Linked Wk4

Series Road Map

**Series Overview:** Who and how we date is so important. Culture tells us that relationships and sex are just for fun. It tells us that we can change other people into versions we like more. It values physical attraction to a degree that almost nothing else matters. We’re told to have fun, be carefree, and don’t worry about the consequences because they’re not real anyway. And it all sounds so fun! So fun, in fact, that at first glance it seems like the way to go. But can that really be what God intended for us? To use people? To allow ourselves to be used? To treat our bodies and our hearts with complete recklessness? In this series we’ll discover that healthy bonds and true intimacy are the real gift and God even gives us the directions to see that link establish in our own lives.

**Week Overview:** There are healthy bonds & unhealthy bonds. Healthy bonds are created when we spend quality time with people, are present in difficult times, serve together, and enjoy intimacy in the context of marriage. Unhealthy bonds are created when we rush into sex acts, depend on others for happiness, and make excuses for the poor decisions of others. If we want a healthy link with someone, we must pay attention to the bonds we create and how they’re lived out.

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Weak internet connection

**Tension (What's the Struggle?):** Bonding with others is always fun & exciting. That’s why we’re fooled into thinking that all bonds are good and of equal value.

**Climb (Rising Conflict):** Some bonds help, while other bonds hurt. How do we know the difference?

**Truth + Supporting Text (Illuminate):** There is a better way. Philippians 1:1-11

**THP (What’s the Takeaway?):** Don’t rely on a weak link

**Application (Call to Action):** Tensile Test. Test the quality of your bond. How did the bond grow? How does the bond effect you? Is the bond reciprocated? Are you relying on a weak link?

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

Humor me for a minute here. I want you to imagine that you desperately want something that you have to order from the internet. And this thing you want to order is only available in a limited number and for a very limited time. Maybe it’s some sort of electronic device or piece of clothing or a sport/concert ticket. Could be anything, just get in that headspace.

*Personal story of when this happened to you…*

For me this was last Christmas. I desperately wanted to get Owen and Jaxon a new PS5. They’d been talking about it for over a year and being a parent, you just desperately want to get your kids the things they want at any expense to you. It’s just a thing, I can’t explain it. So last Christmas, I wanted to get a PS5 for the Zurcher boys. But here’s the tough part: they’re nearly impossible to get your hands on. And I tried. I heard Walmart was gonna get some so I showed up there only to be told they went to a few employees. I heard Target was getting a shipment and the only way to get one was to go online at a certain time, add it to my cart, and be one of the first people to finish my payment. So I went online, put a PS5 in my cart and waited for the online universal atomic world clock to tell me when to pay. And at precisely midnight, I hit the checkout button, sped through the fastest payment option I had, PayPal, and hit submit. I was lightning fast. You’d have been so proud of your boy. But guess what. By the time the page refreshed, they were out. I was beat. My fastest speed wasn’t fast enough. Luckily for me, when you’re old and connected, you’ve got a guy for everything. And my guy was able to get me a PS5 in time for Christmas.

So get in that frame of mind. You want to order something online so bad, but time is of the essence. If you’re not fast enough, you’re hosed. You know you’ve gotta bring your absolute best, so you plan ahead. You grab the fastest computer you can find, you free your calendar for the moment the sale starts, and you head to somewhere with the absolute best, most reliable, and fastest internet anywhere. Why is that? I mean you might be hanging out at a friend’s house who lives out in the country. Why don’t you just trust the internet connection he has? Or you’re already at a local coffee shop that has free guest wifi. Why don’t you just stay there and roll the dice? Because you want…nay, you need the best connection you possibly can. Because when time is of the essence, you can’t roll the dice on a weak link.

When you’re online for something that matters to you, a great link is important. More than important, it’s essential. So you do whatever it takes to find the perfect link that you can rely on. Our focus tonight is this: **Don’t rely on a weak link**.

Seems obvious doesn’t it? But why does it seem that this is one of the most difficult parts of finding the right person? I mean how many times have you looked at a girl and thought, “Why are you with that guy? He treats you horribly!” Or “Bro, that girl is so mean, why do you put up with that?”

The answer is bonds. Deep bonds. You see what I did there? It was like James Bond, but not. I changed the words just enough for it to be different and in doing so completely changed the meaning in a somewhat witty way. Cool, eh?

We form bonds with anything. And I mean anything. But I’m not talking about covalent bonds or ionic bonds. I’m talking about real bonds. Interpersonal bonds. Who here feels a bond with their friend group? Probably about all of us. Who here feels a bond with their family? Hopefully everyone again. Now who here feels a bond with an animal? Could be any animal: a horse you train, that good boy that’s waiting for you at home right this very moment. God gave us this incredible ability to create these emotional bonds of love and belonging with things. And what’s trippy is it doesn’t even need to be a living thing. Does anyone feel a bond with their car or device or bed? Do you talk to it, encourage it, or dread saying goodbye? I know I do! My car’s name is Benny the Jet Rodriguez and I’ve even got this theory that bonding with your car makes it run longer. Call me crazy. I’m just your run of the mill, everyday, brilliant man of God, but whatever.

The point is that we humans create bonds with others that are so strong and so powerful that they literally determine the direction of our lives. The bonds we feel for people can lead us to do things we never imagine, in good and bad ways. Maybe your bond with another friend in Northview Students caused you to go to an event that really impacted your life. Or the bond you have with another led you to try a new food that you really love. Or maybe the bond you have with your friend group led you to do something you regret, that you’d never do on your own. That deep, deep shame that is only there because of your bond to another. Maybe the bond you have with a boyfriend or girlfriend led you to make a decision you wish today you’d never made. Some of you in this room know exactly what I mean.

The truth is: there are healthy bonds & unhealthy bonds. Healthy bonds are created when we spend quality time with people, are present in difficult times, serve together, and enjoy intimacy in the context of marriage. Unhealthy bonds are created when we rush into sex acts, depend on others for happiness, and make excuses for the poor decisions of others. If we want a strong link with someone, we must pay attention to the bonds we create and how they’re lived out.

That’s kinda scary, isn’t it? Because bonds are a joy to establish. Getting to know someone new, enjoying their company, and being opened up to new perspectives and ideas is fun. It’s exhilarating. You know that feeling when you’re making a new friend and you start to realize, “Wow, this is more than just a casual friendship. This is a big deal!” That’s such a fun feeling! You spend extra time with them, you go on epic adventures, you talk about the things that matter to you and the bond grows and grows. But it’s often only when the bond is formed that we realize that things are headed in ways we’re not sure we like. Maybe they suddenly bring up a topic that you’re not at all comfortable with. Or they want to pursue something that you don’t think is healthy. But you’ve created this bond and suddenly there’s fear of letting them down or even a fear of losing that relationship. So you ignore the voice that’s telling you to run and you fall in line, only to regret it.

God gave us something amazing when He gifted the act of sex to Adam & Eve, and thereby to the world. This gift of sex, stating the obvious, is really enjoyable. There’s a reason it’s everywhere. Sex is fun. And done in the context of marriage it isn’t just a fun thing to do, it leads to incredible blessings. The most obvious is kids. One gift of sex is building a family to love and enjoy. But a more immediate and unavoidable blessing of sex and sex acts is the bond that it creates between two people.

That’s amazing when it’s done inside of marriage. That’s catastrophic when it’s done outside of marriage. Because in both scenarios it builds a dynamic bond between two people. In marriage it makes you stronger and more able to endure. Outside of marriage it makes you needier and more likely to excuse bad behavior. It’s why you see people putting up with behavior that makes no sense. It’s why you hear people excuse their boyfriend or girlfriend of things that are just crazy. Because they built a connection, a deep bond of loyalty and patience, with someone who not only hasn’t earned the right to have it, but uses that bond for their own gratification. In short, we consciously and subconsciously remain bonded with someone that has no right to be bonded to us. They rely on a weak link, formed by mistakes, with a future marred with regret.

Don’t **rely on a weak link.**

That’s easy to say, but what does that really mean? Like everything, we look to Jesus. But He never had a romantic partner. He never engaged in that type of relationship. So we need to take a step back and look at the bonds that existed in the New Testament. And one place that’s so clear on what a healthy bond looks like is that between the Apostle Paul and the church he started in a city known as Philippi. Paul writes…

Philippians 1:3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Yall, this is what a God honoring bond looks like. This is what it looks like when you create a healthy bond.

Notice how the bond came: by the mutual pursuing of Jesus. Through joy and the pursuit of two goals: to know the love of God better and to communicate that to others.

Notice how the bond endures: they’re constantly there for each other – during the good times of God moving and the difficult times of being imprisoned because of the declaration of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection.

And notice how the bond continues into the future: the promise of continued pursuit of Jesus, to the glory of God and benefit of everyone who hears the word of God.

Friends, you get to decide how your relationship grows. You get to determine if it’s healthy or unhealthy. Will you choose bonds built intentionally or bonds built by mistakes? A healthy bond or an unhealthy bond? **Don’t rely on a weak link. Don’t rely on a weak link.**

 So lets chat about how this looks in a real life setting...

\*transition into panel discussion – questions to come\*