

Families: Eunice & Lois

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Date: 14 April 2024

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[0:00] I'm excited about this, and I'll tell you why. As we all gather here, and as Joe said, certain people like Dr. Trevor Chan don't need to be here on a Sunday morning, we're not for the fact that there's something that compels him. And so it's interesting to ask, why do we gather? And we do the mission statements not because we want to be legalistic and start something that sucks the life out of why we do Sunday mornings, but it's to remind us, it's to remind me why I'm here. Why are you here, risking breaching fire hazards as we pack this place?

Why are you here? And we read the mission statements for that reason, and if I was to sum up the whole mission statement as to what it would be, it would be we gather for relationships.

We gather for relationships. You know, there's churches that, again, great churches around that do different kinds of things and different kinds of ways of worship, but the one that I, maybe I'm least comfortable with, is when people walk into a room, a hall, and they sit, and they listen to a sermon, but they don't talk to anyone next to them, and then they leave.

Have you been in one of those services? You literally go in, you sit, you watch the screen, and if you're late, you go into the overflow room, so you, you're late, so you deserve it, so you're in the overflow room, and you're just watching a screen, not talking to a single person, and then you leave. Hey, God, God works even through that. It's the word of God that's being preached, so that's good, but for me, man, I want to be able to talk to the people. I want to have gone to church and spend a few hours on a Sunday morning, and actually having spent time with people, and so those three mission statements are all about relationship. Number one, to know and enjoy him.

We're here to gather for a relationship with him. Number two is we're here to gather for a relationship with each other, and number three, we're here to gather so that others may have a relationship with him, right? So that's one, two, and three, and that's why we do what we do, because we believe in the deepest part of our hearts that we're not supposed to do it alone. We're not supposed to do life alone.

[2:13] Now, why we're doing a series on relationship is as we learn to gather, we're with people, and people are problematic. This is not a perfect church. Why is it not a perfect church? Because you're in it.

Because I'm in it. And I'm not perfect, and you're not perfect. And you come with your own problems, and I come with my own problems, and we come, and suddenly we're a happy family? Unlikely. When we say we want to be as one, it means something has to give. That's where relationships come in.

The main priority that we have, that we have in our hearts, why we gather, is to make disciples of Jesus. Now, the question is, if the people that we're wanting to make disciples of Jesus have issues and challenges and obstacles that are standing in their way to stop them from being disciples of Jesus, then we need to talk about it. That's why we're talking about relationships, because relationships is the key thing that either hinders or helps someone's relationship with the church, and someone's relationship with God. That's why we're talking about relationships.

And we're going to go through this series, and we're going to start with family, because that's the first relationship we know. And then we're going to talk about, actually, what does it mean to be a single person? What does it mean to actually live a life full of Jesus as your own individual? And then what does it mean to start dating? What does it mean to start getting married? What does it mean to have friends? We're asking this question because in order to make disciples, we have to get this relationship thing right. We're here, we gather for relationship. People have often said, we are a product of our relationships.

Mine and Joe's mum is in Hong Kong right now. She decided not to come to listen to me preach, and she went over to the Chinese side. But if you meet her, and if you met our dad, you'll see, oh,

there's good things we picked up from them, and there's also bad things that we picked up from them. The way we relate to people, the way we talk to people. Gabe said a few months ago, the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree. We're affected by our relationships within.

[4:20] Now, if we're going to be talking about relationships, we need to first understand that we are a product of our relationships, and also this church is a product of all the relationships here. This is not actually a unique thing just to Christians either. We all know, whole of humanity knows that we were not built to be alone, right? We're social beings.

Politics. It comes with a lot of problems. Politics is the word that we use when we talk about those problems. But we are social beings. We're supposed to be together. In fact, I'll show you a couple of quotes. This is from an Indian philosopher who says this. No, this is not an Indian philosopher. This one is. Society is the product of relationship of yours and mine together. If we change in our relationship, society changes. This here, we are a product of, this church is a product of all the relationships that we have here. If our relationship changes, this church changes. This church is not the 14th floor. This church is not a building. This church is basically an amalgamation, a collection of all these relationships. There's another one, American businessman who was a Christian, Max Dupree, says this. He's talking about a company. I think his family ran a furniture company in the US, and he says this. We talk about the quality of product and service. What about the quality of our relationships and the quality of our communications and the quality of our promises to each other? What is the quality of this church? Thank the Lord Jesus that the quality of this church is not based on the quality of the preaching.

Thank the Lord Jesus that the quality of this church is not based on the worship. The quality of this church is based on the relationships that we have, that we're here in this together.

The question is, what does that mean? We have so many people in this city looking for community. We have that all the time, right? I don't have people around me. But here's the thing. Have you heard that quote, you want the truth, but you can't handle the truth? I said this last night to someone. I feel as though when it comes to the city, a lot of us want community, but we can't handle what it takes to build community. We say we want people around us. We want our bros. We want our sisters. We want our crew. We say we want community, but we can't handle what it takes to get community.

Because once we start hanging out with people, which is what communities are made of, by the way, we end up going, oh, people are so annoying. And then we wonder why we don't have a community.

[6:40] Oh, I should go out to my midweek this Thursday night, but man, I'm just tired. So I'm not going to go. Oh, I don't have anyone. I don't know anyone there anymore. This issue, this issue of trying to find community I know is hard. I'm not also saying here that we're going to have all the answers. But what I am trying to do is go, let's talk about this. Let's talk about why it's hard. And the first one to start with is the issue of family. Because family is how we learn to relate to people from the very beginning. If we were created to be social beings, we, Genesis 126 says we, actually the Trinity, the unity says, let us make man in our image. Let us, Father, Son, and Spirit, let us make man in our image. We came from community. From a biological, physical standpoint, every single person here came from two people in relationship. We were made from community and we were made for community. Recently we had our dear Jojo, Young Life staff. It's her birthday, birthday party today. The big three. You're all invited. Is that okay? Everyone's invited.

Everyone's invited. Here at 5pm. And to celebrate her coming of age 30, we decided to honour the next season of life that she was moving in, which is old age. And the Young Life staff, we had a meeting.

We were supposed to have a meeting. We were like, you know what? Let's just take her out for a breakfast. And we went to yum cha. And it was great. And it was fun. And we walked in and there's just, I'm like, Jojo, there's so many of your people. Just gray hair. And then it was fascinating. And I'm like, wow, so many people have this routine and this habit in Hong Kong every morning to go yum cha. It's a thing. And then Aaron, what was it that you said? Actually, this is how people stay alive. And this is how people live to an ripe old age. Why? Community.

Because there's people that they can get up for. There is dim sum that they can get up for to enjoy with people. And we were talking about the Netflix show, Live 200, which we've talked about, right? Like the centenarians around the world and all these different places, Okinawa and all these other places. Why do they live to such a ripe old age? Why? Because of community.

So even though we hate community, it's all we can't live with or without them. So we better learn to live with each other in some way, with all our annoyances, with all our grievances.

[9:19] But first it starts with actually how aware are we of ourselves when it comes to relationship? Quban, actually, we were talking about this. Now, how am I going to do this without messing up my slides? You know what? I cannot. What if I did this? Can you all see my screen? Oh, you can. Never mind. We're just going to keep doing this. Oh, creative kids. Thank you.

We were talking about Quban and he emailed me this. And I thought it's really interesting. Actually, this is quite a cool way to do this. The five lessons from a conversation with a world renowned happiness expert. And it talked about the five lessons, which summarized here. Relationship satisfaction impacts health.

Loneliness kills. Make social fitness a priority. Check your energy to improve your life. And ambivalent relationships are the most toxic, which is very interesting. I think there was a quote. There's a stat down here. Relationship satisfaction at age 50 was the single greatest predictor of physical health at age 80. What? Relationship satisfaction at age 50 was the single greatest predictor of physical health at age 80. Relationship satisfaction was a more effective predictor of health at age 80 than cholesterol, blood pressure, or any other health marker. Loneliness kills. The amount of time teenagers are spending in person with their friends is down 70% over the last two decades. Loneliness is killing. Lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Wow, you guys never say this when I'm preaching about the word of God. Make social fitness a priority. Check your energy to improve. And the rest of them we don't want to talk about. Okay, so I'm going to try and get back to here. Here we go. We all crave connection. We all crave communion. Maybe one of my favorite writers of all time is Henry Nowen, and he talks about this. And one of his journal entries I wanted to share with you today is called Continue Seeking Communion. I want to read out. A desire for communion has been part of you since you were born. The pain of separation which you experienced as a child and continue to experience now reveals to you this deep hunger.

[11:39] All your life you have searched for a communion that would break your fear of death. This is him writing to himself, by the way. This is his kind of personal journal. All your life you have searched for a communion that would break your fear of death. This desire is sincere. Don't look on it as an expression of your neediness or as a symptom of your neurosis. It comes from God and is part of your vocation. Nonetheless, your fear of abandonment and rejection is so intense that your search for communion is often replaced by a longing for concrete expressions of friendship or affection.

You want deep communion, but you end up looking for invitations, letters, phone calls, gifts, and similar gestures. Maybe in this day and age it would be social media likes, friends, approval from work, all these kinds of things. When these do not come in the way you wish, you start distrusting your deep desire for communion. Your search for communion often takes place too far from where true communion can be found. Isn't that us? Isn't that you? It's definitely me. Always in search for communion, always in search, not knowing that actually there is a real need inside me that can't be satisfied by you, but we have to learn to live together. And by living together and being a community together, we can reflect God's love and thereby be satisfied. So the first one that we're going to talk about is family. Family is incredibly tricky. We're not going to spend a ton of weeks talking about family, even though we really could. But my question to you is this, how has your relationship with your family affected your relationship with other people? How has your relationship with your family affected how you relate to the people in the church, to God? Do you have commitment issues? Do you have trust issues? Do you have feelings of abandonment that are then passed on to your relationship with your friends? Do you come into a church community with incredibly high expectations of what family should be like? Because it's either what you experienced yourself or it's what you haven't experienced, so you're chasing after it. And then you find out that actually people aren't perfect and they're not satisfying your need for family. And so you start distrusting. What is your relationship?

How has your relationship with your family impacted how you relate to others? Even as Trevor was saying why he's impacted by his family, how his parents brought him up, how he saw them love other people impacts the way he tries to love other people too. What about you? As a parent, this terrifies me because it means that what I say and what I do has a huge impact on my kids. And that terrifies me because I have bad days. Out of seven days, I probably have four bad days. And so,

and I'll say things, I'm like, man, you're such a jerk to your kids. You just said that, oh man, that could scar them for life. And then I look at the Bible and I'm like, okay, let me see, find some good examples of parenting in the Bible. And you realize there are not that many good examples of good parents in the Bible, right? David, King David, his son tried to kill him. And David himself was forgotten by his dad when his dad was introducing who potentially who wanted, which one of his sons could be the next king. And he completely forgot about little David who's out in the field. So David probably grew up with neglect. And then you look at Noah, the righteous man, the only family that deserved to survive and live, ends up finding himself drunk and naked for his kids to find him. That's pretty messed up.

Jacob, Jacob, the deceiver, had favorites. He had a favorite wife. He had a favorite son. He ended up raising a spoiled brat who would share his dreams with his brothers and then get himself into trouble and get him sold to slavery. It's not a pretty picture when it comes to parenting in the Bible. And what you find is this is not an instruction manual for parents necessarily.

It is just a graveyard of dysfunctional families and bad parenting and the vicious cycles that come with that. It brings me some comfort in some ways that I qualified to be in the Bible.

[16:05] But man, does that scare me. Does that scare me that how I parent my kids, how I disciple my kids could have a long lasting effect on them. And actually, so one of the things about going through this is I didn't want you just to hear from me. Because when it comes to relationship, we're a product of all of our relationships. And I think there's people here in this community that actually have things to share that I think would be good, both positive experiences and both negative experiences. And I'm seeing it as a chance to actually spotlight different people in this community for you to hear a little bit about their story as well. Trust me, it's taken as much harder than I realized trying to navigate people's schedules and which days they can do. And so actually the topics of friendship and singleness I've had to rejig because the people I've asked to share can't make certain weeks. But today is a good one. Today is about family. And actually, our dear Cubon, I'll invite you right now, Cubon. Maybe you can just bring that stool and just plunk yourself right here. Those of you who don't know, Cubon's here because of family.

Cubon's here because he's pursuing family. Because he comes from a less than positive experience of family and he's here to pursue it. And I wanted to ask him this simple question is, how does your relationship with your family and the upbringing that you've had impact the way you relate to us?

Can we give him a round of applause? Great question. Thank you, James. I could talk forever about this stuff. And I'll give you guys a little bit of background first. And my dad is one of the dudes that swam to Hong Kong from China to escape communism during the Cultural Revolution. And he came here with nothing, met my mom, had a kid, which is my sister. And right before the handover, they moved to the U.S. and they had a lot of money saved up. We had some family friends in Ohio, where I'm from, who said, why don't you just take a stop there where you can get settled down before you move to California where all the other Asians are?

So we did that. My parents did that. But the family friend said, all that money you're bringing in is dangerous. You can't bring all that money in because America is dangerous. Give it to us and we'll keep it safe. So they did that. They took all the money and then they fled to California.

So that's why I'm from Ohio. We had no choice but to grow up there. My parents didn't speak any English or anything. So they had to work immigrant jobs and had to feed two more kids that came on the way. So it was tough growing up, tough with the parents that just yelled all the time. And that was my definition of love. Two people fighting physically and emotionally all the time. So as a kid growing up and witnessing that, I felt so powerless. There was nothing that I could do to make that better.

[18:59] And not only did I not have the courage to go up to my dad and say, like, stop fighting, I also felt as though maybe if I wasn't there, they would be happier. They would have one less mouth to feed. And then I realized all these things went into the way I behaved. I hated feeling powerless.

I hated feeling like I wasn't a value add, even to small things like playing on the worship team or playing spike ball. If anybody's played spike ball or volleyball with me and we're doing poorly, I get pretty frustrated because I want to do well. I want to show people that I am a positive contribution to their life. Because with my parents, it wasn't like that. It seemed as though that they would have been better without me. And then not only that, I learned to quiet my desires and my needs.

I would tell myself, like, okay, I'm just not going to eat for these couple of days to prove to myself that I don't need food to show that my desires are so small that I will never be a burden to anybody. Or something as small as, like, I don't need to use shampoo. Or, or, or, or like, I don't need to use a towel after I take a shower. That's the toughest part.

Or, or maybe like, I, I can go long, long periods of time with wearing only a couple of shirts, which maybe you guys have noticed. So it's crazy how much our parents influence the way that we treat each other and treat the wider community.

[20:41] And how does this community and how does the gospel then kind of help you change and kind of face some of those obstacles that you have in your mind? Yeah, it helps in a lot of ways. There's a lot of obstacles. Firstly, when this person of Jesus entered my life, it was odd because I did nothing to earn his love, which was the weirdest and still is a very hard to grasp concept.

Since there's a lot of people maybe in this room and also in my life that I don't love because they haven't earned it. They haven't proven to me that they're worth loving. Same with my, myself and my parents.

They're supposed to love me as their, as the mom and dad, but how come they didn't? Or how come they did it so poorly because I didn't do anything to earn it? So when this Jesus comes in and says like, Hey, you did nothing to deserve this.

That was radical and really helped me to try to believe that truth that I'm loved despite nothing I've done, which is hard.

I struggle to love people like that everywhere, everywhere and anybody. Yeah. One final thing. What's, what's something that we as a community around you should be aware of in terms of how, how you receive love and how you kind of give love?

[21:55] Because I think we all do it different ways, right? And that is a good question. So, so in the beginning stages of the gathering, I was not, maybe not self-appointed.

I was the appointed social chair, right? Because I wanted people to feel included. I wanted people to know that I'm helping people have a good time around here. I'm planning all these things, planning trips, whatever, so people can have a good time, which can make it so that I, this is such a small thing.

I can make it so that I don't enjoy it as much. Something as small as when I, last year on my birthday, we planned this big party and Francis came up to me and said, Hey, I need you to enjoy this.

That just was really loving for him to do that to me. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. We love you. And yeah, thank you. It's a joy to be part of your family.

It was even more joyful. A couple of weeks ago, we had Kumon's mom come and visit and she'd not been in Hong Kong for all those years. And she found it really enjoyable to be part of this family too. We enjoyed having her and it was a real blessing for her to actually for her.

[23:00] But she told me, she was like, I had no idea why my son was in Hong Kong and what he was doing here, whether he had a job or whether he had friends. And then he finally, she got here and she's like, Oh, at least she has, he has a church and a family here.

And that just, that just kind of softened her heart and just filled her with joy. So, and we were glad to be able to tell her that her son's on a bum. He does have a, he does have a job and he does have some friends as well.

So, and a family. Yeah. So thank you, Kumon. Round of applause for Kumon. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You can see the effects that what it's like to have from the moment we're born, because we were conceived through communion and a baby in a mother's womb is just connected and then they come out and then they cry.

And from that moment of separation, we've been trying to get communion, trying to find connection with people. And you, and you can see the effect that that can have.

And as Christina and I often share, actually for Alicia, she spent her first month in hospital when she was a tiny, tiny thing in the neonatal ward. And we, and actually she didn't have anyone.

[24:09] She'd scream and cry and she was extremely loud, but we weren't there. We weren't allowed to be there. And actually we can see the effects that that has. And she doesn't like playing alone now. She likes to always be with people.

We can see even from a very young age and then all our childhood and then all our teen years, how our relationship with our family impacts how we relate to others, how we want to relate to others,

how we don't want to relate to others.

And as I said, this Bible is, shows us so many examples of the depravity of man, how we're all imperfect. Even the great ones, even the righteous ones have problems when it comes to family. But I did find one good one. I did find one good one that actually really encouraged me and has always encouraged me. It's 2 Timothy 1.5. Paul's writing to his Timothy, his mentee.

And he says this line that really just caught me. And it's this, and I've loved this for a number of years now. He's writing to Timothy and he says, I'm reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother's Lois and your mother Eunice.

[25:07] And now I'm sure dwells in you as well. So we all know Timothy. Timothy is a fascinating character. We hear about him in Acts 16 where he's a teenager.

He's a teenager. He's a young person. Paul, the greatest church planter of all time, comes through town, sees this teenager and goes, I want to take you under my wing. I want you to travel with me. And he sees something in Timothy. And here we see he sees a sincere faith. Timothy's fascinating. And I think some of you will really enjoy hearing about Timothy because he was essentially a second or third generation Christian.

So, of course, he's got his mother and his grandmother going to church with them. His dad was actually a Greek, so he was bicultural. There's no mention of his dad really much. But you see this second, third generation Christian, bicultural kid who gets taken by Paul and ends up being the leader of the church in Ephesus.

And it's fascinating because it starts with his grandmother and then it starts with his mother. And what I really like about this is that he has a sincere faith. I'm like, man, there's a family.

[26:15] Now, I don't know what the challenges were in that family. But somehow that was passed along. That had a positive effect on Timothy. Now, he was still timid. But he had a sincere faith that Paul really chose and really mentored and grew.

And that's fascinating. And I want to bring someone else up because when I think about sincere faith, there's someone here that actually I'm reminded of that sincere faith. And that's actually Agnes. And I wanted to bring her up.

Now, just a word of prep for you about Agnes. She is one of the deacons here in this church. And she's been a deacon. How many years have you been a deacon for, Agnes? 11 years.

Probably 11 years. And she's told me before that she really doesn't like public speaking. And so I decided, well, can I invite you up to do some public speaking? And so here I have so much admiration for Agnes.

Can we give her a round of applause? Thank you. What's really funny is when Christina and I were still in England and we were talking at that moment about potentially coming to Hong Kong and had some interviews with this whole deacons board on Zoom for Kong Folk.

[27:28] And then this lady, Agnes, messages me afterwards and says, are you sure you actually want to come to Hong Kong? Is this something that you actually want to do? And I was like, well, I don't know. I think it's what God wants to do.

And then she said, I'll help you. And then I said, oh, actually. And then we started to progress. And, OK, it looks like we're going to come over. She was like, well, you need to find somewhere to live. Then I said, I don't know anywhere in Hong Kong about where to live and all that kind of thing. Can you help me? So, yeah, I can help you. And so Agnes is the first person that I put in touch. And I said, oh, actually, I have a brother, albeit useless brother, in Hong Kong. I said, I have a brother here who actually maybe can help in some way.

But you have to really carry him, just like I've carried him for all these years. You're going to have to carry him and really help him. So then I said, Joe, can you go and meet this lady called Agnes at the MTI? And she's going to take you to a place called TKO.

And she said there's some good flats there. And can you just do that? And so one of the first pictures I have of just the whole Hong Kong journey is a picture of Agnes and Joe and just trying to find us a flat.

[28:30] And it ends up being just the Lord's provision throughout all of it, right? And because now not only did she find me a flat, she also took my brother off me, which is like seriously so good, so good.

I am forever in her debt. And so what I'll tell you is, man, sincere faith. Sincere faith.

And I often say this and I tell people who aren't part of Kung Fu Church, who don't know the deacons, and you have this image of what a deacons board for a mega conservative Chinese church looks like. You have this image that they meet in a dark room and they just scheme and talk and just hate people and hate life and hate joy.

And of course, that is completely, couldn't be further from the truth. And she's been a huge blessing to her and this sincere faith that has then passed on to her daughter, Alex, and of course, her daughter, Sam as well.

And I wanted to invite her up just to hear how has your relationship with your family impacted how you pray for and how you disciple your daughters and go from there?

[29:36] And sorry, I think the Holy Spirit has been filling me since he talked about family relationship. My tears just keep coming as soon as he stopped talking.

So it's a very dear in my heart, this family relationship topic, you know. Okay, give you, like Cuban, I want to give you some background of me.

I have, you know, my parents and also I have four siblings, but one passed away about 15, 20 years ago because of ALS.

My family, you know, my mother was a faithful, faithful, not Christian, Buddhist, you know. One of those that, you know, even you have, you know, your own name and with, you know, like you have your clothes, your gasa.

I don't know what it is. But my mother impacted me a lot growing up because my mother, like even though she worked three jobs, she will make sure that all my relatives at home playing mahjong, waiting for her to come home after her third job, getting all the grocery and then feeding, you know, every week, you know, 10, 15 people.

[30:53] So that's the way I see my family when I was growing up. Even though she was, she and my father, you know, she was just very critical of my father.

They argue a lot. But she has, you know, the most love with all her family, you know, like my father's family, her own family. That's her focus.

So that gave me, I think that got passed down, that value got passed down to me and then I think now to Alex and Sam. Okay.

Even though she was not a Christian then, but before she passed away, she was a Christian. But there's another impact is that she was critical to my father more than us.

So it's the same. I learned that also. Okay. I picked that up also. So it's not what you say. It's what you see your parents doing.

[31:55] Okay. You end up picking that same thing also. So then, okay, then about faith, okay, I have a Lois and Eunice also, but not from my parents, but from Vincent's family.

She has the most, he has the most grateful grandmother, faithful grandmother, great grandmother. Okay. His grandmother, Sam's and Alex's great grandmother.

She just celebrated her 102 years old birthday yesterday in New York. Okay. She lives alone in New York in an apartment with some help during the day and that's all.

One time, two years ago, she, at night when the helper all gone, she was alone. She fell down. And she, all she did was she was praying, hallelujah, praise the Lord, hallelujah, praise the Lord, fool out when she was lying down.

Okay. To fall. Then it ended up somebody passed by the hallway and heard her, keeps mumbling something, you know, and then call, you know, the building security and saved her.

[33:12] Okay. Okay. And that's what she, that's her. Okay. And then my mother-in-law. Okay. Actually, I seldom share this.

My mother-in-law was a Christian. You know, she passed away already. After I got married with Vincent.

She has some major, back then she has some major, major life setback. Her husband lost all her business, you know, my, my, my father-in-law.

And then, and, and she got cancer and stuff like that. I was looking at her and make me, back then I was not a Christian. Then I was thinking, hmm, how come she has this kind of faith and endurance? Okay. Make me, okay. I think out of curiosity and, you know, I start, you know, thinking about the faith. So that's an impact to my life.

[34:13] And even when I was in my Baptist sharing, I shared that too. Okay. It was from my mother-in-law. Okay. And, okay, talking about my prayers for my daughter.

In the recent year, I shared with a lot of people. I have number one and number two prayer for my two daughters. Number one prayer, you know, Sam was, both Sam and Alex was brought up in church.

Okay. So they have the seed, you know, the God's seed, the gospel seed in their heart. But after Sam went to the U.S. in university, she was formally denouncing her faith.

I said, I don't believe anymore. Okay. So in my life, that's my number one prayer for her salvation. It has been so long. So usually, you know, as a mother, you know, all you young people, usually you hear nagging, go to church, go to church, go to church.

And I did the same thing. Okay. So the more I said that, the more she didn't want to go. Okay. Then later on, I realized that. Then in the recent year, I just prayed for her.

[35 : 24] Okay. And then number two prayer, okay, for Alex. And Sam has a fiance. Then I start praying for Alex. You know, why number two prayer?

You don't have to get married. So it's a number two. Salvation is number one. And then pray for God giving her a Christ-loving husband or partner. Okay. This man helped answer, you know, God gave him.

Pass him to me here and then answer both my prayer. Okay. So I have to thank him. No, he thanks me for taking on. Yeah.

God works his way amazingly. Okay. Then Sam, how she turned? Okay. It's not for me lagging going to church. She didn't go to church. My mother-in-law, two years ago, passed away.

And then we were cleaning up her stuff. Then we find a whole bunch of her journal, okay, talking about a lot of very long journal in Chinese.

[36 : 29] So like Vincent's family, actually, including Vincent, they don't read Chinese. So the only people that could read Chinese was me and Sam.

Alex was there. So she was reading them, okay. And then my mother-in-law's journal was all about how she induced food.

When she has cancer, she had no money. The roof was falling down one day. She was praying.

And all of a sudden, somebody rang the doorbell. And it was a tornado coming. And then somebody rang the doorbell and said, I passed by your house.

I see some problem with your roof. Let me help you to fix it. It could be something like that. You know, like she was in, one day she was so down that she was crying to say, Lord, where are you? And then all of a sudden, somebody, it was her birthday. And then somebody rang the doorbell. It was her church brother and sister brought over a birthday cake to celebrate her birthday.

[37 : 31] Okay. Situation didn't change. But her heart was changed. Okay. So, I mean, something like that. You know, so Sam was reading and reading her life journal.

And I know, okay. She didn't say. I know that changed her heart. And then you all saw her when she came back to Hong Kong, right? She, two weeks after she gave birth, one day she dressed up. And I said, Sunday morning, I said, what are you doing? I need to go to church. I said, only two weeks. You know, wait for a month. No, no, no, no, I'm going. Then she came.

Okay. So, what I'm trying to say is, family relationship is upward and downward. You know, I mean, in your family tree.

Okay. You are Christian. Probably your parents are not or your grandmother are not. But, you know, or, you know, in the future you have children.

[38 : 34] Okay. Okay. God's promise is believe in Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Not just you. You and your household.

Okay. And then we can grab hold tightly on this promise and then pray for them. I can tell you, like, all my family, both family, Vincent's family and all our siblings, we're Christian.

And my parents, before they die, well, many, many, almost 10 years before, you know, they, even my mom got baptized in hospital.

So, this is God's promise. And then we have an obligation as Christian is to look up and look down and practice good news to all of them.

And finally, my final sharing is just in the gist of family relationship is to be kind, have tender hearted, you know, and also forgive one another as God in Christ forgave us.

[39 : 47] Okay. So, that's my reminder that I'm kind to most people, not as kind to Vincent. I think he may deserve it.

So, that's always my reminder. And the reason he is like, be kind, be kind. But easy set than, you know, action. Thank you, Agnes. Can we give a round of applause?

Sincere faith. Sincere faith. You see, just, I mean, if you want to know more about how strong a woman Agnes is, you just need to meet Vincent. And you'll see what she has to put up with and look after.

Love you, Vincent, too. But that prayer. The top two prayers. I mean, the second one, actually, we're not for Joe and Alex getting together.

I don't know if we'd have had the gathering in this shape or form. But for a parent to have the first prayer is just that her children would know Christ. I say as a parent that that's what I want for my kids.

[41:02] But I also want them to be hardworking and successful and do well in school. But to have just a number of salvation. To know Jesus. That is the only prayer.

That's how the Apostle John wrote in 1 John, right? I just want you to know him. I want you to be in fellowship with him. And that's it. And last year, you saw Sam and Nick. They came back after they gave birth.

And Nick was the one part of the team with Darren to help build the pool table in the back. And so involved, even from a very, very early place. And just to see the Lord's favor on a family as well. Of course, there is one more example of a parent and a child in perfect union.

And of course, that is just Jesus and God the Father. He says, the Father and I are one. And in Jesus, you see the example of a son who just completely trusted his Father.

To the point of death. Even death on the cross. To the point where he didn't want to do something and he'd be in the garden and he'd say, Dad, if there's any chance we can change plan, let's do it.

[42:05] Let's change plan, please. Could you spare me from this cup of suffering? But yet not my will, but yours. Be done. And Jesus entrusted his life, his spirit to his Father.

And that union that comes. The floor is level at the ground of the cross. Whatever words those are. Whatever family background you come from. Whether it's an incredibly positive one and your whole family is Christian.

Or whether you come from you're the only one. Or whether you come from you just have all the brokenness in your family. I have good news for you. I have good news for you.

And that is, in Christ Jesus, we are also a family now. We are also a family now. We have to learn to be kind. We have to learn to love one another as Christ is loved of.

I said at the beginning, our goal is to make disciples of Jesus. Jesus only defines what a disciple is three times. His own words about what a disciple is. It's John 8. It's abide. If you abide in my word, you are my disciple.

[43:07] It's John 13. If you love one another, you will be my disciple. And John 15. If you bear fruit, you will be my disciple. Those who are his disciples will abide in his word, will love one another.

How? As he loved us. And I want to finish with a passage. Usually we do our scripture reading at the very beginning. And I invite you to stand. This time I want to do it here towards the end.

Because I want to read to you Ephesians 2. And regardless of what family background you come from, this is good news for you and I. Because we were once dead in our trespasses and sin.

We were once following the course of this world. We were carrying out the desires of our flesh. And we had no family. But God. But God.

But God. Rich in mercy. Because of the great love that he had for us. Made us alive together. And Jesus comes and preached peace to those who are far off and to those who are close.

[44:09] He breaks down that dividing wall of hostility. And through him, through the cross, we now have access to the Father. All of us. Whatever family background we come from. Whatever levels of journey of the faith that we're on.

We are now all members and citizens of the household of God. That is the family. I want to finish and then I'll read the scripture to you. That quote, that long journal entry from Henry Nouwen finishes like this.

I hadn't read the whole thing to you. And it says this. Still, communion is your authentic desire. And it will be given to you. But you have to dare to stop seeking gifts and favors like a petulant child.

And trust that your deepest longing will be fulfilled. Dare to lose your life and you will find it. Trust in Jesus' words. There is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land

for my sake.

And for the sake of the gospel, who will not receive a hundred times as much houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land. And persecutions too. Now in this present time and in the world to come.

[45:08] Eternal life. He's saying, you have a new family now. Because of me. Regardless of where you come from before. He knows what you've let go of. He knows what you're still struggling with.

Just before he died on the cross. He looks at Mary, his mother. And he looks at John. And he says, this is now your mother. This is now your son. Why? Because of me. Because of me, you are now family.

Because of him, we are now family. Hi, mom. Because of what he did for us. Whether we are blood related or not.

We are bound by the blood of Christ. And I want to read Ephesians 2 over us. And I want you to open up your heart and open your hands and receive that good news. And let whatever that good news is compelling you to do, to love other people.

Let that permeate through into all of your actions. Regardless of whether you've been so hurt by family or not. Or whether you come from a Christian family. And have no real hurts to share either.

[46:13] We come together because of what God did for us. Can I invite you to stand for the word of God? I'm reading the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

And again, as I always like to remind myself. I stand because this is the word of God. This has stopped being the word of James. This is not Cubon. This is not Agnes. This is not Trevor. This is the word of God himself speaking to us.

And we receive it with reverence and awe. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world.

Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind.

And were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy.

Because of the great love with which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses.

[47:19] Made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace.

In kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a resort of works so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works. Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh.

Called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision. Which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

And strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus. You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[48:17] For he himself is our peace. Who has made us both one. And has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances.

That he might create in himself one new man. In place of the two. So making peace. And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross. Thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off. And peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens.

But you are fellow citizens with the saints. And members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

In whom the whole structure being joined together. Grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together. Into a dwelling place for God by the spirit.

[49:19] Can I invite you just to open up your hands and pray. Amen. Jesus we receive this good news. And we bring to you whatever experiences we've had of our family.

