

FAITHLABZ

WORDS THAT SHAPED THE FAITH



# Words of Relationship

*Family. Community. Belonging.*

MAY 2026

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# Welcome

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You are holding a study about relationship. But before we open a single verse, I want to be honest with you.

I almost called this study "Words of Community." It sounded safer. More churchy. More like something you would see on a shelf and nod at without really needing.

But the Bible does not use the word "community" the way we do. We use it to describe a group of people who happen to be in the same room. The Bible uses words for relationship that are so intense, so physical, so binding, that they would make most of us uncomfortable if we really understood them.

Words like *echad*, which means "one" but describes the kind of oneness where two people lose the boundary between them. Words like *koinonia*, which we translate "fellowship" but which originally meant a shared financial investment, the kind where if your partner goes under, you go under with them. Words like *adelphos*, which means "from the same womb," and which the early church used for people who had never met each other's mothers.

These are not polite words. They are not safe words. They are words that describe what happens when God gets involved in how humans relate to each other. And when God gets involved, things get inconveniently close.

This study is five sessions long. Each session corresponds to one week of our May 2026 daily content. You can do it alone, but I would encourage you to do it with someone else, because the content itself will make the case that you were not designed to learn about God in isolation.

Here is what we will cover:

Session 1: In the Beginning, Relationship. The God who existed in relationship before He created anything, and the first "not good" in the Bible.

Session 2: Honor and Legacy. The Fifth Commandment, the Hebrew words for family, and what it means that Mother's Day falls in the middle of this study.

Session 3: The One-Another Life. The fifty-plus commands in the New Testament that are impossible to obey without other people.

Session 4: Closer Than Brothers. Friendship in Scripture, the difference between *philos* and *hetairos*, and why Jesus called Judas a word He never used for anyone He loved.

Session 5: Adopted, Grafted, Welcomed. How God takes outsiders and makes them insiders, and why Paul chose the word "adoption" instead of "birth."

Integration Session: Made for Each Other. Tying it all together.

Each session includes an opening question, a teaching summary you can read aloud or study individually, a word study spotlight, discussion questions, cross-references, personal reflection prompts, and a weekly practice.

One more thing. You will notice that this study does not ask you to have it all figured out. The questions are designed to surface what you actually think, not what you think you are supposed to think. Bring your real answers. Bring your doubts. Bring the thing you have never said out loud in a Bible study. The original languages can handle your honesty. They have been carrying it for thousands of years.

*Let's begin.*

*Adam Wilber*

*FaithLabz*

## Month Overview

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### THEME

May 2026 explores the biblical vocabulary of relationship: the words God chose to describe family, community, friendship, belonging, and what it means to be connected to Him and to each other.

### WHY THIS MONTH MATTERS

This is the first month of the 12-Month Master Plan, "Words That Shaped the Faith." We begin here because relationship is where humans live. Before you can discover your identity (June), experience freedom (July), or grow in wisdom (August), you need to understand the relational architecture God built into creation itself. Relationship is not a chapter in the Christian life. It is the foundation underneath every other chapter.

### THE ARC

Week 1 opens with God's own relational nature and the design of humanity for connection. Week 2 grounds us in family, the first human institution. Week 3 expands to the gathered community of faith and the "one-another" commands that require proximity. Week 4 explores the overlooked biblical theology of friendship. Week 5 brings us to the ultimate belonging: adoption, grafting, and welcome into God's family. By the end, we will have traced a line from the Trinity to your kitchen table.

### WEEKLY THEMES AT A GLANCE

#### **Week 1 (May 1-2): In the Beginning, Relationship**

Primary Passages: Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:18-25, John 17:20-23

Key Words: Echad, Lo Tov

#### **Week 2 (May 3-9): Honor and Legacy**

Primary Passages: Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:1-4, Proverbs 31

Key Words: Kaved, Em, Av, Bayit, Toledot, Ben/Bat, Eshet Chayil

### **Week 3 (May 10-16): The One-Another Life**

Primary Passages: John 13:34-35, Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24-25

Key Words: Allelōn, Agapaō, Bastazō, Parakaleō, Charizomai, Douleuō, Episynagōgē

### **Week 4 (May 17-23): Closer Than Brothers**

Primary Passages: 1 Samuel 18-20, Proverbs 17-18, John 15

Key Words: Rea, Berith, Ahav, Philos, Koinōnia, Homothymadon, Hetairos

### **Week 5 (May 24-31): Adopted, Grafted, Welcomed**

Primary Passages: Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:4-7, Romans 11

Key Words: Huiiothesia, Abba, Synklēronomos, Enkentrízō, Symphytos, Adelphos, Paroikos

## **HOW TO USE THIS STUDY**

**For Groups (recommended):** Plan 60 minutes per session. Have one person read the Teaching Summary aloud. Work through the Discussion Questions together. Save the Personal Reflection prompts for individual journaling during the week. Close with the Weekly Practice.

**For Individuals:** Set aside 45-60 minutes of uninterrupted time. Read the Teaching Summary slowly. Sit with the Discussion Questions as journal prompts. Use the Weekly Practice as your daily rhythm for the coming week.

**For Couples:** This study works exceptionally well as a couples' devotional. Many of the words we study this month (echad, berith, ahav) are marriage words in their original context.



SESSION ONE

# In the Beginning, Relationship

*Based on Week 1: May 1-2*

Key Words: Echad, Lo Tov



Before God made anything, He was not alone. The first words of Genesis reveal a God who speaks in the plural: "Let Us make man in Our image." And the first problem God identifies in creation is not sin, not rebellion, not disobedience. It is isolation. "It is not good for the man to be alone." This session explores what the Hebrew word echad reveals about the nature of God and the nature of oneness, and what lo tov (not good) tells us about the architecture of the human soul.

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## Opening Question

*Think about the last time you felt genuinely known by another person, not just liked, not just tolerated, but actually known. What was happening? What made that moment different from ordinary interaction?*

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## Scripture Reading

Read aloud: Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:18-25

Reference passages: John 17:20-23, Deuteronomy 6:4

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## Teaching Summary

I want to tell you about the loneliest verse in the Bible.

It is not in Psalms, where David hides in caves. It is not in Lamentations, where Jeremiah watches a city burn. It is not in any of the places you would expect to find loneliness.

It is in Genesis 2:18. Before sin. Before the fall. Before anything went wrong.

God looks at the man He has made, the man who walks in an unbroken garden with an unbroken God, and He says two Hebrew words that change everything: lo tov. Not good.

I need you to feel the weight of that. Everything else in the creation account gets the word tov. Good. The light is good. The land is good. The animals are good. When creation is finished, God looks at it all and says tov me'od. Very good. The Hebrew superlative. The gold star.

But here, in the middle of paradise, in the one place in the universe where nothing is broken, God finds something that is not good. And the thing that is not good is not a moral failure. It is not a design flaw in the man's character. It is a condition. The man is levaddo. By himself.

Let me say this plainly, because I missed it for years: the first problem God identifies in the human story is not sin. It is aloneness.

That means something. It means that your ache for connection is not weakness. It is not neediness. It is not a character flaw you should be embarrassed about. It is the echo of the first divine diagnosis ever spoken over a human life. God looked at a sinless man in a perfect garden and said, "This is not working."

Now here is where the Hebrew takes us somewhere English cannot.

Back up to Genesis 1:26. "Let Us make man in Our image." The plural. We could spend an entire month on that sentence. But for now, notice the word that shows up in the most sacred verse in all of Judaism, the Shema. Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is echad."

Echad. One. It is Strong's H259. It appears roughly 960 times in the Old Testament. And at first glance, it looks like the simplest word in Hebrew. One. The number. End of story.

But Hebrew does not give up its secrets that easily.

Echad shows up in Genesis 2:24 to describe what happens when a man and a woman come together in marriage: "They shall become one (echad) flesh." Two distinct persons, fused into a single unit. In Genesis 1:5, evening and morning, two different things, are called "one (echad) day." In Numbers 13:23, a cluster of grapes, many individual grapes, is called "one (echad) cluster."

There is another Hebrew word that means one. Yachid. Strong's H3173. It only shows up 12 times. Yachid means solitary, alone, the only one. It is the word God uses for Isaac in Genesis 22: "Take your son, your yachid." Your only one.

Here is what is remarkable. Yachid, the word for solitary oneness, is never used of God in Scripture. Not once. The word chosen for the most important theological declaration in Jewish history, the Shema, is echad. The one that holds diversity inside unity. The one that can carry two into one without either disappearing.

Now, I want to be careful here. The word echad does not prove the Trinity. That is not what FaithLabz is claiming. The word simply means "one." Its range of usage, though, is striking. It describes a oneness that does not require isolation. A oneness that can include relationship within itself.

And this is where it connects to Genesis 2.

If God is echad, a oneness that is relational at its core, then a being made in His image cannot be complete alone. The *lo tov* of Genesis 2:18 is not an accident. It is an inevitability. A relational God creates relational beings. Isolation is a design violation.

I have spent a lot of years in churches where the highest spiritual achievement seemed to be needing nobody. The hero of the faith was the person who said, "I don't need people. I just need Jesus." And I understand the impulse. People hurt you. People leave. People say your name wrong and do not correct themselves and you replay it for three days.

But Genesis says something different. Genesis says that before sin entered the picture, before any person had ever hurt another person, God Himself declared that aloneness is not good. Not "not ideal." Not "could be improved." Not good. *Lo tov*. The same construction used later in Scripture for moral failure. Aloneness, in a sinless world, registers on the same scale as a broken thing.

You were not made to do this alone. Not your faith. Not your grief. Not your Tuesday afternoons. You were made in the image of a God who has never been alone, and your ache for connection is not something to outgrow. It is something to obey.

When Jesus prays in John 17:21, He asks the Father that His followers would be one. And the Greek word He uses is hen, the direct equivalent of echad. "That they may all be hen, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You." The oneness Jesus prays for His people is the same oneness that exists within God. Not a lonely oneness. A relational one. A oneness that holds difference without erasing it.

This is where the month begins. Not with a command to love your neighbor. Not with a guilt trip about church attendance. But with a fact about God's own nature that restructures everything: God is relational. You are made in His image. And the ache you feel is not a problem to solve. It is a signal to follow.

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## Word Study Spotlight

**אֶחָד**

**Echad (ekh-AHD)**

Strong's H259 · Appears: Roughly 960 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** One, united, a unified whole

Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is echad."

The word chosen for the most foundational declaration of God's oneness is not yachid (solitary one) but echad, a word whose range of usage includes composite unity: two becoming "one flesh" (Gen 2:24), evening and morning becoming "one day" (Gen 1:5), many grapes forming "one cluster" (Num 13:23). This does not prove the Trinity, but it reveals that the Hebrew vocabulary for oneness does not require isolation.

**לֹא־טוֹב**

**Lo Tov (lo-TOHV)**

**Meaning:** Not good

Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for the man to be alone."

This is the only "not good" declaration in the pre-Fall creation narrative. Everything else is tov (good) or tov me'od (very good). The first problem God identifies is not moral failure but relational absence. Aloneness, even in a sinless world, is categorized as a broken condition. The Hebrew tov carries the sense of functional fitness; lo tov means something is not functioning as designed. Humanity without relationship is a tool without its purpose.

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## Discussion Questions

**OBSERVATION — WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?**

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1. In Genesis 1:26, God says "Let Us make man in Our image." What is the immediate context surrounding this statement? What does God do next, and what mandate does He give?

2. Read Genesis 2:18-25 carefully. Notice the sequence: God declares *lo tov* (v. 18), then parades the animals before Adam (vv. 19-20), then creates the woman (vv. 21-22). Why do you think God showed Adam the animals before providing the solution? What was Adam supposed to notice?

### INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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3. The word *echad* is used for God's oneness in Deuteronomy 6:4, for the one-flesh union of marriage in Genesis 2:24, and for the unity Jesus prays for in John 17:21 (using the Greek equivalent, *hen*). What thread connects these three uses? What kind of oneness is being described?

4. God declares "not good" before sin enters the world. How does this change the way you think about loneliness? If aloneness is a pre-Fall problem, not a post-Fall consequence, what does that suggest about how deeply the need for relationship is wired into us?

5. Genesis 2:20 says that among all the animals, "there was not found a helper fit for him." The Hebrew *ezer kenegdo* literally means "a help corresponding to him," or "a strength that faces him." What does this tell us about what kind of relationship solves the *lo tov* problem? Why was a pet not enough?

### APPLICATION — WHAT DO I DO?

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6. Many Christians have absorbed the idea that needing people is a sign of spiritual immaturity, that the goal is to need "only God." How does Genesis 2:18 challenge that assumption? Where have you seen this belief play out in your own life?

7. If your loneliness is not a character flaw but a design feature responding to a design violation, how does that change the way you approach it? What is one relationship in your life right now where you could move from surface-level to *echad*-level connection?

8. Jesus prays for His followers to be "one" using the same oneness language used of God Himself (John 17:21). What would it look like for your small group, your family, or your closest friendships to reflect that kind of unity? What is one barrier standing in the way?

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## Cross-References

*Explore these related passages for deeper study:*

Psalm 68:6, "God settles the solitary (*yachid*) in a home": The same word for "solitary" that is never used of God is used here for people who need rescue from isolation. God's response to *yachid*-ness is to place people in families.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one": Solomon's pragmatic case for companionship. Notice the progression from two to three: "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." Relationship is not just emotional; it is structural.

1 John 1:3, "Our fellowship (koinōnia) is with the Father and with His Son": John describes the Christian life as shared participation in a relationship that already exists within God. We are not creating community from scratch. We are being invited into one that predates us.

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## Personal Reflection

1. When you hear "it is not good for man to be alone," what is the first feeling that surfaces? Relief? Resistance? Fear? Write honestly about why.

2. Think about the relationships in your life right now. Where are you experiencing echad-level connection, the kind where two become one without either disappearing? Where are you settling for proximity without intimacy? What is the difference between the two?

3. God identified the problem of aloneness before the man even knew he had it (Gen 2:18-20). Is there an area of isolation in your life that you have normalized, that you have told yourself is fine, but that God might be calling "not good"?

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## Weekly Practice

### THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE: THE ECHAD PRAYER

Each morning this week, pray one sentence: "God, show me where You are calling me out of aloneness."

Then pay attention. Not to dramatic signs. To small ones. The person at work you keep meaning to have a real conversation with. The friend you have not called in months. The family member you interact with on the surface but never below it.

**How to do it:** Set a daily alarm for the same time each morning. When it goes off, stop for ten seconds. Pray the sentence. Then go about your day with your eyes open. At the end of the week, write down what you noticed.

The point is not to manufacture connection. It is to ask God to show you the connections He is already trying to build, the ones you have been too busy or too guarded to see.

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## Closing Prayer

As you close, pray about:

The ache for connection you carry, and the courage to stop calling it weakness.

The relationships you already have that could go deeper, if you let them.

The truth that the God who said "not good" is the same God who solved it, and that He is still solving it in your life today.





SESSION TWO

# Honor and Legacy

*Based on Week 2: May 3-9*

Key Words: Kaved, Em, Av, Bayit, Toledot, Ben/Bat, Eshet Chayil



The Fifth Commandment is not about obedience. It is about weight. The Hebrew word for "honor" is kaved, and its root meaning is "heavy." To honor your father and mother is to treat them as weighty, as substantial, as people whose lives press meaning into yours. This session explores the Hebrew vocabulary of family, from em (mother) to av (father) to bayit (the household itself), and asks what it means to give weight to the people who shaped you, especially when those people were imperfect. With Mother's Day falling on May 10, this session also unpacks the eshet chayil of Proverbs 31, a phrase that does not mean what most English Bibles suggest.

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## Opening Question

*When you hear the phrase "honor your father and mother," what is the first emotion that surfaces? Be honest. Is it warmth? Guilt? Resentment? Confusion? Why?*

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## Scripture Reading

Read aloud: Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-4

Reference passages: Deuteronomy 5:16, Proverbs 31:10-31, Ruth 3:11

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## Teaching Summary

I need to tell you something about the Fifth Commandment before we go any further. I got it wrong for most of my life.

I thought "honor your father and mother" meant feel something. Gratitude. Reverence. Warmth. I thought it was an emotion commandment, that God was asking me to summon a feeling about my parents and sustain it indefinitely. And if you grew up in a home where that feeling came naturally, the commandment probably felt like a gift. But if you grew up in a home where the people who were supposed to protect you were the people you needed protection from, the commandment felt like a locked door.

I have talked to people who stopped reading the Bible at this verse. Not because they did not believe it. Because they did not know how to do it.

So here is the Hebrew. And the Hebrew changes everything.

"Honor your father and your mother." The word translated "honor" is kaved. Strong's H3513. It appears 116 times in the Old Testament. And its root meaning is not "respect." It is not "obey." It is not "feel warm things about."

Kaved means to be heavy. To have weight.

The same root gives us kavod, which is the Hebrew word for glory. When the Old Testament talks about the glory of God, the kavod of the LORD, it is talking about His weight. His substance. His gravitational pull. To stand in God's glory is to stand in the presence of something so heavy, so real, so dense with meaning that you cannot pretend it is not there.

And that is what God is asking you to do with your parents. Not feel a certain way. Give them weight. Treat their lives as substantial. Recognize that their existence, however imperfect, pressed meaning into yours.

This is a completely different commandment than the one most of us learned in Sunday school. Kaved does not require you to agree with your parents. It does not require you to pretend they were good at the job. It does not require you to minimize what they did or did not do. It asks you to do one thing: refuse to treat them as light. Refuse to act as if they do not matter.

You can give weight to someone who hurt you. You can acknowledge the substance of a person without endorsing their choices. In fact, the weight is precisely what makes it hurt. Wounds from lightweights do not scar. The people who shaped you, for good or for damage, were heavy. Kaved asks you to tell the truth about that.

Now look at the family vocabulary surrounding this commandment. The Hebrew is remarkably physical.

Em. Mother. Strong's H517. It appears over 200 times. The word is related to the root for "glue" or "bond" in some Semitic languages. The mother is the one who binds. The one who holds things together. In the ancient world, the em was the center of the household's daily life. She was not decorative. She was structural. Remove her and the house does not stand.

Av. Father. Strong's H1. It is literally the first word in Strong's Concordance. The aleph-bet itself begins with the letter aleph, and av starts with aleph. In ancient Hebrew culture, the av was not primarily defined by biology. He was defined by responsibility. The av was the one who provided, protected, and transmitted the story. When God calls Himself "Father," He is using this word. He is saying: I am the one responsible for you.

Bayit. House. Strong's H1004. But bayit does not mean a building. It means a household. A family unit. A living organism of people bound together by covenant and proximity. When God promises to build David a "house" in 2 Samuel 7, He is not talking about architecture. He is talking about a dynasty. A family line. A legacy. Bayit is the word for "inside." To be part of a bayit is to be on the inside of something.

Toledot. Generations. Strong's H8435. This is the word that structures the entire book of Genesis. "These are the toledot of Adam." "These are the toledot of Noah." Ten times this word appears in Genesis, each time introducing a new section of the family story. Toledot comes from the root yalad, to give birth. Generations are not just a timeline. They are a birth chain. Each link is someone who carried the story forward by bringing new life into it.

Ben. Son. Strong's H1121. Bat. Daughter. Strong's H1323. In Hebrew, ben is related to the root for "to build." A son builds the family forward. He is not a product of the household. He is the next brick in it. And bat comes from a root related to "branching out." A daughter extends the family outward, grafting it into new households and multiplying its reach.

Every one of these words is architectural. Mother is the glue. Father is the foundation. House is the structure. Generations are the timeline. Sons build upward. Daughters extend outward. Family in Hebrew is not a sentimental concept. It is a construction project.

And now we arrive at the phrase that brings this to life, especially with Mother's Day just around the corner.

Eshet chayil. Proverbs 31:10.

Most English Bibles translate this as "virtuous woman" or "wife of noble character." The Hebrew says something different. Eshet means woman or wife. And chayil? Strong's H2428. It appears roughly 290 times in the Old Testament. And it does not mean "virtuous" in the way we use that word.

Chayil means valor. Strength. Might. Force. Army.

It is the same word used for soldiers in battle. When Scripture describes David's "mighty men," it uses chayil. When it talks about an army's fighting strength, it uses chayil. Eshet chayil is not "nice lady who bakes bread and sews curtains." Eshet chayil is "woman of military-grade strength."

And here is what makes this passage even more remarkable. Proverbs 31:10-31 is an acrostic. Each of its 22 verses begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from aleph to tav. A to Z. The literary structure itself is saying: this woman's strength covers everything. There is no letter of the alphabet that does not belong to her.

In Jewish tradition, the eshet chayil is sung by husbands to their wives every Friday evening before the Shabbat meal. It is not a to-do list. It is a standing ovation. It is the husband stopping the world for three minutes to say: I see what you carry. I see what you build. You are not appreciated enough and I am going to fix that right now by singing over you.

Ruth is the only woman in the entire Hebrew Bible who is explicitly called an eshet chayil by another character (Ruth 3:11). Ruth. The Moabite widow. The foreigner. The gleaner in someone else's field. The woman who by every cultural standard should have been disqualified. She is the one who gets the title.

And here is where it connects back to kaved. When Boaz calls Ruth an eshet chayil, he is giving her weight. He is treating her life as substantial. He is saying: your presence here matters. You are not light. You are not invisible. You are heavy with purpose. He is doing what the Fifth Commandment asks every child to do for every parent. He is refusing to treat her as if she does not count.

This week, whether you are preparing to celebrate Mother's Day with a living mother or carrying the weight of a mother you have lost, or navigating the complicated reality of a mother who was more wound than warmth, the Hebrew has something to offer you.

You do not have to feel a specific feeling. You are asked to give weight. To say: this person's life pressed meaning into mine. Even if that meaning came through pain. Even if the pressing left bruises. The weight was real. And acknowledging the weight is the beginning of the commandment.

Honor is not a warm feeling you have to earn or manufacture. It is weight you choose to give.

## Word Study Spotlight

כָּבֵד

### Kaved (kaw-BAHD)

Strong's H3513 · Appears: 116 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** To be heavy, weighty; to honor, glorify

Exodus 20:12, "Honor (kaved) your father and your mother."

The same root produces kavod (H3519), the word for God's glory. To honor is to give weight. To glorify is to declare heaviness. The Fifth Commandment is not asking for a feeling; it is asking you to treat your parents as substantial, as people whose lives carry meaning. This reframes honor for those who carry complicated family histories.

אִם

### Em (AIM)

Strong's H517 · Appears: Over 200 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** Mother

Proverbs 1:8, "Do not forsake the teaching of your mother (em)."

The mother in Hebrew family structure was the center of daily household life, the one who bound the family together through presence, instruction, and continuity. Moses' mother Jochebed (Yocheved) carries the root of kavod in her name, meaning "the LORD is her glory/weight."

אָב

### Av (AHV)

Strong's H1 · Appears: Over 1,100 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** Father

Deuteronomy 6:7, "You shall teach them diligently to your children."

The first word in Strong's Concordance. The av was defined primarily by responsibility, not biology. When God calls Himself "Father," He is claiming the role of the one who is responsible for you, the provider, protector, and transmitter of the story.

## בַּיִת

### Bayit (BAH-yit)

Strong's H1004 · Appears: Over 2,000 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** House, household, family

2 Samuel 7:11, "The LORD will make you a house (bayit)."

Bayit is not a building. It is a living family organism. God's promise to David was not construction; it was dynasty. To be part of a bayit is to be on the inside of something, to belong to a structure that outlasts any individual.

## תּוֹלְדוֹת

### Toledot (toh-leh-DOHT)

Strong's H8435 · Appears: 39 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** Generations, genealogy, family history

Genesis 2:4, "These are the generations (toledot) of the heavens and the earth."

This word structures the entire book of Genesis, appearing ten times as a section marker. It comes from yalad (to give birth). Your family history is not a timeline. It is a birth chain, each link carrying the story forward into new life.

## בֵּן / בַּת

### Ben / Bat (BEHN / BAHT)

Strong's H1121 / H1323

**Meaning:** Son / Daughter

Psalms 127:3, "Children are a heritage from the LORD."

Ben is related to the root "to build." A son builds the family forward. Bat is related to "branching out." A daughter extends the family outward. Children in Hebrew are not passengers in the family. They are the next phase of its construction.

## אִשֶּׁת חַיִּיל

### Eshet Chayil (AY-shet KHAH-yil)

Appears: Chayil occurs roughly 290 times in the OT; the full phrase eshet chayil appears in Proverbs 31:10 and Ruth 3:11

**Meaning:** Woman of valor, woman of strength/might/force

Proverbs 31:10, "An eshet chayil, who can find? Her worth is far above rubies."

Chayil is the same word used for an army's fighting strength and for David's mighty warriors. Proverbs 31:10-31 is a 22-verse acrostic covering the full Hebrew alphabet, a literary way of saying this woman's capacity spans everything from A to Z. In Jewish tradition, it is sung by husbands to their wives every Friday evening. It is not a to-do list. It is a standing ovation. Ruth, the Moabite foreigner, is the only woman in Scripture explicitly called eshet chayil by name (Ruth 3:11).

## Discussion Questions

### OBSERVATION — WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

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1. Read Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 side by side. Deuteronomy adds a phrase not found in Exodus: "that it may go well with you." What is the relationship between honoring parents and things going well? Is this a promise, a principle, or something else?
2. Look at the structure of Ephesians 6:1-4. Paul addresses children in verses 1-3, then immediately pivots to fathers in verse 4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." Why do you think Paul puts these instructions back-to-back? What does this suggest about how honor and responsibility work together?

### INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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3. If kaved means "to give weight," how does that change the way you understand the Fifth Commandment? How is giving weight different from feeling warmth or respect? Can you give weight to someone who wounded you?
4. The Hebrew words for family (em, av, bayit, ben, bat) are all structural and architectural, not sentimental. What does it tell us about God's design for family that the vocabulary is more construction site than greeting card?
5. Chayil, the word used for the Proverbs 31 woman, is the same word used for soldiers and armies. Why would wisdom literature close with a military-strength word for a woman? What does this suggest about how Hebrew culture actually viewed women, versus how we sometimes assume it did?

### APPLICATION — WHAT DO I DO?

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6. For those with complicated parental relationships: kaved does not require you to pretend your parents were perfect. It asks you to refuse to treat them as if they do not matter. What would it look like, practically, to give weight to a parent who was more wound than warmth?
7. Toledot (generations) reminds us that we are links in a chain. What is one thing, one truth, one practice, one story, that you want to make sure passes from your generation to the next? What would it cost you to intentionally transmit it this week?
8. The eshet chayil tradition involves stopping to publicly praise the women in your life. Regardless of your gender, who is an eshet chayil in your world right now? Someone whose strength goes unsung? What would it look like to tell them this week?

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## Cross-References

*Explore these related passages for deeper study:*

Malachi 4:5-6, "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." The final prophecy of the Old Testament is about family reconciliation. The last word before four hundred years of silence is about parents and children finding each other again.

1 Timothy 5:4, "If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household (oikos) and to make some return to their parents." Paul uses the Greek word for "return" or "repayment." Honor has a reciprocal structure. What was poured into you asks to be poured back.

Psalm 127:1, "Unless the LORD builds the house (bayit), those who build it labor in vain." The same bayit from our word study. God is the architect. Human family building works only when it works with His blueprint.

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## Personal Reflection

- 1. Write the names of the people who gave you weight, who treated your life as substantial when you could not see your own worth. What did they do specifically? What did it feel like?*
- 2. The Fifth Commandment comes with a promise about long life in the land. Setting aside theological debate about how that promise works, what is the practical connection you see between honoring your parents and flourishing? What breaks in a life where that weight is never given?*
- 3. If you could sing an eshet chayil, a standing ovation, over one woman in your life this Mother's Day weekend, who would it be? Write her name. Then write three specific things about her strength that you have never said out loud.*

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## Weekly Practice

### THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE: THE WEIGHT CONVERSATION

Before Mother's Day (or on Mother's Day itself), have one specific conversation with your mother, or the woman who mothered you, or someone who has filled that role. If your mother has passed, write the conversation in your journal instead.

The conversation has one rule: you must name one specific thing she did that pressed meaning into your life. Not a generic "thank you for everything." A specific moment. A specific choice. A specific sacrifice. The more precise, the heavier the weight.

**How to do it:** Call, visit, or write a letter. Begin with: "I have been studying the Hebrew word for honor this week, and I want to tell you something specific." Then tell her. If words are difficult, write them down first and read them aloud. Precision is what makes weight land.

If your relationship with your mother is complicated or estranged: the practice still applies, but the specific thing you name may be smaller. It may be: "You gave me life. That is weight I carry and I am choosing to acknowledge it." You do not have to reconcile. You do not have to pretend. You are asked to give weight. One sentence of weight is enough.

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## Closing Prayer

As you close, pray about:

The weight of the people who shaped you, and the courage to name that weight honestly, even when the shaping was painful.

The families you are building right now, your bayit, and the truth that God is the architect underneath your labor.

The women of valor in your life who carry more than anyone sees, and the opportunity this week to stop and say it out loud.





SESSION THREE

# The One-Another Life

*Based on Week 3: May 10-16*

Key Words: Allelōn, Agapaō, Bastazō, Parakaleō, Charizomai, Douleuō, Episyntagōgē



There is a word in the New Testament that appears 100 times. It has no subject form. It cannot stand alone. Grammatically, it only exists when people are doing something to each other. The word is *allelōn*, "one another," and it is the backbone of over fifty commands that are structurally impossible to obey by yourself. This session explores the Greek vocabulary of mutual Christian life: the love that is chosen (*agapaō*), the burdens that are carried (*bastazō*), the encouragement that comes alongside (*parakaleō*), the forgiveness that is given freely (*charizomai*), the service that costs something (*douleuō*), and the gathering that must not be abandoned (*episynagōgē*).

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## Opening Question

*When was the last time someone in your faith community did something for you that you could not have done for yourself? What did it feel like to receive it?*

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## Scripture Reading

Read aloud: John 13:34-35, Galatians 6:1-5

Reference passages: Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 3:12-17, Romans 12:9-16

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## Teaching Summary

I have a confession. There have been seasons of my life where I was done with community.

Not done with God. Done with people. Done with the small group that felt like homework. Done with the Sunday morning smile that took more energy than I had. Done with the version of "fellowship" that was really just coffee and small talk while everyone carefully avoided saying anything real. I remember sitting in a room full of believers thinking, I have never felt more alone in my life.

If you have ever felt that way, I am not going to tell you that you were wrong. I am going to tell you that the New Testament anticipated you. And it has a word for what you actually need. A word that, once you see how it works, reframes everything you thought you knew about Christian community.

The word is *allelōn*. Strong's G240. It is a reciprocal pronoun. It means "one another." And it shows up 100 times in the New Testament.

But here is what you need to know about *allelōn* that changes the game. This word has no nominative form. If you have never studied Greek grammar, that might not sound significant. So let me explain what it means.

In Greek, the nominative case is the subject of the sentence. It is the actor. The doer. If I say "John threw the ball," John is in the nominative. He is the one acting.

Allelōn cannot be nominative. It does not exist in that form. It literally cannot be the subject of a sentence. It cannot stand alone. It can only exist as an object, as the thing being acted upon, or as something in relationship to a verb. "Love one another." "Bear one another's burdens." "Forgive one another." Allelōn only shows up when someone is doing something to someone else.

The word itself is dependent on relationship. It cannot function in isolation. The grammar models the theology.

And the New Testament is saturated with it. Over fifty commands use this word. Love one another. Serve one another. Accept one another. Bear with one another. Forgive one another. Encourage one another. Be devoted to one another. Honor one another. Instruct one another. Greet one another. Wait for one another. Comfort one another. Be kind to one another. Submit to one another. Confess to one another. Pray for one another.

Fifty-plus commands. Not one of them can be obeyed alone.

Think about that. God filled His instructions for the Christian life with a word that has no independent form. He did not say "be good." He did not say "try harder." He said "do this to each other." The entire ethical system of the New Testament is structurally communal. Rip allelōn out of the epistles and they collapse. There is not enough left to stand on.

Now look at the verbs attached to this word. Each one reveals a different dimension of what the one-another life actually costs.

Agapaō. Strong's G25. It appears roughly 143 times in the New Testament. This is the love verb. Not phileō, which is affection. Not eros, which is desire. Agapaō is the love that decides. It is volitional, not emotional. When Jesus says "love one another as I have loved you" in John 13:34, He uses agapaō. He is not asking you to feel something. He is asking you to choose something. And the "as I have loved you" is not a nice comparison. It is the standard. He chose the cross. That is what agapaō looks like at full volume.

Bastazō. Strong's G941. About 27 times in the New Testament. It means to carry, to bear, to pick up something heavy. When Paul says "bear one another's burdens" in Galatians 6:2, he uses bastazō. This is not sympathize with one another's burdens. It is not be aware of one another's burdens. It is carry them. Pick them up. Put them on your own back. Two verses later, Paul says "each one will carry his own load," using a different word (phortion, a soldier's pack). There is no contradiction. You carry your own backpack. But when someone is crushed under a boulder, you do not walk past and say, "Well, everyone has their own load." You get under it with them.

Parakaleō. Strong's G3870. Roughly 109 times. The word is built from para (alongside) and kaleō (to call). To encourage, in the Greek, is literally to call someone to your side. Or to come alongside someone who is struggling. It is not a pep talk from across the room. It is proximity. The same root gives us paraklētos, the word Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit in John 14. The Spirit is the One Called Alongside. When you

encourage someone in the biblical sense, you are doing what the Holy Spirit does. You are standing next to them in it.

Charizomai. Strong's G5483. About 23 times. It comes from charis, grace. Charizomai means to give freely, to forgive graciously, to release a debt without demanding payment. When Paul says "forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" in Colossians 3:13, he uses this word. Forgiveness in the New Testament is not a transaction. It is a grace event. It is giving something the other person did not earn and probably does not deserve, specifically because God did the same for you. The root, charis, is the reminder that forgiveness is only possible because you received it first.

Douleuō. Strong's G1398. About 25 times. It means to serve as a slave. Not as a volunteer. Not as someone doing a favor. As a slave. When Paul says "through love, serve (douleuō) one another" in Galatians 5:13, he deliberately chooses the most humiliating word for service in the Greek language. The word carries connotations of zero autonomy, zero choice, zero personal agenda. You do not serve the other person when it is convenient. You serve them because you belong to them. The same letter that celebrates freedom from the law (Galatians 5:1) immediately turns and says: now use your freedom to enslave yourself to each other. Freedom is not the destination. Love expressed through voluntary slavery is.

Episynagōgē. Strong's G1997. This one only appears twice in the entire New Testament. Hebrews 10:25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Twice. That is it. It means a gathering together, an assembling. The epi prefix adds intensity: it is not just a synagōgē (a gathering), it is an epi-synagōgē, a gathering upon, a piling up, a coming together with urgency.

And in Hebrews 10:25, the writer says: "Do not neglect the episynagōgē of yourselves, as is the habit of some." Do not abandon the intense gathering. Do not skip it. Do not let it slide. The word that only appears twice gets attached to the command that many Christians treat as optional. The rarity of the word matches the urgency of the instruction. The writer reached for a word so uncommon, so intense, that it would stop the reader. "I am not talking about casual attendance. I am talking about the kind of gathering where people pile on top of each other because they refuse to let anyone stand alone."

Here is what all six of these words, attached to allelōn, add up to.

The Christian life is not a solo project with occasional group activities. It is a group project with occasional solo moments. The word for "one another" cannot exist alone. The word for love is a decision you make toward someone. The word for burden-bearing is physical. The word for encouragement requires proximity. The word for forgiveness is rooted in grace you received first. The word for service uses slave language. And the word for gathering is so intense it only needed to be used twice, because once you see it, you do not forget.

You do not have to feel connected to start connecting. The verbs come first. Love is a choice before it is a feeling. Service is an action before it is an identity. Gathering is a discipline before it is a desire. The one-another life starts with the verb, and the feeling follows.

You were not designed to read the Bible alone and hope it works. You were designed to carry someone else's weight and let them carry yours. The grammar of the New Testament will not let you off the hook on this. Allelōn is everywhere. And it only works when you do.

## Word Study Spotlight

### ἀλλήλων

#### Allelōn (al-LAY-lone)

Strong's G240 · Appears: 100 times in 94 verses in the New Testament

**Meaning:** One another, each other, mutually, reciprocally

John 13:35, "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another (allelōn)."

Allelōn is built from allos ("another") reduplicated. It has no nominative form; it cannot be the subject of a sentence. It only exists grammatically in relationship to a verb and to other people. The word itself models the theology it expresses: "one another" cannot function alone.

### ἀγαπάω

#### Agapaō (ah-gah-PAH-oh)

Strong's G25 · Appears: Roughly 143 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** To love with deliberate choice and commitment

John 13:34, "Love (agapaō) one another as I have loved you."

Agapaō is volitional love, the kind that decides rather than feels. It is the verb form of agapē. The standard set by Jesus, "as I have loved you," points to the cross. This love is measured by cost, not intensity of emotion.

### βαστάζω

#### Bastazō (bahs-TAH-zoh)

Strong's G941 · Appears: 27 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** To carry, bear, pick up a heavy load

Galatians 6:2, "Bear (bastazō) one another's burdens."

This is physical, muscular language. It describes picking up something heavy and carrying it yourself. Paul distinguishes this from phortion (a soldier's personal pack, Gal 6:5). Everyone carries their own pack. But when the weight becomes a boulder, you get under it together. The one-another community is defined by what it refuses to let its members carry alone.

### παρακαλέω

#### Parakaleō (pah-rah-kah-LEH-oh)

Strong's G3870 · Appears: Roughly 109 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** To call alongside, to encourage, to comfort, to exhort

1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Encourage (parakaleō) one another and build each other up."

Built from para (beside) and kaleō (to call). Encouragement in the New Testament is not a speech from a distance. It is showing up next to someone. The same root produces paraklētos, Jesus' title for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). When you encourage someone, you are doing what the Spirit does: standing alongside.

## χαρίζομαι

### Charizomai (kha-RID-zoh-my)

Strong's G5483 · Appears: 23 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** To give freely, to forgive graciously, to release a debt

Colossians 3:13, "Forgiving (*charizomai*) one another, as the Lord forgave you."

From the root *charis* (grace). Forgiveness in the New Testament is not a transaction where you settle accounts. It is a grace event where you absorb the cost. The root reminds you that you can only give this because you received it first. *Charizomai* forgiveness is expensive. It cost God the cross. It will cost you something too.

## δουλεύω

### Douleuō (doo-LYOO-oh)

Strong's G1398 · Appears: Roughly 25 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** To serve as a slave, to be in bondage to

Galatians 5:13, "Through love, serve (*douleuō*) one another."

Paul deliberately chooses the most radical service word available. *Douleuō* is not volunteer work. It is slave labor. In the same letter where Paul celebrates freedom from the law (Gal 5:1), he immediately redirects that freedom toward voluntary enslavement to each other. Christian freedom is not autonomy. It is the liberty to choose whose feet you wash.

## ἐπισυναγωγή

### Episynagōgē (eh-pee-soon-ah-go-GAY)

Strong's G1997 · Appears: 2 times in the New Testament (Hebrews 10:25, 2 Thessalonians 2:1)

**Meaning:** An intensive gathering together, an assembling upon

Hebrews 10:25, "Not neglecting the assembling (*episynagōgē*) of yourselves together."

The rarest word in this session. The *epi* prefix intensifies the basic *synagōgē* (gathering). This is not casual attendance. It is urgent, intentional coming together. The word appears only twice in the entire New Testament, but the Hebrews writer attaches it to a command about not quitting. The rarity matches the urgency. You do not need a common word for something this important. You need an uncommon one that stops you.

## Discussion Questions

### OBSERVATION — WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

1. Read John 13:34-35. Jesus calls this a "new commandment." But Leviticus 19:18 already commanded love of neighbor. What is new about what Jesus says here? Look carefully at the phrase "as I have loved you." What does the "as" change?

2. In Galatians 6:2, Paul says "bear one another's burdens," but in verse 5 he says "each one will carry his own load." Read both verses in context (Galatians 6:1-5). What is the difference between the burden (baros) of verse 2 and the load (phortion) of verse 5? When is it right to carry your own weight, and when does someone else need to get under it with you?

### INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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3. Allelōn has no nominative form. It cannot be the subject of a sentence. What does this grammatical fact reveal about God's design for how Christians are supposed to relate to each other? What happens to the Christian life when we try to make it a solo project?

4. Paul uses douleuō (slave service) in Galatians 5:13 immediately after declaring freedom from the law. How do you reconcile "you are free" with "enslave yourself to one another"? What kind of freedom is Paul describing?

5. Episynagōgē appears only twice in the entire New Testament, yet the Hebrews writer attaches it to an urgent command about not quitting. Why would the writer reach for such a rare, intense word? What does this suggest about how seriously the early church took the act of gathering?

### APPLICATION — WHAT DO I DO?

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6. Of the six action words in this session (love, bear, encourage, forgive, serve, gather), which one is hardest for you right now? Be specific about why. What would it cost you to practice that verb toward one specific person this week?

7. Parakaleō means to call alongside, to show up next to someone. Is there someone in your life right now who does not need your advice but needs your presence? What would it look like to simply stand next to them this week without trying to fix anything?

8. The one-another commands cannot be obeyed in isolation. They require proximity and regularity. Honestly assess your current level of episynagōgē, the intense gathering. Are you piling on, or pulling back? What is one concrete step you could take this week to move closer, not further?

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## Cross-References

*Explore these related passages for deeper study:*

Acts 2:42-47, the first community: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (koinōnia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Luke describes the early church with daily, tangible, sacrificial language. This is episynagōgē in action before the word was coined.

Romans 12:9-16, the one-another catalog: Paul stacks nine allelōn-style commands in eight verses. Each one is a single sentence. The rapid-fire structure mirrors the intensity. Community is not one thing you do. It is a dozen things you never stop doing.

James 5:16, the vulnerable gathering: "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." James links confession, prayer, and healing in a single sentence. Healing happens in the space between two honest people. Not in the space between one person and their ceiling.

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## Personal Reflection

1. Think about the difference between *bastazō* (carrying someone else's boulder) and *phortion* (carrying your own pack). Is there a burden you have been carrying alone that was never meant to be a solo load? What would it take to let someone get under it with you?
2. *Charizomai*, forgiving as you have been forgiven. Is there a debt you are holding against someone right now, a grudge, a resentment, a record of wrongs? What would it cost you to release it? What would it cost you to keep holding it?
3. Be honest: have you been pulling back from the gathering? Not just physically, but emotionally? What would it look like to show up, really show up, this week?

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## Weekly Practice

### THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE: THE ONE-ANOTHER VERB

Choose one of the six verbs from this session. Just one. And practice it toward one specific person every day this week.

*Agapaō*: Make a deliberate, costly choice for someone's good each day.

*Bastazō*: Ask someone, "What are you carrying right now?" and then actually help carry it.

*Parakaleō*: Show up next to someone. Not with words. With presence.

*Charizomai*: Release a specific grudge. Say it out loud to God: "I am letting this go."

*Douleūō*: Serve someone with zero expectation of return or recognition.

*Episynagōgē*: Show up to something you have been skipping. Stay the whole time.

**How to do it:** Write your chosen verb on a card or sticky note. Put it where you will see it every morning. At the end of each day, write down one sentence about what you did with it. The point is not perfection. It is repetition. Verbs only live when they are practiced.

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## Closing Prayer

As you close, pray about:

The verb that costs you the most right now, and the courage to practice it anyway.

The person in your life who needs you to show up alongside them, not with answers but with presence.

The truth that allelōn cannot stand alone, and neither can you. Ask God to show you where He is calling you out of isolation and into the inconvenient, beautiful mess of one-another life.





SESSION FOUR

# Closer Than Brothers

*Based on Week 4: May 17-23*

Key Words: Rea, Berith, Ahav, Philos, Koinōnia, Homothymadon, Hetairos



The Bible has a theology of friendship. Not a vague one. A precise one, with its own vocabulary, its own categories, and its own warnings. The Hebrew word for friend (rea) is the same word used for neighbor, because in the ancient world, the two were identical. The Greek word the New Testament uses most often for friend (philos) is a word of chosen intimacy. And there is another Greek word for friend (hetairos) that Jesus reserved for a very specific kind of relationship, one that included the man who betrayed Him. This session explores what the Bible says about the friends who save you, the covenants that bind you, the fellowship that costs you, and the word Jesus chose for the man who kissed Him in the garden.

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## Opening Question

*Think about your closest friendship. Not your spouse, not a family member. A friend. How long have you known them? What was the moment the relationship moved from acquaintance to something deeper?*

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## Scripture Reading

Read aloud: 1 Samuel 18:1-4, John 15:12-17

Reference passages: Proverbs 17:17, Proverbs 18:24, Matthew 26:47-50

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## Teaching Summary

I want to talk about the most overlooked relationship in the Bible.

We have entire conferences on marriage. Sermon series on parenting. Books on singleness, on dating, on mentorship. But friendship? Friendship gets a verse on a coffee mug and a wave from the stage. "Find good Christian friends." That is the extent of most churches' teaching on the subject.

Meanwhile, the greatest human relationship story in the Old Testament is not a romance. It is a friendship. David and Jonathan. Two men who loved each other so fiercely that their bond altered the political future of a nation. Jonathan, the crown prince, stripped off his own royal robe and gave it to a shepherd boy. He handed away his inheritance. Not because he had to. Because his soul was "knit" to David's.

The Hebrew word for what happened between them is fascinating. First Samuel 18:1 says Jonathan's soul was "knit" (qashar) to David's. Qashar means to bind, to tie, to conspire. It is used elsewhere for tying a rope, for binding something so tightly it cannot come undone. Jonathan's soul was roped to David's. This was not affection. It was structural attachment.

And the word underneath their whole relationship? Rea.

Rea. Strong's H7453. It appears roughly 187 times in the Old Testament. We translate it "friend" or "neighbor" or sometimes "companion." But here is what makes rea different from our English word "friend." In the ancient Near East, your rea was not someone you chose to spend time with. Your rea was the person next to you. Literally. Your neighbor, your companion in work, your fellow in proximity. The word carries a sense of obligation. Your rea is not someone you are merely friendly toward. Your rea is someone whose life is adjacent to yours, and that adjacency creates responsibility.

When Leviticus 19:18 says "Love your rea as yourself," it is not saying "love people you like." It is saying "love the person next to you, the one whose life is pressed up against yours, whether you chose them or not." Rea friendship is not elective. It is situational. And it becomes sacred when you honor the situation.

But David and Jonathan did not stop at rea. They went further. They cut berith.

Berith. Covenant. Strong's H1285. It shows up roughly 284 times. This is one of the most consequential words in the entire Old Testament. Berith is the word used for God's covenant with Abraham, with Moses, with David. It is the structural word for the binding agreement that holds God's relationship with His people together.

And Jonathan cut a berith with David. First Samuel 18:3: "Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself." In the ancient world, cutting a covenant involved a physical ritual, often the slaughter of an animal, each party passing between the halved pieces. The message was visceral: may what happened to this animal happen to me if I break this bond.

Jonathan did not just like David. He bound himself to David with the same vocabulary God uses to bind Himself to Israel. Friendship, in Scripture, can carry covenantal weight. Not every friendship does. But the capacity is there. And when friendship reaches that level, it becomes something the ancient world considered sacred.

The verb underneath Jonathan's motivation is ahav. Strong's H157. It appears roughly 208 times. Ahav is the Hebrew verb "to love." It is the same word used in "You shall love (ahav) the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5). It is the same word used for romantic love in Song of Solomon. It is the same word Hosea uses for God's relentless love for unfaithful Israel. Ahav does not distinguish between types of love the way Greek does. It carries the full weight of every kind of love in a single word. When Scripture says Jonathan loved David, it uses the word that means all of it. Total commitment. Holding nothing back.

Now cross into the New Testament, and the friendship vocabulary sharpens.

Philos. Strong's G5384. About 29 occurrences. Philos means "friend" but it carries a warmth that hetairos does not. It is personal. It is chosen. It is intimate without being romantic. And here is where John 15:15 becomes one of the most staggering sentences in the New Testament. Jesus says to His disciples: "I no longer call you servants (doulos). I call you friends (philos)."

Think about the upgrade. The disciples started as servants. Servants do what they are told without knowing why. But Jesus says: I have told you everything the Father told me. You are no longer in the dark. You are not employees. You are philoi. You are inside the relationship now.

Philos is the word of chosen closeness. It is the friend who knows your business and stays anyway. The friend you trust with the information that could destroy you.

Now place that word next to another one.

Hetairos. Strong's G2083. It appears only three or four times in the New Testament, all in Matthew. And every time it appears, it carries a note of distance. Jesus uses hetairos for the workers in the vineyard who complain about their wages (Matthew 20:13). He uses it for the man at the wedding banquet who shows up without proper clothing (Matthew 22:12). And He uses it in the garden of Gethsemane, when Judas arrives with a kiss.

Matthew 26:50: "Hetaire, do what you came to do."

Friend. But not philos. Not the word of chosen closeness. Hetairos. Comrade. Associate. Fellow. A word that acknowledges proximity without affirming intimacy. A word that says: you were near me, but you were never in.

Jesus had two words for friend. He gave one to the eleven. He gave the other to the one who sold Him. And the word He chose tells you everything about the relationship.

This is where koinōnia enters.

Koinōnia. Strong's G2842. Roughly 19 occurrences. We translate it "fellowship." And that translation has, frankly, ruined it.

Koinōnia does not mean "coffee and conversation after the sermon." In first-century Greek, koinōnia was a business term. It described a shared financial investment. A partnership where each person had skin in the game. If the business went under, both partners lost everything. Koinōnia meant: my resources are your resources. My risk is your risk. My failure is your failure. We are financially, materially, practically bound together.

When Luke describes the early church in Acts 2:42, he says they were devoted to the koinōnia. He is not saying they had nice potlucks. He is saying they entered into a shared-risk partnership where the well-being of each member was the financial and material responsibility of every other member. Two chapters later, people are selling property. That is not generosity. That is koinōnia. That is what partnership looks like when you take the word seriously.

And one more. Homothymadon. Strong's G3661. It shows up 11 times in the New Testament, and 10 of those are in Acts. It means "with one mind" or "with one accord." The word is built from homos (same) and thymos (passion, spirit, heat). Same heat. Same fire. Not same opinion. Same urgency.

When Acts says the early church gathered "with one accord" (homothymadon), it is not describing a group of people who agreed on everything. It is describing a group of people who burned for the same thing. They could disagree on details because they were unified on direction. Homothymadon is not uniformity. It is shared combustion.

So here is the friendship theology of the Bible, reassembled from its original vocabulary.

Your rea is the person next to you. Proximity creates obligation. Berith is the covenant that makes temporary friendship permanent. Ahav is the love that holds nothing back. Philos is the friend who is inside the relationship, who knows what you know and stays. Hetairos is the one who was near but never in. Koinōnia is the shared-risk partnership that puts your resources where your mouth is. And homothymadon is the shared fire that lets a diverse group move as one.

The Bible does not treat friendship as a nice addition to the spiritual life. It treats friendship as a covenantal category with its own language, its own rituals, and its own warnings. Jonathan gave David his robe. Jesus called His disciples philos. And when friendship was betrayed, the word He used for the betrayer was a different word entirely.

Who you call friend matters. What kind of friend you are matters more.

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## Word Study Spotlight

רֵעַ

### Rea (RAY-ah)

Strong's H7453 · Appears: Roughly 187 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** Friend, neighbor, companion, fellow

▮ *Proverbs 18:24, "There is a friend (rea) who sticks closer than a brother."*

In Hebrew, friend and neighbor are the same word. Your rea is the person whose life is adjacent to yours. The adjacency creates obligation. "Love your rea as yourself" (Lev 19:18) is not about liking people. It is about honoring the responsibility that proximity creates.

בְּרִית

### Berith (beh-REET)

Strong's H1285 · Appears: Roughly 284 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** Covenant, agreement, binding pact

▮ *1 Samuel 18:3, "Jonathan made a covenant (berith) with David because he loved him as himself."*

The same word used for God's covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David is used for Jonathan's bond with David. Friendship in Scripture can carry covenantal weight. Berith involves ritual, obligation, and the understanding that breaking it has consequences. This is not casual friendship. This is binding attachment.

## אהב

### Ahav (ah-HAHV)

Strong's H157 · Appears: Roughly 208 times in the Old Testament

**Meaning:** To love (all encompassing: familial, romantic, divine, covenantal)

1 Samuel 18:1, "Jonathan loved (ahav) him as his own soul."

Hebrew does not compartmentalize love the way Greek does. Ahav carries the full weight of total commitment in a single word. It is used for God's love for Israel, a husband's love for his wife, and Jonathan's love for David. The word does not distinguish. It simply gives everything.

## φίλος

### Philos (FEE-ios)

Strong's G5384 · Appears: Roughly 29 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** Friend, beloved one, one held dear

John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants. I call you friends (philos)."

Philos is the word of chosen closeness. When Jesus upgrades the disciples from doulos (servant) to philos (friend), He is saying: you now have access to the inside of what I know. You are not employees. You are intimates. Philos is the word Jesus never used for Judas.

## κοινωνία

### Koinōnia (koy-no-NEE-ah)

Strong's G2842 · Appears: Roughly 19 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** Partnership, shared participation, joint investment, fellowship

Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (koinōnia)."

In secular Greek, koinōnia was a business partnership term meaning shared financial risk. If your partner lost, you lost. The early church's "fellowship" was not coffee hour. It was a material, financial, practical commitment to shared survival. When Paul says the Galatians gave him "the right hand of koinōnia" (Gal 2:9), he is describing a binding business handshake.

## ὁμοθυμαδόν

### Homothymadon (ho-mo-thoo-mah-DON)

Strong's G3661 · Appears: 11 times in the New Testament (10 in Acts)

**Meaning:** With one accord, with one passion, unanimously

Acts 2:46, "Every day they continued to meet together with one accord (homothymadon)."

Built from homos (same) and thymos (heat, passion, spirit). This is not agreement on every issue. It is shared fire. The early church was not a group that eliminated disagreement. It was a group that burned for the same mission. Homothymadon is what happens when diverse people care about the same thing with the same intensity.

## ἑταῖρος

### Hetairos (heh-TIE-ros)

Strong's G2083 · Appears: 3-4 times in the New Testament (all in Matthew)

**Meaning:** Comrade, associate, fellow (formal, somewhat distant)

*Matthew 26:50, "Jesus said to him, 'Friend (hetairos), do what you came to do.'"*

Jesus had two words for friend. He called His disciples philos (John 15:15). He called Judas hetairos (Matt 26:50). Philos is the word of chosen intimacy. Hetairos is the word of acknowledged proximity without affirmed closeness. Judas was near Jesus for three years, but the word Jesus used in the garden tells you he was never inside. The vocabulary of friendship has boundaries, and Jesus knew where they were.

## Discussion Questions

### OBSERVATION — WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

1. Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4. Jonathan gives David his robe, his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt. In the ancient Near East, a prince's robe symbolized his royal authority. What is Jonathan doing with these gifts? What is he saying without words?
2. In John 15:13-15, Jesus defines the greatest love as laying down one's life for friends (philos). Then He immediately says, "I no longer call you servants but friends." What shifts in the relationship between Jesus and His disciples at this moment? What does a servant receive that a friend does not?

### INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Rea (friend) and rea (neighbor) are the same Hebrew word. What does this tell us about the ancient understanding of friendship? How does it challenge our modern tendency to separate "friends I choose" from "neighbors I am stuck with"?
4. Koinōnia was a business term meaning shared financial risk. How does knowing this change the way you read Acts 2:42-47? What would koinōnia-level partnership look like in your church or small group?
5. Jesus used philos for the eleven and hetairos for Judas. Both words are translated "friend" in English. Why does this distinction matter? What warning does it carry about the different levels of closeness in our own relationships?

### APPLICATION — WHAT DO I DO?

6. Jonathan's berith with David was a friendship that carried covenantal weight. Do you have a friendship in your life that reaches that level? If not, what prevents your friendships from going deeper? If so, what sustains it?
7. Homothymadon is "shared fire," not shared opinions. Is there a relationship or community in your life where you are trying to achieve agreement when what you really need is shared mission? What would change if you stopped demanding uniformity and started pursuing shared combustion?

8. Be honest: in your closest friendships right now, are you functioning at the philos level (inside, known, trusted) or the hetairos level (near but not truly in)? What would it take to move one relationship from proximity to intimacy this week?

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## Cross-References

Explore these related passages for deeper study:

Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend (rea) can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." The juxtaposition with Judas' betrayal kiss is unmistakable. A real rea wounds you with honesty. A hetairos kisses you with betrayal. The physical acts are reversed. The honest friend hurts. The dishonest one is gentle.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor." Solomon's case for friendship is economic and practical before it is emotional. If one falls, the other lifts. If one is cold, the other warms. The logic of friendship in Ecclesiastes is the logic of koinōnia: shared risk, shared return.

Philippians 2:19-22, Paul on Timothy: "I have no one else like him." Paul uses language of uniqueness for Timothy. In a life full of ministry partners, Timothy stands alone. Not because he was the most talented, but because he "genuinely cares for your welfare" while "all others seek their own interests." The highest praise Paul gives a friend is: he is not self-interested.

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## Personal Reflection

1. Jonathan gave away his robe, his armor, and his sword. He voluntarily surrendered his claim to the throne because of his love for David. Has a friend ever given up something significant for you? Have you ever given up something significant for a friend? What did it cost?

2. Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants. I call you friends." He said this to people who had failed Him repeatedly, who would scatter within hours, who did not fully understand who He was. What does it mean that Jesus offers philos friendship to imperfect people? What does it mean that He offers it to you?

3. Is there someone in your life you have been calling "friend" who is actually a hetairos, someone near but not in? And is there someone you have been treating as a hetairos who deserves to be a philos? What is the difference between the two, and what would it cost to close the gap?

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## Weekly Practice

### THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE: THE KOINŌNIA MEAL

Invite one person, not your spouse, not a family member, a friend, to share a meal this week. Not a group dinner. One person.

During the meal, ask one question you have never asked them before. Something below the surface. Not "how's work?" but "what are you carrying right now that nobody knows about?" or "what is one thing you wish someone would ask you?"

**How to do it:** Text or call them today. Set the date. Show up without an agenda. The goal is not to solve anything. The goal is to practice koinōnia at its most basic level: shared presence with shared risk. You are risking awkwardness. You are risking vulnerability. You are risking the discomfort of knowing someone more than you did before. That is what partnership costs. And it is worth it.

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## Closing Prayer

As you close, pray about:

The friends who have been your Jonathans, who gave you something they did not have to give, and the gratitude you may have never expressed.

The friendships that have stayed at the surface, and the courage to go deeper.

The truth that Jesus chose the word *philos* for imperfect people, and that the same word is available to you.





SESSION FIVE

# Adopted, Grafted, Welcomed

*Based on Week 5: May 24-31*

Key Words: Huiiothesia, Abba, Synklēronomos, Enkentrízō, Symphytos, Adelphos, Paroikos



Paul had a word for birth. He could have said you were born into God's family. He did not. He reached for a different word, a Roman legal term that described something his first-century readers would have recognized immediately: *hiothesia*. Adoption. And in Roman law, adoption was not a lesser form of family membership. It was stronger than biology. An adopted son could not be disowned. A biological son could. This session traces the journey from *paroikos* (foreigner with no legal standing) to *hiothesia* (fully adopted with irrevocable rights), through the wild grafting of Romans 11 and the Aramaic word for Father that the early church refused to translate out of their Greek texts.

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## Opening Question

*Have you ever walked into a room where you were clearly the outsider, where everyone else knew each other and you knew no one? What did it feel like? What would it have taken for you to feel like you belonged?*

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## Scripture Reading

Read aloud: Ephesians 2:11-22

Reference passages: Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 4:4-7, Romans 11:17-24

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## Teaching Summary

I want to start at the end of the story and work backward.

Ephesians 2:19. Paul writes to a group of Gentile believers, people who had no claim on the God of Israel, no history with the Torah, no seat at the covenant table, and he says: "You are no longer foreigners and strangers. You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household."

Three status changes in one sentence. Foreigner to citizen. Stranger to fellow citizen. Outsider to household member. Paul is describing the most dramatic upgrade in the ancient world. And the word he uses for what they used to be, the starting point, is *paroikos*.

*Paroikos*. Strong's G3941. It appears four times in the New Testament. A *paroikos* was a resident alien. Not a tourist, not a visitor, but someone who lived in a place permanently without any of the legal protections that citizens had. A *paroikos* could be expelled without cause. A *paroikos* could not own property. A *paroikos* could not inherit. A *paroikos* had no legal standing in court. You could live somewhere your entire life and die a *paroikos*, and your children would be *paroikoi* after you.

That is what Paul says the Gentile believers used to be. Not just "far from God" in some vague spiritual sense. Legally unprotected. Structurally excluded. Without inheritance rights in the kingdom. You were paroikoi. And now you are not.

But how? How does a paroikos become a family member?

Paul's answer is one of the most deliberate word choices in the New Testament. He does not say you were born into the family. He says you were adopted.

Huiothesia. Strong's G5206. It appears five times: Romans 8:15, Romans 8:23, Romans 9:4, Galatians 4:5, and Ephesians 1:5. The word is built from two Greek words: huios (son) and thesis (a placing). Huiothesia is "the placing of a son." It is the legal act of taking someone who is not your biological child and giving them the full legal status of a firstborn.

And here is where the Roman legal context is critical. Paul was a Roman citizen writing to people who lived under Roman law. They knew what adoption meant, and it meant something far more binding than we realize.

In Roman law, adoption (adoptio) involved a formal legal process. The adopting father went before a magistrate. The biological father's rights were formally extinguished. The adopted son received a new name, a new identity, and full legal standing in the new family. All previous debts were canceled. The old life was legally erased.

But here is the detail that should stop you. Under Roman law, a biological son could be disowned. A father could remove his natural-born son from the family. But an adopted son could not be disowned. The legal process that created the adoption was considered so deliberate, so intentional, that it could not be reversed. Adoption was stronger than birth.

Paul knew this. His audience knew this. And when he writes in Romans 8:15, "You have received the Spirit of adoption," he is saying: God did not stumble into fathering you. He went before the court. He made the declaration. He gave you His name. And what He did cannot be undone. You cannot be un-adopted. The paperwork is filed. The case is closed.

The word that comes next is the word the early church refused to translate.

Abba. It appears three times in the New Testament: Mark 14:36 (Jesus in Gethsemane), Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6. In every instance, the Greek text preserves the Aramaic word untranslated, then adds the Greek equivalent: Abba, ho Pater. Father, Father. The same word, in two languages, side by side.

Why? Why would Greek-speaking authors preserve an Aramaic word instead of simply translating it? Because abba carried something that pater could not. Abba was the word children used for their fathers at home. It was intimate. It was familial. It was the word you said at the dinner table, not the word you used in a legal filing. And the early church, writing in Greek for a Greek-speaking audience, could not bring themselves to lose it. So they kept both. Abba, the intimacy. Pater, the authority. The adopted child gets to use the family word. Not the formal title. The one from the kitchen.

Now look at what follows the adoption. Romans 8:17: "If children, then heirs. Heirs of God and synklēronomoi with Christ."

Synklēronomos. Strong's G4789. Co-heirs. Joint heirs. The syn prefix means "together with." This is not a junior inheritance. It is not a smaller portion. Paul is saying that adopted children receive the same inheritance as the firstborn Son. You do not get a seat at the back of the table. You get the same chair Christ sits in. Synklēronomos means: what is His is yours. Equally. Fully. Without distinction.

But there is a cost. Paul adds a condition in the same verse: "provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." Co-heirs, yes. But co-sufferers first. The inheritance is real, but it is not cheap. It comes through the same road the firstborn Son walked.

Now move to Romans 11, where Paul uses one of the strangest metaphors in the New Testament.

Enkentrízō. Strong's G1461. To graft in. It appears six times, all in Romans 11. Paul describes the Gentile believers as wild olive branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree. And here is what makes this metaphor remarkable: in horticulture, you never graft a wild branch onto a cultivated tree. It does not work. You graft cultivated branches onto wild rootstock to take advantage of the wild roots' vigor. Paul's metaphor is backward on purpose.

He even says so. Romans 11:24: "You were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature (para physin), into a cultivated olive tree." Contrary to nature. Against the natural order. Paul is telling the Gentile believers: your inclusion in God's family violates every horticultural principle. You should not be here. The graft should not have taken. But it did. Because God does not follow the rules of agriculture. He follows the rules of grace.

The word for what happens after the graft is symphytos. Strong's G4854. It appears once, in Romans 6:5: "If we have been united (symphytos) with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His." Symphytos means "grown together." From syn (together) and phyō (to grow). Once the graft takes, the branch and the tree grow together. They share the same sap. The same root system. The same life. You cannot separate them without killing both.

And the word for what the adopted, grafted-in believers call each other? Adelphos. Strong's G80. Brother. It appears roughly 346 times in the New Testament. The word comes from the prefix a (together, same) and delphys (womb). Adelphos literally means "from the same womb."

The early Christians called each other adelphos. People who had never met each other's mothers. People from different cities, different cultures, different languages. They looked at each other and said: same womb. Romans who lived next door to the church heard Christians calling each other "brother" and "sister" and, according to some ancient sources, assumed they were a literal family practicing incest, because who else calls strangers "siblings"?

The church did. Because once you have been adopted by the same Father, once you have been grafted into the same tree, once you share the same sap and the same inheritance, there is only one word left. Adelphos. From the same womb. Family.

So here is the journey, reassembled.

You start as a paroikos. A foreigner. No rights. No inheritance. No protection. No seat.

God files the papers. Huiiothesia. You are adopted. The old debts are canceled. The new name is given. And the adoption cannot be reversed.

You open your mouth and the word that comes out is not "Your Honor" or "Sir." It is Abba. The kitchen word. The family word. The one that means you belong so completely that formality would be an insult.

You look at what you have been given and discover it is not a guest room. It is synklëronomos. The same inheritance as the firstborn. Equal heirs.

You look at how you got here and discover it was para physin. Against nature. A wild branch grafted into a cultivated tree by a Gardener who does not follow the rules.

You look at the person next to you, the one you did not choose, the one from a different story, and you call them adelphos. From the same womb. Because you are.

You are not tolerated. You are not on probation. You are not a guest who might be asked to leave.

You are adopted. Grafted. Grown in. Named. And the paperwork is final.

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## Word Study Spotlight

### υιοθεσία

#### Huiiothesia (hwee-oh-theh-SEE-ah)

Strong's G5206 · Appears: 5 times in the New Testament (Rom 8:15, 8:23, 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5)

**Meaning:** Adoption, the legal placing of a son

▮ *Romans 8:15, "You have received the Spirit of adoption (huiiothesia), by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"*

Built from huios (son) and thesis (placing). In Roman law, an adopted son received a new name, had all previous debts canceled, and, crucially, could not be disowned. A biological son could be. Paul chose adoption over birth language deliberately: your place in the family was intentional, legal, and irrevocable.

### Ἀββᾶ

#### Abba (ah-BAH)

Strong's G5 (Aramaic, preserved untranslated in the Greek NT) · Appears: 3 times in the New Testament (Mark 14:36, Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6)

**Meaning:** Father (intimate, familial form)

▮ *Galatians 4:6, "God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father.'"*

Every time abba appears in the Greek NT, the Greek word pater (father) is placed alongside it. The early church refused to translate this Aramaic word out of their Greek texts because it carried a familial intimacy that pater alone could not convey. Abba is the kitchen word, not the courtroom word. Adopted children get to use it.

## συγκληρονόμος

### Synklēronomos (syn-klay-ro-NO-mos)

Strong's G4789 · Appears: 4 times in the New Testament (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6; Heb 11:9; 1 Pet 3:7)

**Meaning:** Co-heir, joint heir, one who inherits together with another

— *Romans 8:17, "Heirs of God and co-heirs (synklēronomoi) with Christ."*

The syn prefix means "together with." This is not a smaller portion or a junior inheritance. Adopted children receive the same inheritance as the biological firstborn. What is Christ's is yours. The condition: "provided we suffer with Him." Co-heirs, but co-sufferers first.

## ἐγκεντρίζω

### Enkentrízō (en-ken-TRID-zoh)

Strong's G1461 · Appears: 6 times in the New Testament (all in Romans 11)

**Meaning:** To graft in, to insert a shoot into a tree

— *Romans 11:24, "You were grafted in contrary to nature (para physin)."*

Paul's olive tree metaphor is horticulturally backward on purpose. You never graft wild branches onto a cultivated tree. But God does. The Gentile inclusion in God's family violates agricultural logic. It is a grace graft. It should not have taken. But it did.

## σύμφυτος

### Symphytos (SOOM-foo-tos)

Strong's G4854 · Appears: 1 time in the New Testament (Romans 6:5)

**Meaning:** Grown together, united with, fused

— *Romans 6:5, "If we have been united (symphytos) with Him in His death, we shall certainly be united with Him in His resurrection."*

From syn (together) and phyō (to grow). Once the graft takes, the branch and the tree grow into each other. They share the same life, the same sap, the same root system. You cannot separate them without killing both. Symphytos is the word for what happens after the adoption papers are signed: you grow into each other. Permanently.

## ἀδελφός

### Adelphos (ah-del-FOS)

Strong's G80 · Appears: Roughly 346 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** Brother, one from the same womb

— *1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers (adelphous)."*

From a (same) and delphys (womb). The early church called each other adelphos, "from the same womb," even when they had never met each other's families. Romans who overheard this language were confused, sometimes scandalized. It was radical. It still is. Once you share a Father, you share a womb. Biology is not the only thing that makes siblings.

## πάροικος

### Paroikos (PAH-roy-kos)

Strong's G3941 · Appears: 4 times in the New Testament

**Meaning:** Foreigner, resident alien, sojourner without legal standing

*Ephesians 2:19, "You are no longer foreigners (paroikoi) and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household."*

A paroikos could live somewhere permanently and still have no rights: no property, no inheritance, no legal protection, no standing. Paul uses this word to describe what Gentile believers used to be before Christ. Three status changes in Ephesians 2:19 move them from paroikos (foreigner) to sympolites (fellow citizen) to oikeioi (household member). The distance covered in that single verse is the entire journey of the gospel.

## Discussion Questions

### OBSERVATION — WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

1. Read Ephesians 2:11-13. Paul reminds the Gentile believers of five things they used to be: separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship, foreigners to the covenants, without hope, and without God. Why does Paul list all five? Why not just say "you were far from God"?
2. In Romans 11:17-24, Paul warns the grafted-in Gentile branches not to boast over the natural branches (Israel) that were broken off. What is his reasoning? What does Paul say sustains the grafted branch in the tree?

### INTERPRETATION — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Paul chose huiiothesia (adoption) instead of birth language for how Gentiles enter God's family. Given that Roman adoption was legally stronger than biological birth (an adopted son could not be disowned), what is Paul saying about the security of your place in the family? How does this change the way you think about belonging to God?
4. The early church preserved the Aramaic word abba untranslated in their Greek texts. They could have simply written pater. Why do you think they kept both? What does abba carry that pater alone does not?
5. Paul says the Gentile grafting is "contrary to nature" (para physin). Why does Paul draw attention to the impossibility of it? What does it tell us about God's character that He does something horticulturally absurd to include outsiders?

### APPLICATION — WHAT DO I DO?

6. Think about the paroikos-to-oikeioi journey (foreigner to household member). Is there someone in your community, your church, your neighborhood, who is currently living as a paroikos, present but without protection, proximity without belonging? What would it look like to speak the words of Ephesians 2:19 over them with your actions?

7. Synklēronomos means you receive the same inheritance as the firstborn Son. Not a lesser portion. The same. Do you live like a co-heir, or do you live like a guest who might be asked to leave? What would change in your daily life if you truly believed the paperwork was final?

8. Adelphos, "from the same womb." Who is someone in your faith community that you have treated more like an acquaintance than a sibling? What would it cost to treat them as family this week?

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## Cross-References

Explore these related passages for deeper study:

Ruth 1:16-17, "Your people will be my people, and your God my God." Ruth the Moabite outsider speaks what may be the most famous adoption vow in the Old Testament. She grafts herself into Israel by declaration. And she becomes the great-grandmother of David and an ancestor of Christ. The wild branch bore fruit.

Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul's most radical unity statement. The categories that defined ancient identity (ethnicity, class, gender) do not disappear, but they no longer determine who belongs. Huiiothesia overrides every prior status.

Ephesians 3:6, "The Gentiles are fellow heirs (synklēronomoi), fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise." Paul stacks three syn-compound words in one verse: co-heirs, co-bodied, co-partakers. The prefix syn (together with) appears three times in a row. The repetition is the point. Together. Together. Together.

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## Personal Reflection

1. Have you ever felt like a paroikos in God's family? Present but unprotected? Attending but not belonging? Write about that season honestly. What shifted, or what still needs to shift?

2. Paul says your adoption cannot be reversed. Your debts are canceled. Your name is new. Do you believe that on the days when you feel furthest from God? Write one sentence you could say to yourself on those days that reflects the legal reality of huiiothesia.

3. The wild olive branch was grafted in "contrary to nature." Your inclusion in God's family does not follow the rules. It is a grace graft. How does that change the way you see yourself? How does it change the way you see the person next to you in church who seems like they do not belong?

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## Weekly Practice

### THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE: THE ABBA BREATH

Three times a day, for seven days, stop and breathe one word: Abba.

Not a prayer with structure. Not a request. Not a confession. One word. The kitchen word. The word that means you belong so completely that formality would be an insult.

**How to do it:** Set three alarms, morning, afternoon, and evening. When the alarm sounds, stop whatever you are doing. Close your eyes for ten seconds. Breathe in. On the exhale, say one word: Abba. That is it. No follow-up required.

**What you are practicing:** the reflex of belonging. Most of us default to approaching God as though we are paroikoi, as though we need to prove we belong before we can speak. This practice trains you to approach as what you are: an adopted child with irrevocable papers, who gets to use the family word.

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## Closing Prayer

As you close, pray about:

The places in your life where you still feel like a paroikos, and the truth that the papers have already been filed.

The wild graft, the inclusion that should not have worked but did, and the gratitude that comes from knowing you are here by grace, not by qualification.

The word Abba, and what it means that the God of the universe invites you to use the kitchen word.





INTEGRATION SESSION

# Bringing It Together

*May 2026 Integration Session*

Key Words: All 31 Words — The Complete Arc



This month began with a God who has never been alone and ended with a family made of people who used to be strangers. Between those two points, we traced a line through the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary of relationship: from the divine oneness of echad to the legal permanence of huiiothesia. Each session built on the last. Each word connected to others. And now, with all five weeks behind us, we can see what we could not see from the inside: the entire month was one argument, spoken in thirty-one words across two languages, and the argument is this. You were made for this. All of it. The weight. The risk. The kitchen word. The wild graft. The womb you share with people you have never met. You were made for every bit of it.

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## Opening Question

*Looking back on all five sessions, which single word, Hebrew or Greek, has stayed with you the most? Not which one was the most interesting. Which one kept coming back to you during the week? Why?*

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## The Thread

Here is what the month built, layer by layer.

We started with God. Not with a command. Not with a principle. With God's own nature. Echad. The oneness that holds relationship inside itself. A God who speaks in the plural before creating anything: "Let Us make man in Our image." The foundation of everything that followed this month is not an instruction about how to treat people. It is a fact about who God is. God is relational. That is not something He does. It is something He is.

From that foundation came the first diagnosis. Lo tov. Not good. The only "not good" in a sinless world. God looked at a man who walked with Him in an unbroken garden and said: this is not working. He is alone. And aloneness, even in paradise, registers as a design violation. The ache you feel for connection is not a flaw. It is the echo of that first divine assessment. You were built by a relational God, and your wiring reflects His.

Session 2 moved from the Creator to the first created institution: family. And the word that reframed everything was kaved. Honor means weight. Not warm feelings. Not obedience. Weight. The Fifth Commandment asks you to treat your parents as substantial, as people whose lives pressed meaning into yours. And the vocabulary surrounding kaved, the em who binds, the av who is responsible, the bayit that is a living organism, the toledot that carry the story forward, confirmed that family in Hebrew is architectural, not sentimental. It is a building, not a feeling. And buildings require every piece.

Session 3 expanded the circle from family to community. And allelōn, the reciprocal pronoun that appears 100 times with no nominative form, revealed something structural about the Christian life: it cannot be done alone. The word itself cannot function in isolation. It only exists when people are doing something to each other. And the verbs attached to it, agapaō (choose love), bastazō (carry weight), parakaleō (stand alongside), charizomai (give grace), douleuō (serve as a slave), episyntagōgē (gather

with urgency), showed us that the one-another life is not one thing. It is a dozen things you never stop doing.

Session 4 went deeper than community into friendship. And the distinction between *philos* and *hetairos*, between the friend who is inside and the one who is merely near, landed with a weight (*kaved*, again) that will not leave. Jesus had two words for friend. He gave one to the eleven. He gave the other to the man who kissed Him in the garden. The vocabulary of friendship has boundaries, and Jesus knew where they were. *Koinōnia* showed us that real fellowship is not coffee hour. It is shared financial risk. And *berith* showed us that friendship can be covenantal, the same word God uses for His binding agreements used by Jonathan for his bond with David.

Session 5 brought us home. From *paroikos* (foreigner with no rights) to *huiiothesia* (adopted with irrevocable legal standing). Paul chose adoption over birth because, in Roman law, adoption was stronger. An adopted son could not be disowned. The wild olive branch was grafted in *para physin*, contrary to nature, because God does not follow the rules of agriculture. He follows the rules of grace. And the word that the early church could not bring themselves to translate out of their Greek texts, *Abba*, became the proof that adopted children get to use the kitchen word.

Do you see the arc?

It moves from God's nature (*echad*) to human need (*lo tov*) to family structure (*kaved*, *bayit*) to community obligation (*allelōn*) to chosen friendship (*philos*, *koinōnia*) to permanent belonging (*huiiothesia*, *adelphos*).

Each step expands the circle. Each step raises the cost. Each step deepens the intimacy. And all of it, every word, every session, every discussion question, every weekly practice, has been saying the same thing in different languages:

You are not alone. You were never supposed to be. And the God who said "not good" about aloneness is the same God who filed the adoption papers, grafted the wild branch, and invited you to call Him by His kitchen name.

The month started with one. It ended with family. And the distance between them is the entire gospel.

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## Key Words From This Month

*Organized by thematic category:*

### **GOD'S RELATIONAL NATURE**

*Echad* (אֶחָד, H259): One, unified whole. The Shema's word for God's oneness.

*Lo Tov* (לֹא טוֹב): Not good. The first divine diagnosis: aloneness is a design violation.

### **FAMILY ARCHITECTURE**

*Kaved* (כָּבֵד, H3513): To be heavy, to honor. Honor means weight.

*Em* (אִמָּה, H517): Mother. The one who binds.

Av (אב, H1): Father. The one who is responsible.

Bayit (בַּיִת, H1004): House, household. A living organism, not a building.

Toledot (תולדות, H8435): Generations. The birth chain that carries the story forward.

Ben / Bat (בן / בת, H1121 / H1323): Son / Daughter. Builders and extenders.

Eshet Chayil (אשה חַיִל, H2428): Woman of valor, military-grade strength.

## COMMUNITY VERBS

Allelōn (ἀλλήλων, G240): One another. 100 occurrences, no nominative form.

Agapaō (ἀγαπάω, G25): To love with deliberate choice.

Bastazō (βαστάζω, G941): To carry, bear a heavy load.

Parakaleō (παρακαλέω, G3870): To call alongside, encourage.

Charizomai (χαρίζομαι, G5483): To give freely, forgive graciously.

Douleuō (δουλεύω, G1398): To serve as a slave.

Episynagōgē (ἐπισυναγωγή, G1997): Intensive gathering. 2 occurrences.

## FRIENDSHIP VOCABULARY

Rea (רע, H7453): Friend / neighbor. Same word, same obligation.

Berith (ברית, H1285): Covenant. Friendship that carries binding weight.

Ahav (אהב, H157): To love. The Hebrew word that holds nothing back.

Philos (φίλος, G5384): Friend. Chosen closeness. The word Jesus used for His disciples.

Koinōnia (κοινωνία, G2842): Partnership, shared risk. Not coffee hour.

Homothymadon (ὁμοθυμαδόν, G3661): One accord. Shared fire, not shared opinions.

Hetairos (ἑταῖρος, G2083): Comrade. Near but not in. The word Jesus used for Judas.

## BELONGING AND ADOPTION

Huiōthesia (υἰοθεσία, G5206): Adoption. Legal, deliberate, irrevocable.

Abba (Αββᾶ, G5): Father (Aramaic). The kitchen word preserved untranslated.

Synklēronomos (συγκληρονόμος, G4789): Co-heir. Same inheritance as the firstborn.

Enkentrízō (ἐγκεντρίζω, G1461): To graft in. Contrary to nature.

Symphytos (σύμφυτος, G4854): Grown together. Fused. Inseparable.

Adelphos (ἀδελφός, G80): Brother. From the same womb. 346 occurrences.

Paroikos (πάροικος, G3941): Foreigner. What you used to be. What you are no longer.

## Integration Questions

1. Session 1 said God is echad (relational oneness) and Session 5 said Jesus prays that believers would be "one" (hen, the Greek equivalent). How does the month's journey from God's nature to human adoption show that relationship is not just something God commands but something He shares?
  2. Session 2 explored kaved (honor as weight) in the context of family. Session 4 explored koinōnia (fellowship as shared risk) in the context of friendship. What do weight and risk have in common? Why does every deep relationship in Scripture seem to cost something?
  3. Session 3 revealed that allelōn has no nominative form: it cannot stand alone. Session 5 revealed that symphytos means "grown together" after a graft: you cannot separate them without killing both. What do these two grammatical and botanical facts say about the same truth?
  4. Trace the journey from paroikos (Session 5) back through the month. A paroikos has no family (Session 2), no community (Session 3), no friends (Session 4), and no sense of belonging to God's nature (Session 1). How does each session systematically dismantle a different dimension of isolation?
  5. If you could choose one word from this entire month to carry into June, which would it be? Why that word? What would it change about the next 30 days of your life?
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## Month-Long Reflection

*Looking back on this month's study:*

1. *What is the single biggest insight you are taking with you? Write it in one sentence. If it takes more than one sentence, you have not found it yet.*
  2. *Which Hebrew or Greek word has most changed how you read Scripture? How will you read differently now?*
  3. *What is one thing you believed about relationship before this study that you now see differently? Be specific.*
  4. *How has your view of God shifted or deepened? Not "I learned more about God." How has the way you feel toward Him changed?*
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## Going Deeper

For continued study on this month's themes:

"The Four Loves" by C.S. Lewis. The classic exploration of affection, friendship, eros, and charity. Lewis's chapter on friendship is one of the finest pieces of writing on the subject in the English language.

"Life Together" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Written from an underground seminary during Nazi Germany, this short book describes what Christian community looks like when it costs everything. Bonhoeffer's insight that "the person who loves their dream of community more than the community itself becomes a destroyer of community" is worth the entire read.

"The Meaning of Marriage" by Timothy and Kathy Keller. For couples doing this study together, the Kellers' exploration of marriage as a covenant relationship rooted in the gospel provides a natural extension of Session 2 and Session 4's berith content.

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## Next Month Preview

June 2026: Words of Identity

This month you discovered what you were made for: relationship. Next month you discover who you are inside that relationship.

Words of Identity explores the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary God uses to describe His people: tselem (image), segullah (treasured possession), eklektos (chosen), agapētos (beloved), huios (son), and more. If May answered the question "What am I made for?" then June answers the question "Who does God say I am?"

Father's Day falls on June 21. The session that week will explore what it means that God calls Himself Pater, and what the prodigal's father revealed about fatherhood when he did something no patriarch in the ancient Near East would ever do.

He ran.





APPENDIX

## Complete Word Study Glossary

*All 31 word studies from May 2026 — Words of Relationship*

Listed in order of appearance



# Complete Word Study Glossary

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All 31 word studies from May 2026, listed in order of appearance.

May 2026 — Words of Relationship

## WEEK 1: IN THE BEGINNING, RELATIONSHIP

1. Echad (אֶחָד) — One, unity, unified whole — H259 — ~960 occ. — Deut 6:4
2. Lo Tov (לֹא טוֹב) — Not good — Gen 2:18

## WEEK 2: HONOR AND LEGACY

3. Kaved (כָּבֵד) — To be heavy, to honor — H3513 — 116 occ. — Exod 20:12
4. Em (אִמָּךְ) — Mother — H517 — 200+ occ. — Prov 1:8
5. Av (אָב) — Father — H1 — 1,100+ occ. — Deut 6:7
6. Bayit (בַּיִת) — House, household — H1004 — 2,000+ occ. — 2 Sam 7:11
7. Toledot (תּוֹלְדוֹת) — Generations — H8435 — 39 occ. — Gen 2:4
8. Ben / Bat (בֶּן / בַּת) — Son / Daughter — H1121 / H1323 — Ps 127:3
9. Eshet Chayil (אִשֶּׁת חַיִּיל) — Woman of valor — H2428 — Prov 31:10

## WEEK 3: THE ONE-ANOTHER LIFE

10. Allelōn (ἀλλήλων) — One another — G240 — 100 occ. — John 13:35
11. Agapaō (ἀγαπάω) — To love (by choice) — G25 — ~143 occ. — John 13:34
12. Bastazō (βαστάζω) — To carry, bear — G941 — 27 occ. — Gal 6:2
13. Parakaleō (παρακαλέω) — To call alongside — G3870 — ~109 occ. — 1 Thess 5:11
14. Charizomai (χαρίζομαι) — To forgive graciously — G5483 — 23 occ. — Col 3:13
15. Douleuō (δουλεύω) — To serve as a slave — G1398 — ~25 occ. — Gal 5:13
16. Episynagōgē (ἐπισυναγωγή) — Intensive gathering — G1997 — 2 occ. — Heb 10:25

## WEEK 4: CLOSER THAN BROTHERS

17. Rea (רֵעַ) — Friend, neighbor — H7453 — ~187 occ. — Prov 18:24
18. Berith (בְּרִית) — Covenant — H1285 — ~284 occ. — 1 Sam 18:3
19. Ahav (אָהַב) — To love — H157 — ~208 occ. — 1 Sam 18:1
20. Philos (φίλος) — Friend (chosen, intimate) — G5384 — ~29 occ. — John 15:15
21. Koinōnia (κοινωνία) — Partnership, fellowship — G2842 — ~19 occ. — Acts 2:42

22. Homothymadon (ὁμοθυμαδόν) — One accord — G3661 — 11 occ. — Acts 2:46

23. Hetairos (ἑταῖρος) — Comrade (formal) — G2083 — 3-4 occ. — Matt 26:50

## WEEK 5: ADOPTED, GRAFTED, WELCOMED

24. Huiothesia (υιοθεσία) — Adoption — G5206 — 5 occ. — Rom 8:15

25. Abba (Αββᾶ) — Father (Aramaic, intimate) — G5 — 3 occ. — Gal 4:6

26. Synklēronomos (συγκληρονόμος) — Co-heir — G4789 — 4 occ. — Rom 8:17

27. Enkentrízō (ἐγκεντρίζω) — To graft in — G1461 — 6 occ. — Rom 11:24

28. Symphytos (σύμφυτος) — Grown together — G4854 — 1 occ. — Rom 6:5

29. Adelphos (ἀδελφός) — Brother (same womb) — G80 — ~346 occ. — 1 John 3:14

30. Paroikos (πάροικος) — Foreigner, sojourner — G3941 — 4 occ. — Eph 2:19

31. (Additional word from daily content rotated based on calendar)

## About FaithLabz

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Thank you for studying with us this month. We will see you in June.

F A I T H L A B Z

*"You are not alone. You were never supposed to be."*

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