

“I Will Go to God”: Running to God When Relationships Disappoint

By Bekka French

Love one another. Bear one another’s burdens. Forgive one another. These are a handful of the relational commands God gives His people. With a list like this, Christian community should be of the sweetest kind, yet our relational sins sadly preclude this intimacy, especially when we look to each other as need-meeters. When we view our relationships as a source of fulfillment, we warp God’s good design and His purposes for dwelling in community. We must first understand the purpose of community and what to do when that community inevitably disappoints us.

“And so fulfill the law of Christ...”

What is the purpose of community? Much can be said here, but to maintain brevity, we will simply say God created human community as a means to enjoy Him. As little image bearers, we image Him to each other, caring for one another for the express purpose of showing each other what God is like. Community begins with God, as He dwells in perfect community within the Trinity, and it ends with God as we seek to push one another further up and into the riches, wonders, and glories of God.

Recall Jesus’ words in John 15: fullness of joy comes in abiding in the love of God. Fullness of joy. Not partial, full. A “my cup runneth over” kind of full. How can we know this kind of fullness? By abiding in God’s love. John 15 has a beautiful progression, showing that we can abide in God’s love by obeying Him. We often tell our children that obedience is sweet even when it doesn’t feel like it because this is how we will abide in God. And then Jesus tells us exactly how He wants us to obey—by loving one another. So your access to fullness of joy, to life abundant, comes through loving others. It’s not dependent on being loved well by others.

This goes awry, sometimes in a most painful way, when we look to each other as a source of fulfillment. The secular community strives to convince Christians we have inherent emotional needs only other human beings can fill (security, comfort, sex, love, etc.). But when we look at the Bible, our ultimate source of truth, the basis of our anthropology, it simply doesn’t support this theory. God made us with a need for Him, and He uses various created means to fill the God-shaped hole in our souls. All the love banks and tanks and cups fall desperately short of the reality of our need for Him. And if you work long enough with people, this reality screams out through the littered mess of broken relationships. Our “needs aren’t being met” because we have misidentified both the need and the solution. We come to other humans hungry for that which we cannot possibly get from them. And in doing so, we wrong them and God.

You were made for God. And every single created thing, from your legitimate biological needs to the cries of your heart’s desires for relational satisfaction, drives toward Him. As Jeremiah Burroughs posits, all created order is a conduit unto Him, be it poor conduits or healthy robust ones. They all find their endpoint in Something outside themselves.[\[1\]](#)

So, what do we do when others are a poor relational conduit to God? When there is disappointment and frustration, when the one another is being done poorly or not at all, when someone's sin dominates the way they interact with us? We do as the psalmist does... "I will go to God."

"My exceeding joy"

In Psalm 27, the psalmist brings out a precious truth amidst the reality of broken relationships. He simply says, "Though my mother and father have forsaken me, the Lord will take me in." Sit and ponder the enormity of the emotional reality present here. Two of the most formative (and thus potentially devastating) relationships in our lives are with our parents. All of us have experienced, to various degrees, the sins of our parents against us. Can you imagine the suffering of being abandoned by your parents? Perhaps you know it too well. Fill in the sentence with any other close relationship: "Though my wife forsakes me," "Though my dearest friends turn against me," "Though my child turns his back on me and walks away..." Human relationships were never meant to be the endpoint but rather conduits to the Source. Albeit important, significant, weighty, and devastating when they fail, they are conduits no less.

I am not saying human relationships are useless. We were made to dwell in community. But we were made to dwell in community not for the community as an end itself but rather as a beautiful means of guiding us to the fulfillment God offers in Himself. In the same way that all creation speaks to the glory of God, in the same way that enjoying a beautiful panorama should make our hearts cry with joy at the glory of God, so too our relationships exist to make much of God and thus bring fullness of joy to our hearts. This is why when relationships fall short of that, it is gut-wrenching. But we can still go to God, the substance, who is not dependent on whoever the poor conduit in our life currently is. We were made for so much more than one human relationship can give. We were made for God.

So, "be still my soul when dearest friends depart (*and here I would add, grievously disappoint*) / And all is darkened in the vale of tears / Then thou shalt better know His Love his Heart (*oh bliss! Does it stir your soul that relational abandonment offers better knowledge of the heart of God? Surely this is what our Savior experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane as His dearest failed and fled*) / Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fear."[\[2\]](#)

Dear friend, it will be a conscious and sometimes Herculean effort to continue on when you feel devastated by your relationships. Going to God will not feel like the sweet or satisfying choice. Many a day passes where I think, "so and so doesn't care about me, doesn't see me," and that pain is real. Some of my dearest relationships have severely hurt or disappointed me through that person's sin or simply their own limitations. I know I have done the same to others. But friend, never once have I turned from those disappointments and put all my energy into going to God and come up empty. This is why the psalmist calls God "my exceeding joy" (Psalm 43:4). So when you experience that hurt, put all your energy into going to God and don't stop or rest until you can say with the psalmist, "my exceeding joy."

Questions for Reflection

1. What might it look like practically to “go to God?”
2. How can you bolster your affection in the Lord so that, even when relationships disappoint, you can still fulfill the one another’s?

[1] Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

[2] Kathrina Von Schlagel, “Be Still My Soul”

<https://hymnary.org/text/be_still_my_soul_the_lord_is_on_thy_side>.

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