

A person is seen from behind, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt, with their arms raised high in a gesture of prayer or praise. The background is a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise, with golden light breaking through dark, heavy clouds. The overall mood is one of hope and devotion.

# **Belonging to Him**

Introduction:

**Life Is Relationship**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

**Last week, we discussed three ships.**

**This week, instead of ships, I'm going to discuss mountains.**

**But really, I want to discuss a mountain *story*.**

**This is a mountain story about a guy named Elijah.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY

However, the wicked queen, Jezebel, then puts a contract out on his life and Elijah flees.

He decides he might as well end it all for good:

*He...sat down under [a tree] and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”*  
*(1 Kings 19:4)*

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY

*[Elijah]...reached Horeb, the mountain of God....the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” (1 Kings 19:8-10)*

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY

**Elijah is spent! He's alone. He's depressed. He has nothing left in his tank. He's hosting his own pity party.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY

**But then God makes his presence known:**

*The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”*

*(1 Kings 19:11-12)*



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY

**But then God makes his presence known:**

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-12)*

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A MOUNTAIN STORY



**In this story the presence of God means a great deal to this minister of God.**

**God's presence restored Elijah back to health, gave him new energy, and new hope in his calling.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What's The Connection?

**Everyone in this room is a called servant of God.**

- **Some of you may not be Christian yet, but God is still calling you to become his child, to serve him, & one day pass onto others what God's given you.**
- **Many of you may not function in an official "ministry"—you work in business, at the embassy, you're a school classmate or parent. But, you're still absolutely called to serve & minister to others.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What's The Connection?

**Everyone in this room is a called servant of God.**

- **The rest of you, of course, are missionaries and teachers, etc., and have perhaps a more formal calling to follow God and minister to those in need.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What's The Connection?

**But, answering such a call, we realize something:**

- **Serving others can be draining, and can lead to depression and loneliness.**
  - **Like Elijah, we may move from a huge victory in relating to God and others, but then just as suddenly, our tank is empty, and we feel alone, without any hope to go on.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What's The Connection?

**But, answering such a call, we realize something:**

- **Serving others can be draining, and can lead to depression and loneliness.**
  - **And so we understand the need to be reminded of God's presence and that we belong to him.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

**I'd like to expand upon this point by telling you another story.**

**This isn't about a mountain, but I think you'll see a connection...**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

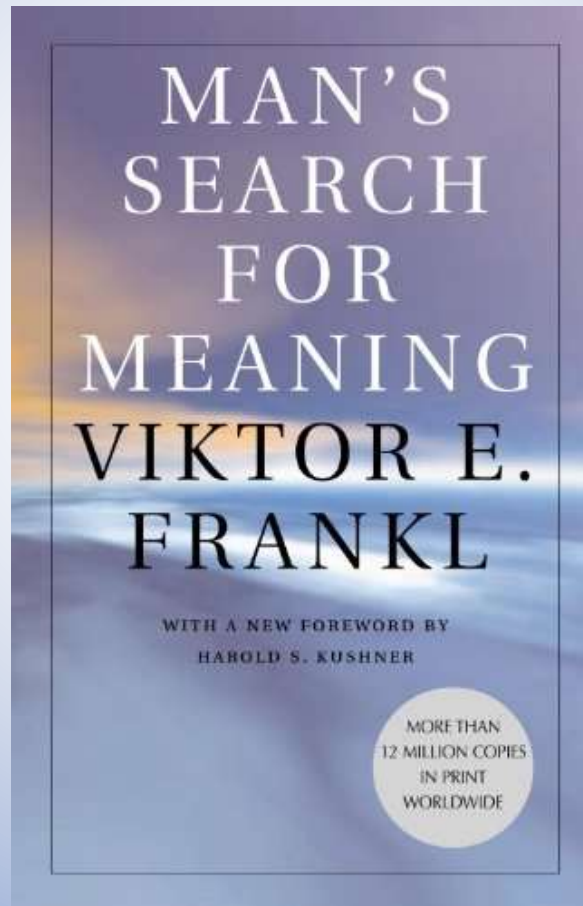


Viktor Frankl  
1905-1997



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

**Frankl would have clients come to him, like Elijah, at the end of their rope—depressed, out of gas, without any hope in the world.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

He would start counseling these people by asking a question most of us would call a bit...*counter-productive*:

“Tell me—why don’t you just commit suicide?”

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

However shocking, faced with such a stark question, these people, no matter how far gone in their hopelessness (like Elijah), were forced to come up with a credible answer.

Why were they still alive? What sense of *meaning* made life worth living?

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

**There was one thing that kept Frankl going while in the camps—his attitude and focus.**

**If there was even the remotest possibility that there was someone out there who he loved and who loved him, he had a reason to live.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## ANOTHER STORY

The idea that he learned and passed onto many of his desperate patients was that *Life is Relationship*.

If life has any merit, any meaning, it's that we have the opportunity to love and be loved.



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What Is Our Deepest Need?

So, let's return to the story of Elijah—and more importantly for our purposes this morning—the story of you and me, and those God has called us to serve.

Ask yourself a few questions:

*What is the deepest need of the human heart?*

*And is there a God out there who wants to meet this need?*

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What Is Our Deepest Need?

**These are questions you need to have a good answer for when serving those God has called you to serve, whether it's your children, your spouse, your students, your co-workers, or those in the mission field.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What Is Our Deepest Need?

**But these are also questions you better have a good answer for first *in your own heart* or your service to others will never ring true.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## What Is Our Deepest Need?

**In my view (both biblical and experientially):**

**The deepest need of the human heart is for healthy, intimate, and sustaining personal relationship with both God and other human beings.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A Relational Apologetic

**An answer to the question: “Is there a God out there who wants to meet this need?”:**

**If in the deepest parts of our soul we realize that the only thing that gives life meaning—the only thing that makes life worth living—is our personal relationships...**

**Then doesn't it make sense that the source of life itself would also be *personal...and relational?***

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A Relational Apologetic

**Like Elijah...in the face of all doubt and despair, it is truly possible to have faith that there is a God out there who won't ever leave us, who won't let us down, who deeply loves every stitch of our existence.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## A Relational Apologetic

**We must both understand and regularly experience what it means to belong to God in personal relationship if we're ever to be successful in serving *human beings* in personal relationship.**

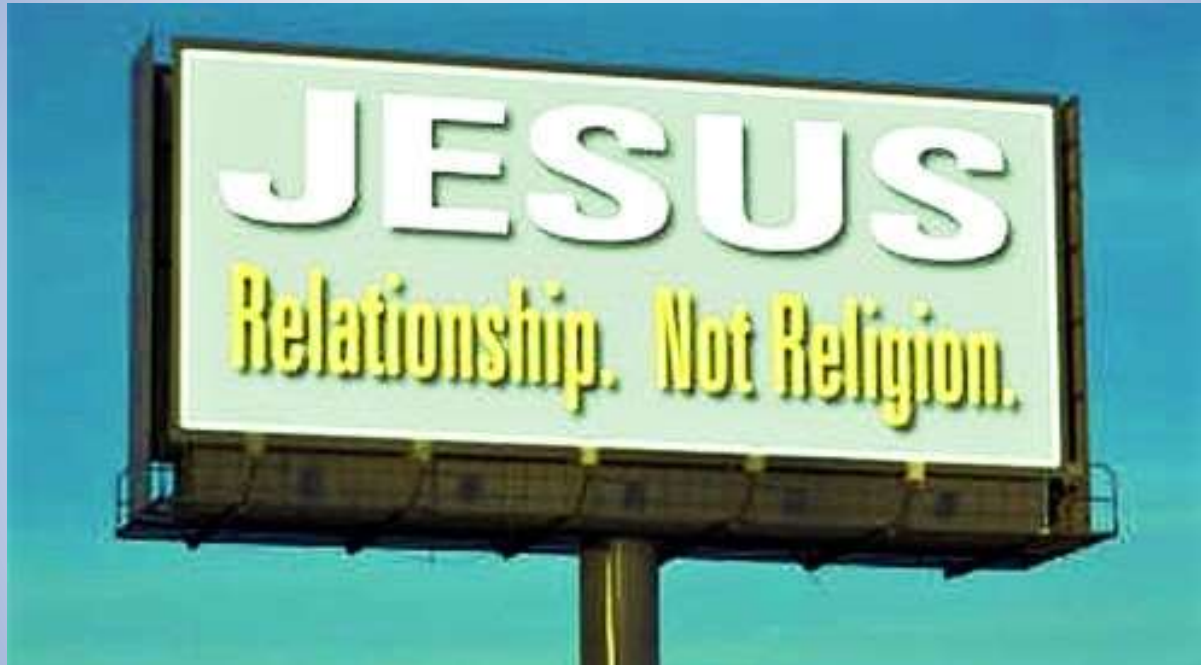
**And, like Elijah, we must understand and experience this if we're ever to thrive in and finish the race God has set out before us.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship





# Introduction: Life is Relationship



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

**To love others well, to win people to Christ and offer them the benefit of belonging to the Kingdom of God, is to call people to personal relationship with God.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

**But to be truly effective in this we must continually ground ourselves in:**

- ***A biblical understanding* of why personal relationship with God is so important in the salvation story.**
- ***An ongoing, daily experience* of personal relationship with him.**

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# **Belonging to Him**

**SERIES  
OBJECTIVES**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #1: I want to ground you in...or at least remind you of...the biblical theology of personal relationship with God.**

**But I want to clothe this theology in the identifiable dynamics of *human* relationship:**

- **The instinctive need we all have for personal relationship.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #1: I want to ground you in...or at least remind you of...the biblical theology of personal relationship with God.**

**But I want to clothe this theology in the identifiable dynamics of *human* relationship:**

- **How our human relationships can be the source of either meaning or tragedy in our lives.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #1: I want to ground you in...or at least remind you of...the biblical theology of personal relationship with God.**

**But I want to clothe this theology in the identifiable dynamics of *human* relationship:**

- **And how, out of our instinctive need for human relationship, we can be drawn into relationship with God.**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #1: I want to ground you in...or at least remind you of...the biblical theology of personal relationship with God.**

**Series Schedule (August 26th-November 25th):**

- **Introduction (2 weeks)**
- **It Is Not Good for You to Be Alone (3 weeks)**
- **Our Need for Loving Relationship (3 weeks)**



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #1: I want to ground you in...or at least remind you of...the biblical theology of personal relationship with God.**

**Series Schedule (August 26th-November 25th):**

- **Our Need for True Relationship (3 weeks)**
- **Our Need for Transcendent Relationship (3 weeks)**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #2: I want to give you (or remind you of) practical tools for maintaining a personal relationship with God, so you can better relate to others about God, and so you can stay strong in the calling God has given you.**

### **Series Schedule (January 3rd-March 3rd):**

- **Encountering Jesus (3 weeks)**
- **Practical Lessons in Divine Intimacy (3 weeks)**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## *Belonging to Him Objectives*

**Objective #2: I want to give you (or remind you of) practical tools for maintaining a personal relationship with God, so you can better relate to others about God, and so you can stay strong in the calling God has given you.**

**Series Schedule (January 3rd-March 3rd):**

- **Belonging to Him/Belonging to Others  
(3 weeks)**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship



**GOD WITH US**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## GOD WITH US

**As a people called to serve others, let me leave you with a few more simple, but important questions:**

**Is God a real person? How do you know?**

**Do you know him personally with the same depth that you know your spouse, your parents, your children, your best friend? Do you know him even more personally than your closest human relationships?**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## GOD WITH US

**As a people called to serve others, let me leave you with a few more simple, but important questions:**

**Does God know *you*? Do you comprehend how well he knows you through and through?**

**Does God show up in a personal way for you through the people you read about in Scripture? How well do you know those stories?**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## GOD WITH US

**As a people called to serve others, let me leave you with a few more simple, but important questions:**

**What are the benefits of belonging to God? Are they just about avoiding hell and going to heaven? Or is there more to it than that?**

**What other needs of the human heart does belonging to God satisfy? Can you provide personal examples or experiences of how God has met this need in you?**

# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## GOD WITH US

**As a people called to serve others, let me leave you with a few more simple, but important questions:**

**If you were left all alone like Elijah or Frankl, separated from all the human relationships you value—and God called your name—would that be enough?**



# Introduction: Life is Relationship

## GOD WITH US

*Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.” (Genesis 28:20-21)*

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# **Belonging to Him**

Introduction:

**Life Is Relationship**