using more than she did. Which is actually a great thing to do if you're guys and you're single and you don't want to feel guilty about getting things for yourself.

It's great. Don't take that. But when I finally found a gift that actually she liked and that pleased her, the fact of seeing joy in her face gives me joy and pleasure.

That's why God calls us to obey him. That's why God gives us his law. Because the law is there to show you God's heart, God's desires, what he likes, so that you get his heart.

[ 12 : 03 ] So that actually as you obey, his joy becomes your joy. Delighting him is what gives you delight. That's actually the heart of good relationships.

That's the heart of love. When actually your happiness is intertwined with the other person's happiness. That's why the law is given.

That's why David can say, how I love your law. And we think, man, has he read it? But no, David knew that this law was revealing what his delighted, beloved God liked.

And that's where his joy was. And as we obey, we deepen our relationship with God. So let me ask you a question. What is it that God is asking you to obey him in at the moment?

Is God come out to you, okay, you've got to forgive that person who's hurt you. Is it you've got to start blessing your boss or your colleagues rather than cursing them?

[ 13 : 14 ] Is it you've got to start reading God's word? I don't know what it is for you. But think about it. How do you think about that command? Does it feel like somehow I felt like with my parents' rules?

That it's just some rule to kind of make me spoil my fun? Or, you know, God, don't you know what that person has done to me? Don't you know what they like? Don't you know?

It's just unfair. I'm not going to forgive them. I'm not going to bless that person. Because disobedience seems more attractive than obedience. But maybe God is wanting us to say, God, I know it's really hard to forgive this person or to bless this person.

But because you love forgiveness, I will forgive. Because you love my boss, I will bless him rather than cursing him.

God, help me. I can't do it. But actually, I want to do what pleases you. Because obedience is about love and growing in my relationship with you.

[ 14 : 26 ] Sometimes it feels like duty. But, you know, sometimes you actually do, dutifully do things for people you love. I go shopping with my wife.

It's not my joy. But actually, my wife is my joy, so I will go shopping with her. That's why Jesus says, If you love me, you'll obey my commands.

Obedience is God's command to grow, and his invitation to grow in relationship with him. So that's the distinctive relationship that God is calling them into.

But this distinctive relationship is then meant to shape and create a distinctive people. Amidst all the other nations, they were to be distinctive. Look in verse 5, it says, As a result of this, they will become God's treasured possession amongst all people.

This is just a beautiful, beautiful image. God, even though the whole world belongs to him, he wants to take this people as his beloved, as his treasured, precious love.

[ 15 : 35 ] God, even though the whole world belongs to him, it was looking a complete wreck.

My dad was about to throw it out. My mom came there to him, and I tell you, he was not going to throw away that cart. Because that cart was precious to her.

My dad had to take it all the way to the new flat, new house they were moving into, even though it was driving him crazy. Because that cart was so precious, she would not let it be thrown away.

That's what God is saying here. My people, I want to make you so precious. Out of everything that I own, and I own everything, you will be for me that precious one that I'll never throw away.

That means you're secure in my affection and my love for you. Isn't that amazing? That actually to be a distinctive people is to be a secure people in his love.

[ 17 : 03 ] But there's another image. Not just treasured possession. You'll also be distinctive because of who you represent. You'll be for me a kingdom of priests.

And the image here is of a whole nation where everybody is a priest. And the priests were the people who could walk right into God's presence, who had access which was forbidden to everybody else.

They could come right in. And it wasn't just that they had this intimate relationship where they could know God in a way that no others could. But it was also that they were to go out and to teach everybody else what God was like.

And so, if everybody was to be a priest, if this community was to be priestly, it meant that they were to show through their life the way what God was like to everybody else.

You know, like moths to a light, like cockroaches to my flat, like Hong Kongers to an investment opportunity. Their life was meant to attract people from outside to come to know the God who was their God.

[ 18 : 19 ] That's why God says, don't have any other images. He says, you know, that's there, second commandment. Don't have any other images, any other idols. Why?

Well, in Deuteronomy 4, Moses says this to the people. He says, God has taken you out and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance.

Do you know what the iron furnace was? The iron furnace is where you make idols. Where you make images of the gods. God is saying, I don't want any other idols.

I don't want any other images because I already have an image. My people are my image. When people are to see what is your God like, they don't want to look at a little statue.

They're to look at your lives as a community and say, that is what our God is like. You see, that's precisely what Genesis 1, where God says he made man in his image, what's to be all about.

[ 19 : 28 ] He's recreating it. And you see, when the church, when we just simply copy what everybody else is doing around us, whether it's in our leadership styles, our marketing strategies, and in our sense of big is beautiful, whatever it is, if we're just doing it because everyone else is doing it, then we may well have gone a long way wrong for what God has called us to be as his church.

Because everyone else may do things that way, but everyone else isn't a community which is to image the living God like we are.

God's law is to make us his treasured possession secure in him. It's to make us this people who image him to the world. And how are we to do that? We're to be, here's the next image, a holy nation.

How do we image him? We are this nation. Now what's a nation? It's a society of people who are gathered and organized under a ruler, under in those times, under a king. And holy means reserved for a special purpose.

If I took a diet Coke and said, this Coke is holy to Tobin, that would mean it was reserved for his use, for his enjoyment, for his pleasure only.

[ 20 : 53 ] When God says, you are a holy nation, it means you are reserved for God and his pleasure. That means they would be a people who were distinctive amongst all the other nations, had their gods.

And you reflect your gods. But this nation was to reflect Yahweh, the God of Israel. They would be different from everyone else.

Now it's, it's no accident that God brings them to a mountain. Mountains are a big theme in the Bible. It's no accident. Because all the nations around, and archaeologists have discovered this, that most of the major cities, the first cities in the world, were built in this area in the Middle East.

And you know what cities would be built around? They would center them on a mountain or a hill, where they would put a temple, or they put an altar at the top.

And if they didn't have a natural hill or a mountain, then what they would do is they'd man-make one. That's probably what the Tower of Babel was. It's what we sometimes call a ziggurat, something where, if you've seen pictures of them, they're stepped towers.

[ 22 : 12 ] And the idea was that you wanted this at the center, because at the top was a bit like a kind of, a free trade zone between you and God. You know, a bit like the EU, but it might work.

Do you know? And, and you would just have to, you would just have to walk up this, and, and you know, it's hot, so you'd be sweating up the steps, carrying your offering.

Okay. Here's Patrick the pagan. He's there. He's walking up, carrying his fruit, carrying his, his lamb, carrying his, even his children, as an offering to their gods.

And it, what, what Patrick would be doing at this point, maybe with his family, would be, he would be saying, look how hard I've worked for you. Look at the sweat that's on me now.

It's all for you. Look at the gifts that I've given you. Look at all the effort I've given. Look at my devotion. Now you need to bless me. And so you'd have this whole community, which was trying to offer these things, showing, working hard to get their God to bless them.

[ 23 : 14 ] It's a bit like if you go down to Wong Tai Sin Temple. Have you seen them at Chinese New Year? You go down there. What do you do? You give your offerings. You give your gifts, because what do you want? I've done my bit.

Now, God, can you give me a bit of blessing back? And the reason you would do that was because your God was either a temperamental, angry tyrant who you had to make sure you kept him appeased, because otherwise, you know, he might come and send some evil spirits on your turnic cape or something, or he'd come and he'd do something to your family.

So you had to keep him happy. So he's either a tyrant or he's a genie. You know, he's the kind of, you rub him, you manipulate him the right way. You know, you go and you kind of flatter him a bit.

You know, you go to the God of the sun and you say, wow, you're looking hot today. And, and, you know, and you do these things because, because if you just manipulate enough, they'll say, oh, wow, what a good person.

I'll bless you. See, that's what it's all about. You've got to prove how good you are. You've got to prove yourself, how hard you've worked to get them to bless you.

[ 24 : 29 ] I think that's the way we work in Hong Kong, actually. Think about work, career. A career can be an idol.

And what do you do to get and move on in your career? Well, you come with your, your time, your effort, those long overtime hours which you didn't have to work but you were just trying to please your boss.

Those social, those meetings outside, those networking things which you never wanted to go to, but you'll come and offer them. You'll laugh at your boss's jokes even though they're terrible just because if you offer them, you hope that you'll get a promotion back.

If I give you enough, then you'll give me something back. Or maybe, you've got an idol of comfort. And you know, the idol of comfort we want to just manipulate because you want to be around people who just make you happy.

You want about people like you, people you feel comfortable with. And so, you'll give your offering of your time, of your relationship just as long as they give you something back, as they kind of stroke your ego, as they meet your social needs.

[ 25 : 42 ] But if you happen to be with somebody, maybe in your community group, who just talks too much, who's just not like you, who is just a little bit annoying sometimes, then we'll be right out of there.

We'll be maybe gossiping about, we'll smile to them in their face, but then we'll gossip about them afterwards. Because, well, you're not working my manipulation game. And that's not the way my religion works.

much of Hong Kong society, much of life is based around those principles. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

But God comes to a mountain to his people. He says, I'm making you a nation, but you know what? I'm neither a tyrant that you have to appease, nor am I a genie that you have to manipulate.

I'm the one who swooped down on eagle's wings to draw you to myself. You don't have to say, man, I've had a hard week, maybe I've done something wrong, maybe God's angry at me.

[ 26 : 49 ] You don't have to live with that because you have a God of grace who's taken the initiative to come to be our God, our love.

His grace is about, is the center of our community life. That's distinctive. Now, to be a distinctive nation, he then gives his law.

And in his law, he gives commandments. But the commandments, you can categorize in two things. The law is to help you to have boundaries to be a holy nation.

But there's two things that these laws are really all about. They're all about love God, love other people. That's what this community, that's what God's people should be characterized with.

That's what, I mean, Jesus says that. You can summarize all the commandments in two things. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus does a pretty good summary because actually, if you take the Ten Commandments, the first three, four are actually all about love for God.

[ 28 : 00 ] The next six are all about love for neighbor. But the order of the commandments is, and that's why we just had the first one up there. You see the first one? The first one, Alfie, is no other gods.

Correct. Give him a round of applause. There you go. There you go. We don't just humiliate Alfie during this time. It's great. All the other commandments flow from this one because if you get this one wrong, everything else falls apart because God's saying, don't put anyone else before me because if you love me first, you'll love other people.

If you put anything else before me, you'll actually end up not loving other people. Even if you put your family before me, you'll end up not loving your family as I want you to and you should because you've not put me first.

rest. Here's an example. The Sabbath. Fourth commandment. One day in the week for you to rest. Why? Well, there's a number of reasons but one of the reasons is here's a society which is an agricultural society and your whole life is based on your crops growing.

So if you for one day stop and don't work, do you know what can happen to your crops? There are things like birds. There are things like insects. There are things like animals which can come in and could devastate your crops in one day if you're not constantly keeping an eye out for them.

[ 29 : 35 ] You know, it's a life or death situation but God comes and he says, no, I want you to rest on one day. I want you to trust me. To trust that I will provide for you.

Because I will. You don't have to be a workaholic because you think you've got to provide everything for yourself. Trust me. That's love for God.

But the repercussions of that love for God are actually communal. They're society. Because, do you know what it says in that commandment? You know, it says everybody should rest.

It says your son, your daughter, it says your servant, your foreign workers, everybody should rest. Because why? Because the community I'm making is one where you don't exploit anybody.

Because you don't work them to the bone so they have nothing less. You see, when you love God, you actually start loving and respecting people. Because that's the society where you're not driven by your work.

[ 30 : 41 ] And you're not driven to exploit people. Think about it. How many of us, do you, if you have a helper, do you make them work on their day off?

If you work long, busy hours, and then you come home at night, or you come home, and even though you're at home with your family or with your community group, you're still thinking all about work all the time.

You're consumed with it. Do you know what will happen? You'll stop loving other people the way you should. Because work has maybe become your idol. Because maybe you haven't trusted God with saying, God, here's what I can do.

I give the rest to you. Because when you put God first, not your career, not just getting things done, you see what? You start loving other people. That's the community that we have to have.

And this community, you see, these laws are not just about individuals. They're about making us as a people. And you can't be the people of loving people if you're not in deep relationships with others.

[ 31 : 54 ] Because that's the kind of God he is. He wants relationship with us so we have relationship with each other. All of the 613 laws that there are are all about in the areas of sex, in the areas of money, in the areas of property, in the areas of relationships, in the areas of all these things.

How do I love God and how do I love other people? That's what it's all about. Because you ought to be a holy nation. You ought to be different from the way everybody else does things because you've got a different God.

So let's think about it. In Watermark, if we ought to be a people who are characterized by loving relationships, love for God, love for others, how do we be distinctive?

An idol of comfort will tell us just be with the people who are like you. Just be in the community with the people who you like to be with. But being distinctive may be being with people who are not like you.



What about if marrieds spent time, invited singles to come for lunch with them? Why don't you go and try to look out for people who are single if you're married and vice versa? That's distinctive.

[ 33 : 06 ] What about if helpers and employers were able to talk together without any sense of inferiority or superiority but just because we're brothers and sisters?

That's distinctive. What about if you're an introvert and extroverts and they drive you nuts but actually you're willing to look out for them, these weird people who are totally different because we're a holy nation and we have a God who is like that.

We have a God who is like that. It's one of the reasons why we have community groups to help you connect with people so you can learn how to love people because that's what church is about.

It's not about coming just on a Sunday and sitting here and feeling like you'd like to sleep for 30 minutes while I'm talking and then going. It's not that. It's about loving relationships.

So let me ask you a question. Who in this church would say that they know that they are loved by you? Who in this church would know that they are loved by you?

[ 34 : 15 ] Or if you're from another church, who in that church would know that they are loved by you? Who in this church community is God calling you to love? To take the initiative in the relationships because that's what God does.

For us. God calls you to obedience by loving people. It's because he's calling you deeper into relationship with him. You won't grow in your relationship with God if you don't get into deep relationships with people.

That's the way it works. So we've looked at a distinctive relationship. Distinctive people which is shaped by that relationship.

But if you just got to the point of saying, okay, now I've just got to love a little bit more. I've just got to do a little bit more loving. Well, hold on a minute because there's something else which shapes this community. It's a distinctive saviour.

Because if you think that you can actually love the way that God calls you to love, well, the law was written to show you that you can't. Because Moses writes down the laws for all the people.

[ 35 : 20 ] This is in chapter 24. And the final part, this is the marriage ceremony. The final part of this kind of marriage ceremony covenant is the taking of the vows. It's the formal signing of the register.

Now, they didn't sign a register. What they did, they had a sacrifice. They would cut an animal in two. But before the cutting of the animal, what happens is Moses says, will you take God to be your husband, to love him, to honor him, to obey him?

And what do the people say? They say, we will. We'll do everything that God has said. We'll obey. That's pretty stupid.

Because I think if you read the rest of the story, you'll realize why that's pretty stupid. They had too high an estimation of themselves. They thought they could obey perfectly what God had told them to.

But you know what? When it came to cutting the animal, and they took the blood, and you see what they did? They threw the blood. Moses threw the blood over them.

[ 36 : 28 ] And so when they would go home, they would still have the blood on them. And what that blood was to say was, may this be, if I disobey this covenant, this relationship, if I disobey, may this be my blood.

May I die rather than disobey. Do you know what happens next in the story? It's quite depressing.

You know, just a few days later, they've made this amazing marriage covenant, beautiful ceremony, okay, and then a few days later, Moses is up the mountain. They go off, and they build a golden calf.

You know, straight after the marriage, and they worship this idol. Straight after the marriage ceremony, they're right in bed with another lover. They've committed adultery within a few days.

And do you know what? What's the sentence if you break the covenant? It's death. God institutes sacrifices temporally to kind of keep them from knowing the full force of his anger so that he can live with them.

[ 37 : 46 ] But you know, 1,500 years later, God comes down to another mountain. He comes down to a hill outside of Jerusalem. And he comes and he swoops down, but this time he's not carrying his people on eagles' wings.

He's carrying them on the palms of his hands, engraved with six-inch nails driven in because he became the sacrifice, the punishment that the people for their adultery deserved.

He was the one who came and who took that death sentence. And do you know what he did? He said, at the communion meal, and notice after they do the covenant, they have a meal.

Meals are symbols of fellowship, of relationship, of acceptance. And do you know what communion Jesus says at the last supper? He says, this is my blood of the new covenant shed for you for forgiveness of sins.

Because we could never keep the covenant by ourselves. What God has called us to be, we cannot be by ourselves. We need a savior.

[ 39 : 05 ] Sometimes I think I forget that. We think, okay, I can obey God fully. No. Do you know why you can't? It's because you need to know that God is your only hope.

You need to know that his grace is the only thing which is going to sustain you. It's the only thing which is going to sustain this community. It's the only thing which is going to really make us distinctive in society, in Hong Kong, because loving people is hard work.

People are annoying. Do you know that? If you really love someone, people are just like frustrating. They don't answer your emails. They don't reply when you want them to. They say the most inappropriate things.

Loving people is hard. And you know what will happen is you'll get to the point where you don't want to love people so you want to withdraw. But you know, when you begin to see actually the lack of love in your heart, you have to run somewhere.

You're either going to be trying to run up the mountain like Patrick the pagan, trying to say, okay, God, I've got to do a bit more to please you. Or you're going to say, God, I need, I'm so grateful that on the cross you swooped down and you took the initiative and you have died for me.

[ 40 : 24 ] grace is to characterize all our relationships so that when you know it for yourself, you extend it to that annoying person over there. You extend it to that person in your community group who you want to avoid.

You extend it to the introvert that you think you just don't want to hang around or the extrovert who just talks so much. Because grace, Hong Kong doesn't need a perfect people.

We're not going to be distinctive by being perfect. We're going to be distinctive by being gracious. and knowing that we are secure because we're his treasured possession.

Knowing that we are his image to the world. Knowing that we are his distinct people. That's God's plan for this city.

That's God's mission strategy. We are. Not just you as an individual. We as a people. So are you willing to engage in relationships? Are you, who are you going to take the initiative to love in this community?

[ 41 : 29 ] Because God has taken the initiative to bring you into relationship with him. Let's pray. let's just think for a moment.

How do I view the people in this church? Who is it that God has called me to love in this church? Even as you go out straight after this, are there people that you can just say hi to?

Who has God called me to love? Maybe you need to repent and ask God to forgive you. Maybe you've been thinking that you've got to prove yourself to God.

That you've not been good enough for him. That he's waiting there to punish you if you if you just slip up. Father, thank you that this church and the churches all around the world are your delight.

I don't know why you delight in us because we're messed up. But you have initiated this relationship with us. You made the first move.

[ 42 : 59 ] I pray that as a people we begin to understand that we cannot save ourselves. We cannot even obey you ourselves. We're like the Israelites.

We're quickly in bed with somebody else when we should be having you as our only lover. But help us to see, Lord, what you've called us to be. In this city, in Hong Kong, to the people around us.

Help us to love as you love. Show us how we can grow deeper in our relationship with you, to live to delight your heart, to live to please you.

Not because we have to earn anything, but because it's our response to your amazing, amazing grace. Thank you, Father. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.