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Hey small group leaders! We are in the second week of our series, “Real Talk”! Whether it’s friendships, family, marriage, or community, navigating relationships isn’t always easy. In this series, we’re having honest, biblical conversations about what matters most. When Jesus is at the center of our relationships, everything begins to change. We’ll explore real talk about how to build stronger, healthier connections that reflect God’s heart and His design for us!

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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***“Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another,
‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one.’”***
[C.S. Lewis]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
 - These verses point to relationships that are not casual, superficial, or comfortable. The principles they teach go against the grain of our culture, viewing relationships primarily as sources of affirmation, comfort, and happiness in our lives. However, the Bible teaches that true friends will wound us, even if our flesh desires flattery and sympathy.
- **Proverbs Ch. 27 Summary & Find a Friend to Wound You**
 - Use this short video and article for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **How to Have a Gospel-Centered Fight & Beg to Be Rebuked**
 - These would be good resources to share with your group after you gather.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.*

What is something that is unique, interesting, or strange that you have in common with a friend?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.”
[Ecclesiastes 4:9-10]

BIG IDEA || Leader Note Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.

We are invited to be tools of love in the lives of those we love, and we need friends that will be the same for us!

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have someone read Proverbs 27:4-6. Have another person read it again in the Message translation.

1. According to this passage, what is better than concealed love? What about this is surprising? *Open rebuke is better than concealed love. This is surprising because we typically associate love with comfort and affirmation, not confrontation. The Bible, however, teaches that loving confrontation is an essential aspect of true friendship.*
2. What does Solomon say about the "wounds of a friend" compared to the "kisses of an enemy"? *Wounds from a friend are trustworthy, meaning that honest correction from someone who loves you is beneficial, even if painful. In contrast, flattering words from an enemy may feel good but are deceptive and ultimately harmful.*
3. Relationships marked only by compliments and flattery can be more like enemies than true friends. How have you found this to be true in your own life? *Answers will vary: true friends are committed to your growth and character, not just your comfort. Superficial affirmation without honest truth-telling can be selfish and damaging, more aligned with harm than genuine love.*
4. Do you at times avoid giving or receiving rebuke, even when it is loving and necessary? Why do you think that is? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
5. In the sermon we heard, *"True discipleship refuses to condemn, but also refuses to condone."* How does this quote challenge or convict you?
6. Why is it crucial for Christ-centered relationships to fully embrace both truth (correction) and grace (forgiveness)? *Grace without truth leads to complacency; truth without grace leads to harshness. Together, they reflect the heart of the Gospel, calling believers to transformative love.*
7. Think of a time recently when someone lovingly corrected you. How did you initially respond? What fruit eventually came from it?
8. Take a moment to reflect on your current friendships. What step(s) could you take to become the kind of friend who "wounds to heal" rather than flatters to avoid? *Answers will vary: developing humility, practicing prayerful confrontation, seeking God's heart for others, and committing to love people enough to speak truth even when it's hard.*
9. How does remembering that your identity is secure in Christ (approved by God) free you to give and receive correction well? *Answers will vary: when approval from others isn't ultimate, Christians can humbly receive feedback without fear and offer correction without harshness, because their worth is rooted in Jesus, not human opinions.*
10. What practical steps can our small group take TOGETHER to move past casual, surface-level friendships into deeper, transformative community? *Answers will vary: structured accountability,*

open confession, honest prayer requests, regular encouragement coupled with gentle correction—all foster authentic, Christ-centered relationships.

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Superficial affirmation is easy, but true friendship involves grace-filled correction **aimed at our holiness, not just happiness**. The gospel gives us the courage and humility to give and receive this kind of love. God's design for community is not casual comfort, but Christ-centered transformation!

As you consider your next step, here are two questions to reflect on: 1) Who in my life loves me enough to “wound me” for my good—and am I listening to them? 2) In whose life might God be calling me to step in with grace and truth this season?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question. The possible next steps of faith below are NOT for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.

Possible Next Steps of Faith

1. PRAY this week for one relationship where you can either receive or offer truth-filled love.
2. INITIATE one honest, grace-saturated conversation that points someone (or yourself) toward Christlikeness.

PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. Pray for one another as well as the prompts below!*

Being and Receiving Tools of Love

- God calls us to be tools of His love in the lives of others—encouraging, comforting, challenging, and building one another up in Christ. We also need others to do the same for us. Christian friendship is a two-way street: giving and receiving love that points each other to Jesus!
- As we pray, let's thank God for the people He's placed in our lives and ask Him to make us more faithful instruments of His love. Let's also pray for the humility to receive love and truth from others, trusting that God shapes us through community!