

Help! with my Relationships
Hebrews 4:14-16; April 26, 2020

Introduction:

As we continue our “Help!” series, today we’re going to look at how the “pressure-cooker” of Covid-19 and this season of quarantine is affecting our relationships.

On one hand, we need help with the lack of relationships and the loneliness we experience.

- Singles stuck at home by themselves
- Single parents juggling homeschool and work from home
- The elderly: living at home or in assisted living.
- And to some extent: all of us. We miss friends, family, teammates, classmates, co-workers, church family, and the list goes on.
- You might be wrestling with feelings of loneliness, that you are unnecessary, not needed or just disconnected. You wonder who will care for you or who you will turn to if a need arises or if you get sick. You might even long for new relationships but can’t even go out and meet someone.

On the other hand, we need help with the abundance of relationships and the challenge it brings.

- Many of us are spending a lot more time with our spouses, kids, siblings and roommates these days.
- There’s some obvious opportunities here (invest in your marriage, teach and disciples your kids in a more intentional way) but there’s also some challenges.
- It probably didn’t take long for all of the pressures to affect your marriage: financial (getting laid off or furloughed), working from home, homeschooling, all the extra time together, etc.
- Parents are wearing multiple hats:
 - In my home, this is amplified even more because we’ve got five kids. Because of our current work situation, Leigh has had the most flexibility and has taken on the brunt of homeschooling. She’s now teaching two second graders and a third, sixth and eighth grader. She’s the PE teacher, Math teacher, lunch lady, principal and counselor.
- There’s the nonstop engagement: “Mommy, mommy, mommy. Daddy, daddy, daddy. Can I have a snack? She pushed me. Can I play on a device? I don’t want to read. Do we really have to do school work? We’ve played that game three times already today. Can we have ice cream? Pizza again?”
- There’s more meltdowns, school troubles, fights and arguments.
- How do we feel?
 - Has anyone said: “My kids are driving me crazy!”
 - Anyone exhausted?
 - Anyone want to just go hide in a closet to get away from all of the chaos in your house.
- Let me talk to the kids for a second:

- Is your brother or sister getting on your nerves?
- Are your parents losing their temper?
- Are your parents using harsh words with you?
- Do you feel like some of their reactions aren't justified?
- You know what? We all need help: parents and kids.

These aren't entirely new challenges but they are definitely amplified by this season of quarantine. Whether is the lack of relationships, the abundance of relationships, or both; we all need help!

Transition: Today, we're going to look at three verses in the book of Hebrews that are extremely relevant to your need and my need for help with our relationships.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Transition: This passage gives us two essential truths about Jesus and then invites us to respond in two specific ways.

1. Jesus is a Great High Priest (14).

- In the OT, the high priest oversaw the ritual worship and functioned as the main representative between God and the people of Israel.
 - His function is seen most clearly with what he would do annually on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:1-25).
 - He would enter into the holiest place of the temple, where no one else was allowed to enter and where God's presence was known to dwell, and he would offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.
 - The purpose of that OT practice was to prepare us for God to send someone to make a way for us to return to his presence.
- The author of Hebrews is saying that Jesus is the promised high priest.
 - He has passed through the heavens and entered into the true holy of holies, God's presence in heaven.
 - He has presented himself before God as the true and perfect sacrifice (cf. 8:1-2; 9:11-14, 22-24). It's through his blood that we can be forgiven and cleansed of our sin.
 - This is where Jesus lives today, having immediate access to God day and night, making intercession for us (cf. Heb. 7:25).
- Jesus makes intimacy with God possible. He doesn't stand between us and God. He takes us straight to God. Through him, there is open access to God.

2. Jesus Sympathizes with our Weaknesses and Propensity to Sin (15).

- One of our greatest fears in life is that no one will understand or relate to what we're experiencing. Have you ever heard someone says, "But you don't understand what I'm going through?"

- The good news of this passage is that Jesus understands what you are going through. Instead of being far removed from our experience, Jesus has been right in the thick of it with us.

Jesus was tempted in every respect as we have been, yet without sin (cf. Heb. 2:17-18).

- Jesus felt the full force and range of all temptations and yet prevailed victoriously.
- While the expressions or tools for sin have changed, the essential nature of sin hasn't changed.
- Go read the Gospel accounts with this lens and just reflect on all the challenges he faced in life and opportunities for temptation to sin.

Objection: Since Jesus never actually sinned, he can't really sympathize with me.

- "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is.... You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later.... We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means" (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp 142).
- Jesus actually knows the force of temptation in a way that we do not.

Jesus can sympathize with our weakness and propensity to sin.

- Jesus knows our weaknesses. It's not just something that he's heard about but something he's experienced firsthand. No temptation that you ever experience will be foreign to Jesus.
- It has even been noted that "This is even greater than having a friend who has been through what you have been through and can identify with you." (Erik Raymond).
- So what are some of the temptations that Jesus gets?
 - For those experiencing loneliness, he understands your temptations:
 - To question God's goodness
 - To cope by turning to other people to solve and satisfy only what God can.
 - To cope by turning to pornography to comfort yourself when there's no one else to comfort you.
 - To cope by indulging in earthly comforts like food, shopping and entertainment to ease your pain.
 - To cope by isolating yourself even further from God and others instead of running to God and seeking out Christian community (connect with a Group).
 - Jesus can sympathize with your loneliness:
 - His closest disciples couldn't even stay awake to watch and pray in his time of greatest need (cf. Matt. 26:38-40).
 - One of his own disciples betrayed him, Peter denied him three times and all of them fled after he was arrested.

- It gets worse: on the cross he cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”
- For those of you experiencing challenges in your relationships, Jesus gets it. He understands your temptations:
 - To think your spouse, kids, siblings or roommates are your enemies.
 - The temptation to turn against them during this season.
 - To take out your frustrations and anxieties on them.
 - To blame them for your behavior.
 - To justify your actions because of their behavior towards you.
 - To yell, bribe, ignore and do whatever you have to do in order to get what you want from them.
 - He understands fatigue and an aching body.
 - He gets busyness and weariness.
 - He know what it’s like to serve and pour out and receive little or nothing in return.
 - He gets what it’s like being surrounded by needy and hungry people.
 - He gets your longings for comfort and peace and just a place to lay your head down for a few minutes.

Transition: Because of these two great truths, there’s a powerful, relevant and practical application for all of us today.

Main Point: Hold fast and draw near to Jesus to find help with your relationships.

- This passage gives us two commands in light of these truths:

1. Hold fast our confession (14).

- This means to hold firmly to the faith we profess. Namely, that because of the life, death and resurrection for Jesus, a way has been made to return to God and live with him forever.
- This is a call to remain committed to Jesus (cf. 2:1; 3:6, 12-14; 4:11).

2. Draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (16).

- Every single one of us needs help. And we especially need help with our relationships right now.
- The help that we need is found at the throne of grace. Jesus has opened up direct access to God and it is at his throne where we can find help.
- **Draw near**
 - Don’t run from God. Run to him.
 - This is a present tense verb implying that we should *constantly* be drawing near to God.
 - God is not socially distant from you even when you remain social distant from others.
- **With confidence**

- We don't have to clean ourselves up or minimize and hide our sin.
- We are to draw near with confidence and without fear that we will incur shame or punishment.
 - God is not sitting in angry judgment as we approach him.
 - He is not rolling his eyes at our pain.
 - He welcomes us with loving compassion.
- One commentator asks: "In light of this, what can hold us back?" (Leon Morris).
- **How do we draw near with confidence?**
 - It's a call to seek God in prayer.
 - "He that would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer. This calls in the suitable help and [assistance] that is laid up in Christ for us (Heb. 4:16). This casts our souls into a frame of opposition to every temptation" (John Owen, *Of Temptation*).
 - When you sense temptation rising, draw near to him. Again and again and again. His grace never runs dry.

As you reflect on your own particular temptations, I'm pleading with you now: draw near to God. Go to him right now in prayer. He's eager and ready to help you in your time of need. Confess your sin. Receive the forgiveness found in Jesus. If you'd like someone to pray with you right now, we have people ready to pray with you in our Church Online platform.

If you've never turned to Jesus as your high priest, trusting in his sacrifice for your sacrifice and receiving the forgiveness that he extends, turn to him today. If you'd like to respond, just text "JESUS" to the number on the screen or in the comments sections. If you're in our Church Online platform click "Raise Hand" to commit to follow Jesus and then select "Request Prayer" so that we can celebrate and pray with you.

Pray