

Title: **Risk, Hope, Act**
Text: **Acts 9:23-43**
Date: **October 6, 2024**

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Big Idea

Gospel love is love that arises from and accords with the gospel. It's composed of three basic steps: risk, hope, and act. It's the sort of love that should characterize the church, because it's ultimately the love that's come to each one of us in Jesus. He risks in drawing near to "toxic" people like us; he hopes for us by defining us not by our sin but by his grace; and he acts by loving us all the way to the cross. As we follow him in this, it leads to peace, comfort, and the growth of the church!

Step #1: Risk

Gospel love is willing to risk for another—which means, of course, we're willing to move towards people even if we have to put our own comfort and security and peace on the line to do it.

We live in a culture where the running motto so far as relationships is concerned goes something like this: "Life is too short to spend it with people who drag you down." Have you heard this? Have you been influenced by it? I'll tell you: I don't know if you can come up with a relational strategy any more contrary to the gospel.

Of course, there is some truth to setting up appropriate boundaries at times. And, yes, we are warned against yoking up with unbelievers and walking in the way of sin with them and things like that. But, let me just say this: If Jesus were to live by such a rule, we'd all be on the fast track for hell. If Jesus was risk-averse in relationship, and he only befriended people he was sure wouldn't harm him, he wouldn't have come from heaven in the first place and he certainly wouldn't have gone to the cross. To put it bluntly: If Jesus refused to hang out with toxic people, he wouldn't be hanging out with people like us! Instead, thanks be to God, these are precisely the kinds of people he came for!

Step #2: Hope

Gospel love is willing to hope for another—which means, of course, we're willing to see people, all people, through the grid of the gospel. And so, no matter how far off they may seem, no matter how deep their sin has gone, no matter how many times they've hurt us personally, we know God can still do great things in their life. We don't write anybody off. We have hope.

If you're a Christian, I'm not going to define you by your worst moments—by your flesh. I'm actually going to define you by your best—by God's grace at work in you, because it's his grace that will get the last word in your life. So I see you in light of that. And I hope. And, somewhat similarly, even if you're not Christian, I'm not going to define you by what you currently are in and of yourself. I'm going to define you by what you could be in Jesus. You're not too far gone. I know the one who raises the dead. So I hope.

Step #3: Act

This kind of love doesn't just stay in the realm of the head or the heart. We don't merely think, or talk, or pray about it. We do it. We act.

We often forego gospel love and cut off from relationships with hard people because we want things like peace and comfort, right? "I don't want to risk, hope, and act in love for you because I want peace and comfort, and you threaten that." But this text says: If you really want peace and comfort—the kind that isn't shallow and fleeting but deep and substantial and lasting—then you don't forego gospel love, you lean into it; you don't push out the hard people, you bring them close (cf. v. 31). Because that's what Jesus does. And where Jesus is there is peace and comfort that this world knows nothing about.



Reflection Questions

- Are your relationship marked more by hope and expectation or by bitterness and suspicion, even fear? Are you on a hunt, looking for evidence of God's grace at work in a person, or are you on a hunt looking for flaws? Why do you think? How might the gospel inform all of this?
- What is God calling you to do in the name of gospel love today? Don't just think about it, pray about it, talk about it . . . do it!

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

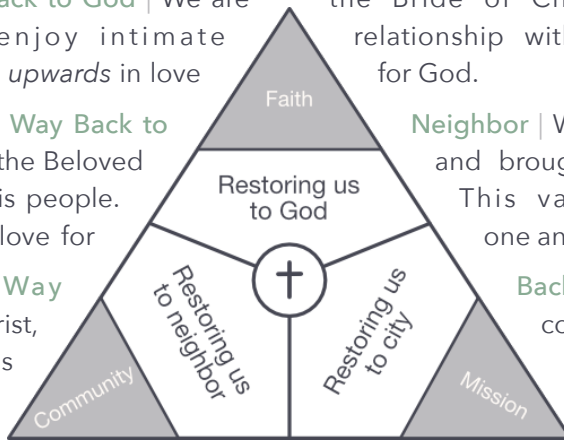
FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the



Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.

Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



Mail: PO Box 23806, San Jose, CA 95153
Phone: (408) 320-7080
Email: info@mercyhillchurch.org
Web: mercyhillchurch.org



Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Pumpkin Carving Party!

Come join us for a fun afternoon of pumpkin carving/decorating (and candy too!) on Saturday (10/26) from 3:00-5:00pm at Allen at Steinbeck Elementary School (courtyard/picnic tables area). Please RSVP by Wednesday (10/23) to guarantee a FREE pumpkin for your child(ren), ages 2-18. This event is for our Mercy Hill Church community, friends and family, as well as for our local community. This is a great opportunity to invite family, classmates, neighbors, and friends! If you would like to help out, please contact Joey.

To find more info and a link to RSVP, please scan the QR code below!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Joey Wang at joey@mercyhillchurch.org.

All Church Hangout - Today!

Mercy Hill Men's BBQ Hangout + Tasting Tour

All Church Prayer - Tonight

Beautiful Day Sign-Ups

Mercy Hill Kids - Volunteers Needed

CityTeam's Grace Village Apartment Renovation

Scan the QR code below for more info!

For clickable content and more announcements,



scan this code to head to our Communications Hub!

Or find it online at mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub.