

The God Who Reconciles

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, let's get into God's word this morning. Before we look at the text, I want to ask you a few questions. Raise your hand if you've ever sinned against someone.

Okay? All right, so this message is for you today. Raise your hand if you think the person sitting next to you has ever sinned against somebody. Okay?

Raise your hand if you've ever been sinned against by someone else. All right, yeah, so, yeah, it's for all of us. All right, let's get a little deeper, more to the heart of what we're going to look at today. Raise your hand if you've ever had a hard time forgiving somebody. Okay? I'm going to ask you one more question if you're willing to answer.

You don't have to raise your hand, but I'm going to raise mine. Raise your hand if you would say, you know, I've forgiven somebody, but I just as soon never have to see him again.

[1 : 04] Anybody like that? This issue of forgiveness, and really the issue we're going to look at today, is the issue of reconciliation.

It gets to our hearts in a very deep place, in a very painful place. I try to read through the Bible each year, and, you know, the Bible says that it's alive.

It's living, powerful, active. And sometimes when you read through God's Word, you say, I know I've read this before. I've had to have read this before, but I've never seen this before.

Or it's never hit me, right? Okay? And I love when God does that. I feel sort of foolish and ignorant when he does it, but it's always refreshing. And I know when God does that to me, I need to pay attention.

I need to pay close attention. And God did this for me this past spring in a powerful way, but I didn't get it at first. I read through this passage, and I thought, wow, the gospel, what a clear statement of the gospel in the Old Testament.

[2 : 17] And I love to see those. I love to see those hints of the gospel right there in the Old Testament. But that application was still out here. And God didn't let it go.

He kept driving home. He kept bringing it back to my mind and meditated. And it took me for a while. It was a little dull. And God said, Eric, you're not applying it.

You're not applying it. I've had to forgive more people in the last couple of years than I ever remember having to do so before. And if probably they were honest, too, they probably had to forgive me more, maybe as well.

But there were some instances where there were people that saw forgiveness, and I said I granted forgiveness. But I was content in a wrong way to keep them at a distance.

Just say, you know what? I don't have to talk to them. I don't have to fellowship with them. It would be really hard.

[3 : 25] It would be a lot easier to not do so. So I'm just not going to reach out. I'm just going to stay in what I've decided now is an unsatisfactory sphere of comfort, a false comfort by keeping people at a distance.

In 2 Samuel, of course, a lot of this is about King David, his rise to power, his ministry as the king, and so forth.

In 2 Samuel 14, we find David caught in the middle of an intriguing scheme devised by the commander of his army named Joab. And this scheme was actually on behalf of one of David's sons, Absalom.

Now, Absalom at this time was estranged from his father, King David. Let me give you a little bit of backstory. You can sort of follow along through your text. Back in chapter 11, of course, this is the infamous account of David and his sin with Bathsheba.

He gave in to his sexual lust. It resulted in her becoming pregnant. Then David tried unsuccessfully to cover up his sin, and eventually he had to resort to murdering Bathsheba's husband, Uriah.

[4 : 51] And he did so by using the hands of the ungodly nation, I think of the Ammonites. He had the rest of the fellow soldiers, Uriah, pull back from him, leaving him exposed to those who were firing their weapons from the walls.

And so Uriah, who died honorably, it was really very shameful that he was killed by the hands of God's enemies. And in chapter 12, verse 14, look there, it says, when Nathan the prophet comes to David to rebuke him, he says, however, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

David sinned with Bathsheba. David sinned against Uriah and, of course, against the nation. But he gave God's enemies the opportunity to blaspheme over their victory of killing the soldier Uriah.

So as king over Israel, the former shepherd boy David, though he was called to shepherd the nation to fight their battles and to protect them from their enemies.

In these ways, he failed miserably in this account. So chapter 12, of course, David's confronted by the prophet Nathan. And David does confess his sin and repents.

[6 : 17] Nathan assures him that God has put away his sin there in verse 13. However, God's promised punishment was significant, and it even included the death of the conceived child.

Nevertheless, God eventually gave David and Bathsheba another son who would eventually rule over Israel. We know his name to be Solomon. So you see God's chastening, but also God's mercy and grace as well in David's life.

Chapter 13, as you turn there, we find that David has had multiple wives and thus also multiple families. One of his sons named Amnon had a problem with lust just like his father David.

Amnon lusted after his half-sister, Tamar. Amnon raped Tamar and afterwards sent her away with hatred, being even more passionate with hate than he was with his lust.

And when their father David heard about it, he was extremely angry, but apparently did nothing about it. Did nothing to discipline his son. Now perhaps David realized that he was just as guilty of a similar kind of sin as his son Amnon.

[7 : 34] He had given in to his lust with Bathsheba. Amnon gives in to his lust with Tamar. David probably felt, if you imagine, he'd be pretty hypocritical, right?

If he would have disciplined his son, even though he was called to do so. It reminds me of, you know, we're all sinners, right?

And I'll just speak to fellow parents, many of you in here are parents, that we need to be honest with our children about our sin, where it's appropriate.

We need to seek their forgiveness. We need to confess our sins when we've sinned against them. We need to show them how important the gospel is to our lives today, why we need that forgiveness today.

Because there are going to be times when we are called to discipline our children according to sins that they've committed that are the same sins that we've committed. And they're going to look at us and say, well, Daddy, didn't you?

[8 : 35] You see? Yeah. And God chastens me. And God has called me to direct you and discipline you and bring correction into your life as well.

So we've got to be honest with that. We're going to be shown as, unfortunately, failures, as hypocrites in some ways. But a hypocrite, really, by definition, is not just someone who sort of breaks in the rules he's trying to live by, but is someone who's characterized by that.

Okay? And so David, you can imagine here in his situation, for some reason he did not follow through with any discipline against Amnon. But this apparent inaction created a breeding ground for hatred in the heart of Tamar's brother, Absalom.

He kept it, and it was brewing. He was bitter towards his half-brother, Amnon. He hated his half-brother, and he was just waiting for an opportunity. And so two years later, Absalom calls all the king's sons together for a feast, and he planned, and he executed his plan to kill his half-brother, Amnon.

After he killed Amnon, of course, all the other sons fled back to Jerusalem, and he fled to the land of his grandfather, Talmai, who was the king of Geshur. And he was there for three years, estranged from David and family and so forth.

[10:01] Look at chapter 13, verses 37 through 39. But Absalom fled and went to Talmi, the son of Ammon, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and he was there three years. And king David longed to go to Absalom, for he had been comforted concerning Amnon because he was dead.

So the Bible's telling us here that at some point, David found comfort, that he had, in his sorrow of the loss of Amnon, God had comforted him in that regard.

But David was still, well, Absalom was estranged from David. Now they're still separated. Three years go by, still separated from his son. David longs to go to be with Absalom, but he's not doing it. He's not making any effort. He's not bringing him back, and he's not going to see him. He's leaving Absalom at a distance.

[11:05] Are you currently estranged from someone this morning? Whether family or friend. Has their sin or yours, or perhaps both, caused such a separation?

If so, how would God describe the condition of your heart towards that person? Are you still holding anger?

Is there hatred, bitterness? Perhaps that has subsided. Are you mourning? Are you still grieving over the loss of that friendship, that fellowship, that relationship?

Are you longing for them? Those would be good signs. The grief, the sorrow, the longing. You know that something is missing, and you want it back.

And perhaps you may have given up hope that it will ever come back, that the relationship will ever be restored. Maybe you've tried. Maybe you've made efforts. And this morning, this message is not comprehensive on the issue of reconciliation or forgiveness.

[12:16] If you're going to build a biblical philosophy and theology, of these things, you're going to have to look at a lot more passages than just this. But just in regards to reconciliation, are you estranged from someone this morning?

Is that where God wants you to be? Is your heart in the condition that God wants it to be in? Let's read a few verses from chapter 14. This is where we're getting to the meat of our text here.

This is the immediate context. Verse 1. So Joab, the son of Zerah, perceived that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom. And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her, Please pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning apparel.

And do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who has been mourning a long time for the dead. Go to the king and speak to him in this manner. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

Let's turn over. Well, actually, I'll just keep reading here. When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, Help, O king!

[13:26] Then the king said to her, What troubles you? And she answered, Indeed, I am a widow. My husband is dead. Now your maidservant had two sons, and the two fought with each other in the field, and there was no one to part them.

But the one struck the other and killed him. And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant, and they say, Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed.

And we will destroy the heir also. So they would extinguish my ember that is left, and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant on the earth.

And the king said to the woman, Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you. And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, My lord, O king, let the iniquity be on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne be guiltless.

So the king said, Whoever says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you anymore. Then she said, Please let the king remember the Lord your God, and do not permit the avenger of blood to destroy anymore, lest they destroy my son.

[14:26] And he said, As the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground. Now pause for a moment. You see, she's not letting it go. She's pushing at something here, and David seems almost like he's getting frustrated.

Like, I told you, I'm going to take care of it, basically. You know, it's going to be okay. She doesn't stop. Verse 12, Therefore the woman said, Please let your maidservant speak another word to my lord the king.

And he said, Say on. So the woman said, Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks in this thing as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring

his banished one home again.

For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life, but he devises means so that his banished ones are not expelled from him.

Now, therefore, I've come to speak of this thing to my lord the king, because the people have made me afraid. And your maidservant said, I will now speak to the king. It may be that the king will perform the request of his maidservant.

[15:44] And it goes on there, and David is shrewd. He figures out, Okay. Is Joab a part of this? Is Joab been on this? And yes, she admits it.

She comes clean in this. But you notice here, she turned it to him. It said, You're guilty. Let's read those verses again. Verse 13, Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God?

For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, and that the king does not bring his banished one home again. For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.

Yet God does not take away a life, but he devises means so that his banished ones are not expelled from him. So the story, you know, as she put it, she had two sons.

One killed the other. By right of law, the family could demand the death of the murderer. The avenger of blood could demand his death. She was already a widow.

[16:50] If both of her sons are gone, there's no one to care for her. Her right of property, of livelihood is gone. She will be penniless. She will be a beggar. Family member, other family members would have to take her in.

She would be reliant upon the mercy and generosity of others. And so she talks about, the one ember that she has left would be snuffed out.

And this was really just a picture. It was a word story to get David emotionally involved, to see the issue at hand in his own heart.

What was going on between him and Absalom. Absalom, by right of law, would face a death penalty. He murdered his brother.

Two sons. David had two sons. He had many more. But of these two sons, one killed the other. The people could demand the death of Absalom. David neither executed judgment against Absalom, nor did he offer the mercy that he was offering to this woman.

[18:02] And so she turns it back to him and says, you have schemed this against the people of God. See, Absalom would have a right to the throne.

As a son, he was part of the king's family, part of, in a sense, that leadership, entourage, the heritage of the Lord through David's lineage, which was promised by God for David, that he would always have someone to sit on the throne.

Of course, speaking of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. But Absalom was part of that lineage. But David didn't execute judgment, and he didn't offer mercy that he was offering to this woman.

And she turns it back to him and says, you are the man. You are doing the same thing. There's no action on your part. And then she talks about the character of God.

And that's really what we need to focus on here this morning. What is God like? When it comes to this issue of reconciliation, as we've already admitted, we've had trouble forgiving people.

[19:08] There are times where we have an uneasy or unsatisfactory comfort in keeping people at a distance, even though we would say that we have forgiven. Have we really? Have I really? Is that how God treats us?

No. And she says, it's really not about death. She talks about, you know, we're all going to die, and our lives are going to be like water that's poured out on the ground. And you're not going to get that back.

She's not saying there's no resurrection, but death is not the issue. David, death is not the issue. The issue at hand here is are you being like God?

Look at verse 14 again. The second part. Yet God does not take away a life, but He devises means so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.

To me, that's what caught my attention. The gospel. Right? Our sin separates us from God.

[20:18] Now, we're born as sinners of sin nature under the wrath of God, under the curse of God. And then we willingly live out of our sin nature and all kinds of sins. And a lot of them, we don't even

recognize at first until the law of God comes into our lives somehow, and then God's word, His spirit convicts us.

Wow, that's bad. I shouldn't be doing that. That's wrong. And then we start to recognize and learn what sin really is. A lot of times, we don't think sin is that bad until we realize what God says that it's separate.

Our sin has separated us from a holy God. Because God is holy, we cannot have fellowship with Him. We are estranged from God because of our sins. But this text tells us that our God doesn't want to keep us at a distance.

Right? That is not how God acts. That is not how God has acted. God devises means, the words there means He thinks thoughts.

He makes plans of how to bring people back into relationship with Him. We know that plan by the term, the gospel, or the good news.

[21 : 28] And what is that? That God Himself said, I will take on the punishment of your sins. So He took on flesh and the person, the second person of God had the Lord Jesus Christ.

He came to this earth, God in flesh, lived life perfectly, no sin. He satisfied every demand of God's righteousness.

He obeyed God's law perfectly. And then He willingly went to the cross to take our sins upon Himself. He paid the punishment for our sins so that if we will turn away from our sins and put our faith in what He did for us, trusting that His sacrifice is not only necessary, but sufficient for your sins, for my sins.

God says that on the basis of that faith, He will apply Christ's payment to our spiritual account that our sins will be paid for.

We will be wiped clean, our record wiped clean, not just of past, but all present, future sins as well that Jesus paid at all so that through that He would bring us back into relationship with Himself.

[22 : 40] He doesn't keep us at a distance. God doesn't say, okay, I forgive you, but stay over there in the corner. I forgive you, but just keep going through life miserable.

I forgive you, but I'm not going to bless you. Or I don't want to hear your prayers. Or I don't want to hear you sing to me. I don't want to hear what's going on in your life.

That's not God. But perhaps someone here this morning may think of God in that way. I know there are times where I thought God was so angry at me that if I would have to try to draw a picture in my mind of His countenance towards me, it would have been nothing but hatred and displeasure.

But God's Word tells me differently. You see, that's a lie the devil wants us to believe. Does God hate sin? Absolutely. Did Christ pay for all my sin?

Absolutely. Does God love sinners? Absolutely. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[23 : 54] Romans 5a, while we were still sinners, God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. You see, God knows us.

perfectly. There is no secret. He knows every flaw. He knows every desire for sin, every thought, every evil deed and word, not just of the past, but in the future.

He knows us perfectly. He loves us perfectly anyway. Okay? That's what the gospel tells us. He doesn't keep us at a distance.

He devised a means by which filthy, rotten sinners like me and you could be made clean and reconciled back to Him forever.

Amen? Amen? And so, it's ironic to me that God used a scheming woman to declare such a tremendous, powerful truth to King David and to us today.

[25 : 10] That God doesn't treat us like that. And so, as she turned that back to David, say, David, you're not acting like God. You're not glorifying God.

You are our leader. But you're not a good example of the character of God in this situation. So, what about us? When we choose to keep people at a distance, we're not acting like God.

See, that's why God had to keep hammering this verse back to me. Not just because it's a wonderful statement of the gospel in the Old Testament, but because I was at that time living in a state of this unsatisfactory comfort.

I'm saying, you know, I don't, making excuses that, well, I'm not really in the circle with them anymore. I don't really run into them, so I don't really need to talk to them. And so, it's going to be hard, it's just, I've forgiven.

And God said, no, Eric, you haven't. I devise plans to bring people back into reconciliation with me.

[26 : 38] Eric, you're devising excuses to keep from doing so. And so, I was not, I was just as guilty of not glorifying God in those relationships.

I will say in one in particular, God made it easy on me. And I'm just confessing my sin to you this morning that before this principle of God's truth had a full enough effect on me, God used the other person to seek reconciliation with me.

And I was convicted yet again that I should have done so. I was humbled by that. And I'm thankful. thankful for the mercy and grace of God that not only covers my sin before Him, but is able to help you and I as sinners to get back into a right relationship with others.

It takes both parties. Okay? We have to know that. And sometimes, despite our, we might say, our best efforts, or our imperfect efforts, it doesn't always work out like we want it to work out, like God would want it to work out.

We can't control what other people are doing. But we do have a responsibility before God to do what we're called to do to demonstrate His character before others.

[28 : 26] Would you turn to Ephesians chapter 4? before we close today, I want to challenge you to memorize a verse.

I'm so glad that you, as a church, are going through memorizing the book of Colossians. Now, I'll give you one more verse to memorize, but we won't turn to this other passage, but when we think about this issue of reconciliation, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, the Apostle Paul, he defends his ministry before the Corinthian believers, but he also enlists them.

He talks about why he served and the ways he served and what motivated him, what impassioned him in his gospel ministry, but then he spoke of every believer, I think, when he says that God has given to us this ministry of reconciliation, and he talks of himself and other believers that we are all ambassadors for Christ to an unsaved world, and our message is this, we urge you to be reconciled back to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's our message, right? That's what the gospel was about, okay? Be reconciled to God. God has made it possible for you to come back into a right relationship, you see, because the work of redemption, it's much bigger than just an individual sinner getting to heaven, okay?

And I think you know that, church, that's sort of that personal application, is how can I be forgiven of my sins, made right with God, and then get to heaven, but it's much more than eternal fire insurance.

[30 : 13] It's about a relationship with the holy God, but it's not just about individuals having a relationship with the holy God. God's work of redemption is about all of his creation, okay?

So, ladies, you're studying the book of Revelation. Compare it to the book of Genesis, right? In the end, God is making all things new, okay?

Not just the millennial kingdom when Christ will reign, and there'll be a rod of righteousness by which he rules. No, but after that, everything's going to be burned up, God's going to recreate.

That's when the work of redemption, in a sense, is complete. When we get to the eternal state, and God makes all things new, and we are all living then as we were originally designed to live.

Adam and Eve blew it in the garden, okay? Adam primarily, right? The weight is on his shoulders, okay? But God is making all things new.

[31 : 10] So this whole work of redemption is when everything is made new. And so part of that making things new is bringing those who are estranged from God back into relationship with him.

This ministry of reconciliation. So we urge people be reconciled to God. And so we have to talk to them about what's keeping them away from God, what has separated them from God.

We've got to talk about Christ because he is the means by which their sins can be forgiven. They can be dressed in Christ's robes of righteousness and so forth, back into relationship.

And so when you think about if that is what God has called us to do in this life, how effective do you think we will really be in preaching that message and sharing that message when we're living contrary to it.

When really we say, well, I say I forgive, but I'm just allowing those bridges to be maybe burned or in disrepair, uncrossed, keeping people at a distance.

[32 : 19] God's going to work on us. He keeps telling us, Eric, that's not how I act with you. That's not how I treat you. you need to trust me for grace to help you be like me in doing that.

Ephesians 4, verse 32. I won't sing to you this morning, especially my voice is as bad as it is, but even on a great day you wouldn't probably want to hear this, but there is a little jingle or song that I

learned when I was probably in middle school.

It was really just the words of Ephesians 4, 32, set to music. Be ye kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

All the theology in chapters 1 through 3 of the book of Ephesians, talking about the glory of God's grace in the gospel and through his church, church, this is one of those applications.

Basically, in light of how God has treated us, we are to treat others with the same degree of tenderheartedness, the same degree of forgiveness, just as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.

[33 : 46] And God can help you do it. forgiveness is not the absence of sorrow or the absence of loss or the absence of any cost to you.

In fact, if I'm correcting this, forgiveness costs the forgiver. There's a parable that Jesus gave of a master.

He had stewards working for him. And the one steward seemed to be in charge of perhaps all of his finances. And he was being deceptive, basically.

And he was indebted to the master. And the master said, you can't be the steward anymore. And, yeah, there's a great debt I'm going to throw you. You're in prison until you pay it. And it was an astronomical, it was like 20 years worth of wages.

This guy was never going to be able to afford to pay back his master. The master says, I forgive you that debt. That same steward went out and found somebody that worked for him that owed him about one year's worth of wages.

[35 : 04] And even though that lesser steward cried out with the same exact words, crying out for mercies and saying, I will pay you back everything I owe you, he wouldn't hear it. And he had him thrown in the prison.

And of course the master found out about it and said, you wicked servant. Shouldn't have you have shown mercy to your fellow servant as like I've shown it to you? You know, that parables picture of what God, God has forgiven us truly an astronomical amount of sin debt.

debt. But he did that because he took the payment himself. You see, if someone owes you and you say, I forgive you the debt, you don't get that money back.

You're still at a loss. And we have to recognize that we don't forgive people when it feels good to forgive them. We forgive them knowing that, yes, they have fallen short.

But we're saying, I'm not going to hold that debt against you any longer. I'm paying it. It's on me. I'm going to suffer the loss in order for you and I to have the relationship that God has designed for us to have.

[36 : 20] Because God has forgiven us so much, he's called us to forgive one another. And it's to so much of a lesser degree. And so by way of application here, as we close, maybe you're not in a position this morning that you feel like anybody is really estranged from you.

Some people are just so very, much more motivated than myself in this. They're probably a lot better relationally connected to people and just cannot stand it.

They're going to do everything they can, maybe even things that they shouldn't do perhaps, but everything they can to try to get a relationship back the way it should be. Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe God is maybe just tweaking your heart a little bit in some way saying, okay, do it for my glory.

But for some of us here this morning, you might just say, I know someone that I'm estranged from, they're estranged from me, and I've just found some unsatisfactory comfort in that.

God is speaking to me this morning. I encourage you, trust the Lord for His grace to reach out. Devise a means, plan, come up with a plan to reach out to that person.

[37 : 37] As much as depends upon you, live peaceably with all men. That's what the Word of God says. And trust God to work on the other side as well.

I can't say in every instance it's all going to come back together. But I do know this, that God wants to be glorified in our hearts, in our actions, in these ways.

Amen? Let's pray. Father in heaven, and sometimes we seem like we're going through motions and your Word maybe hits us with dull ears.

and at other times it really cuts us to the quick. You speak to us in profound ways and sometimes it takes a while for you to get our attention as we ought as we just ask you for forgiveness this morning, Lord.

Help us to be quick to hear the voice of your Spirit, to pay attention to the truth of your Word. Lord, please forgive us for being satisfied with keeping people at a distance, satisfied with our own poultry efforts to offer forgiveness.

[39 : 10] God, help us to trust you. You have allowed sin and difficulty, pain and sorrow and loss to come into our lives. God, we have called us to become like the Lord Jesus Christ who would take the sin upon himself in order to reconcile relationships, to bring us back into relationship with himself and you, God the Father.

Lord, we see this in Jesus at the cross saying, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. We saw it in the first martyr Stephen saying, Lord, don't hold this sin to their account. Lord, may that same kind of heart be in us when we think of others and their sin against us that we would want to overlook it, that we would want to say, God, don't punish them, don't hold this against them.

Lord, help us to have your kind of love, your kind of mercy and grace, that would want to overlook sin, that would want to push it out of the way, even bear it ourselves, in order for our relationships with others to bring you glory, for the gospel to be applied to our relationships with other people. God, sometimes this sin comes so close to home, sometimes it's within our homes, within our very families, even our marriages. And God, when some people, when they hurt us to such depths of pain, we sometimes can't see our way out of it, wonder how in the world we can ever trust, how we can ever reach out.

[41 : 04] God, I believe that your grace is always going to be sufficient for every good work. That's what your word tells us. And so if there's someone here this morning that is in that kind of desperate state of maybe even hopelessness, that you would remind them of your truth this morning, that you are able, you are the God of the impossible, that your grace can and will sustain them, your grace can help them to forgive, help them to learn to trust.

So God, I pray that you would use these truths in our lives and our relationships to bring yourself glory, to demonstrate your grace. Help us, oh God, we pray.
In Jesus' name, amen.